



Military Family
Advisory Network

The Causal Factors of Military & Veteran Family Food Insecurity

presented by

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Our Story

MFAN was founded in 2013 to meet a persisting need in the military community: the ability to quickly and effectively connect to military families.

MFAN uses a peer-leader network, scientific research, and collaboration to stay ahead of and respond to emerging needs.

We connect military families to the resources, people, and information they depend on to navigate all phases of military life.

Today, MFAN is a trusted resource within the military community, among policymakers, and with major corporations and foundations.

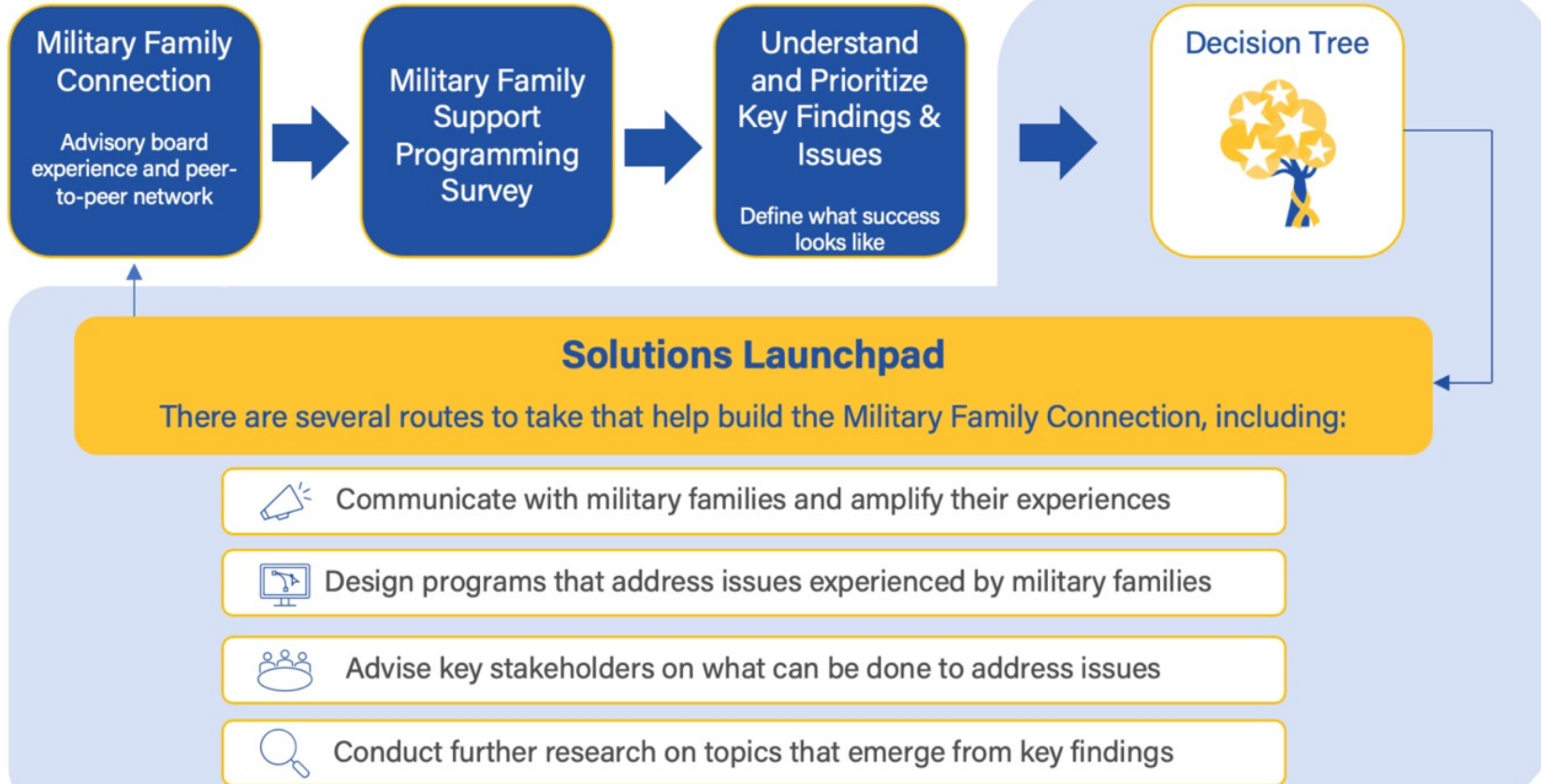




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The MFAN Cycle

MFAN's mission is to understand and amplify the needs of military-connected families and inspire data-informed change.



Footnote: Program Design includes data-informed design, implementation and testing, and evaluation and refinement.

Food Insecurity Research Timeline

**2017 Support
Programming Survey**
15.0% of military families
experiencing food insecurity

**2019 Support
Programming Survey**
1 in 8 military families
experiencing food insecurity

**2020 Off-Cycle Survey
(COVID-19 Pandemic)**
In in 5 military families experiencing
food insecurity

**2021 Support Programming
Survey & Causal Factors
Studies**
Journey map and personas



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2021 MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMMING SURVEY

1 Health Care

2 Family Relationships

3 Financial Readiness

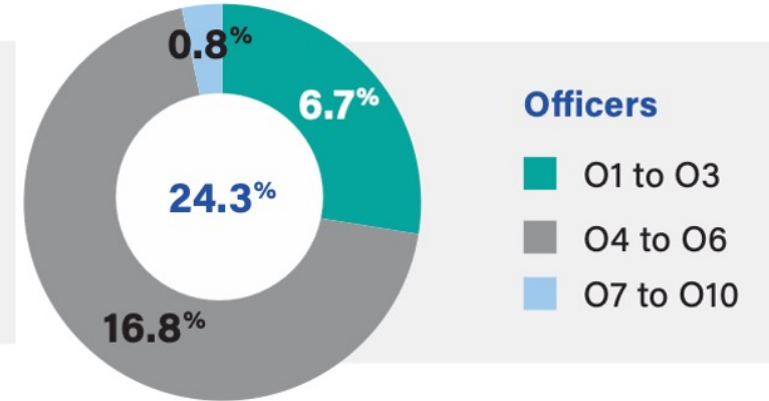
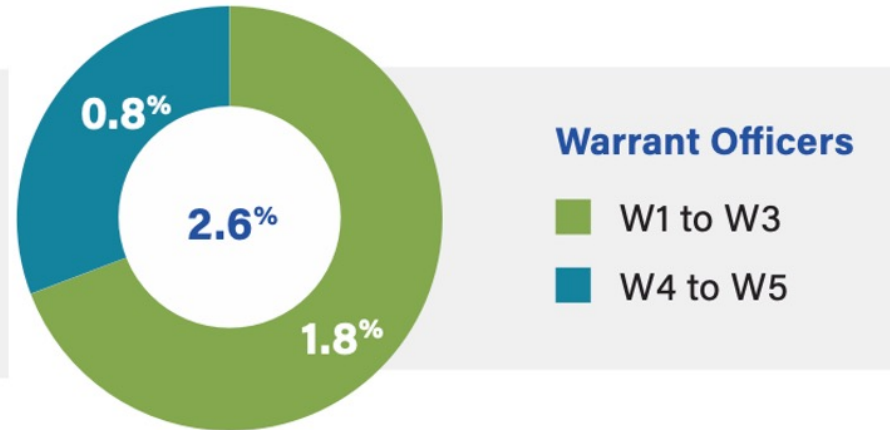
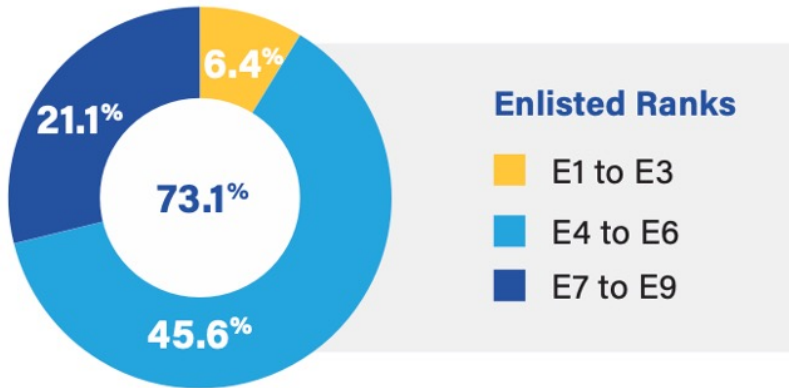
4 Housing

5 Food Insecurity

6 Community, Transition, and
Recommending Military Life

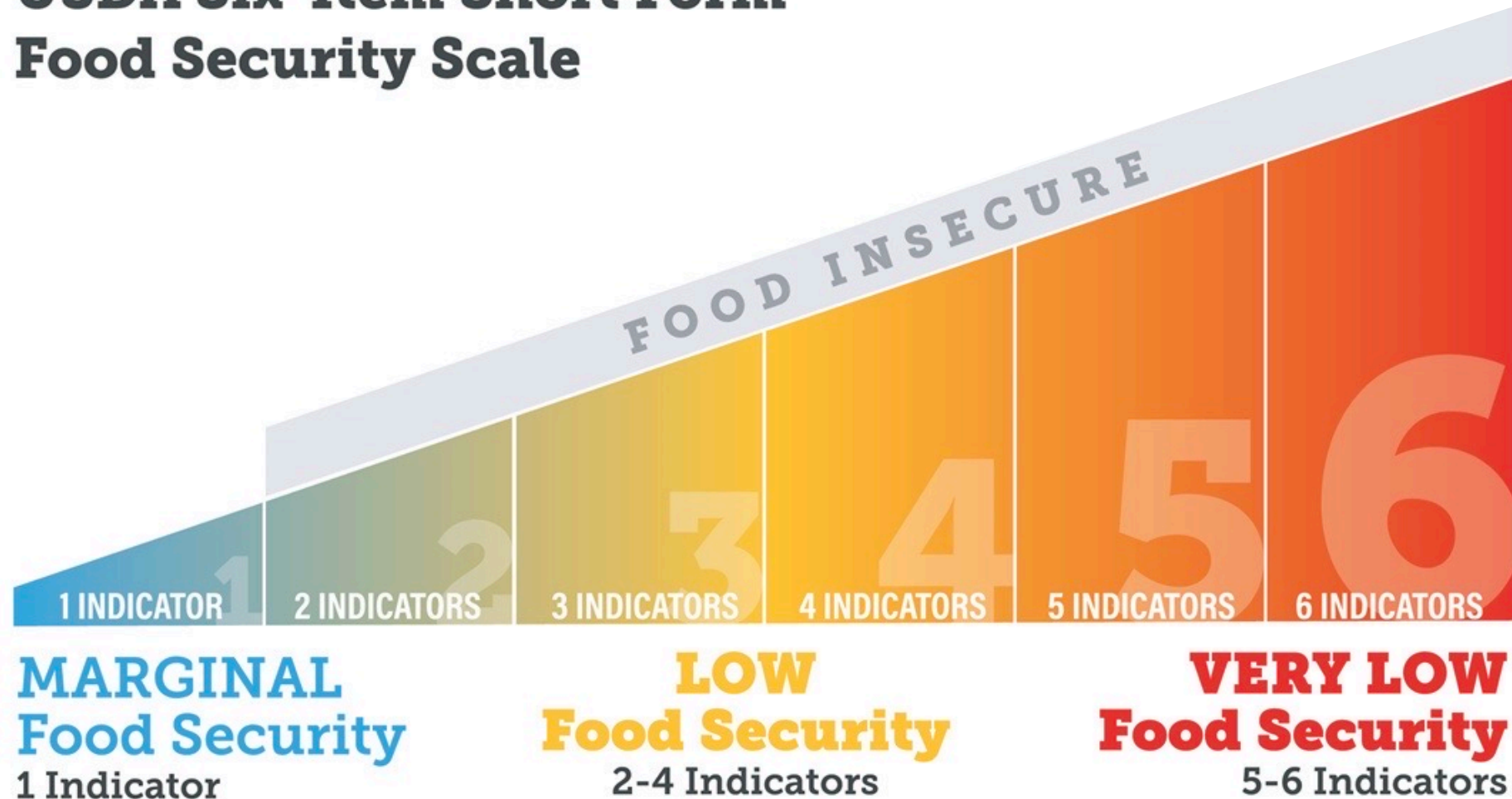


8,638 Total Respondents





USDA Six-Item Short Form Food Security Scale

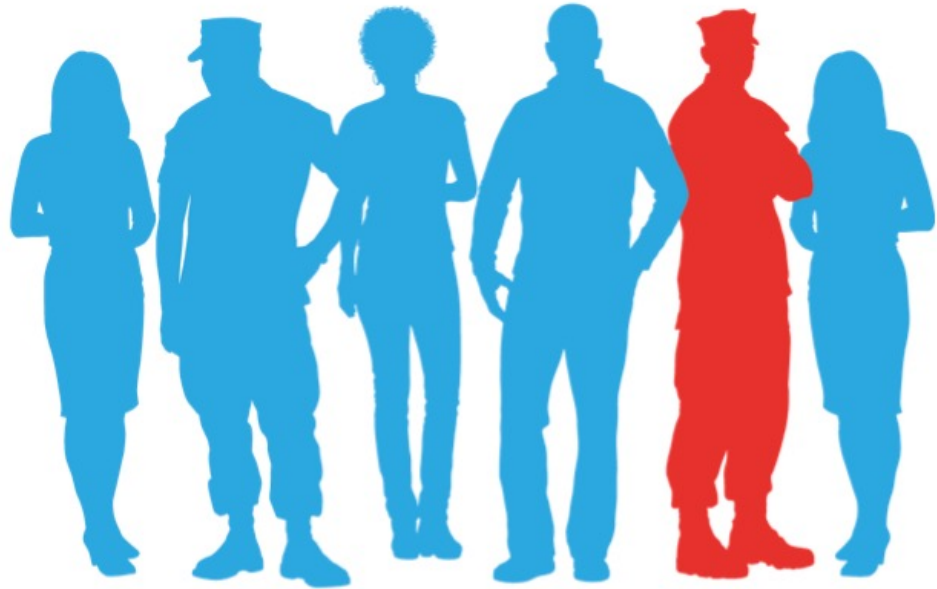




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1 in 6

**respondents was
experiencing
food insecurity.**





Enlisted ranks

23.3% of military and veteran families were experiencing food insecurity or hunger. This is striking in comparison to the 4.4% of food insecure or hungry families at the officer ranks.



Geography

Military and veteran families in the following states reported the highest frequencies of food insecurity: **TX, VA, WA, NC, CA, FL, HI, IL, GA, AZ.**



Race

American Indian or Alaskan native respondents experience hunger at higher levels than any other demographic, with >20% identifying as hungry. An additional 16.5% were food insecure, and 8.3% experienced marginal food security.



Ethnicity

Of the 1,249 respondents identifying as **Hispanic or Latinx in 2021, 13.2% of this population were experiencing hunger,** and an additional 12% were experiencing food insecurity.



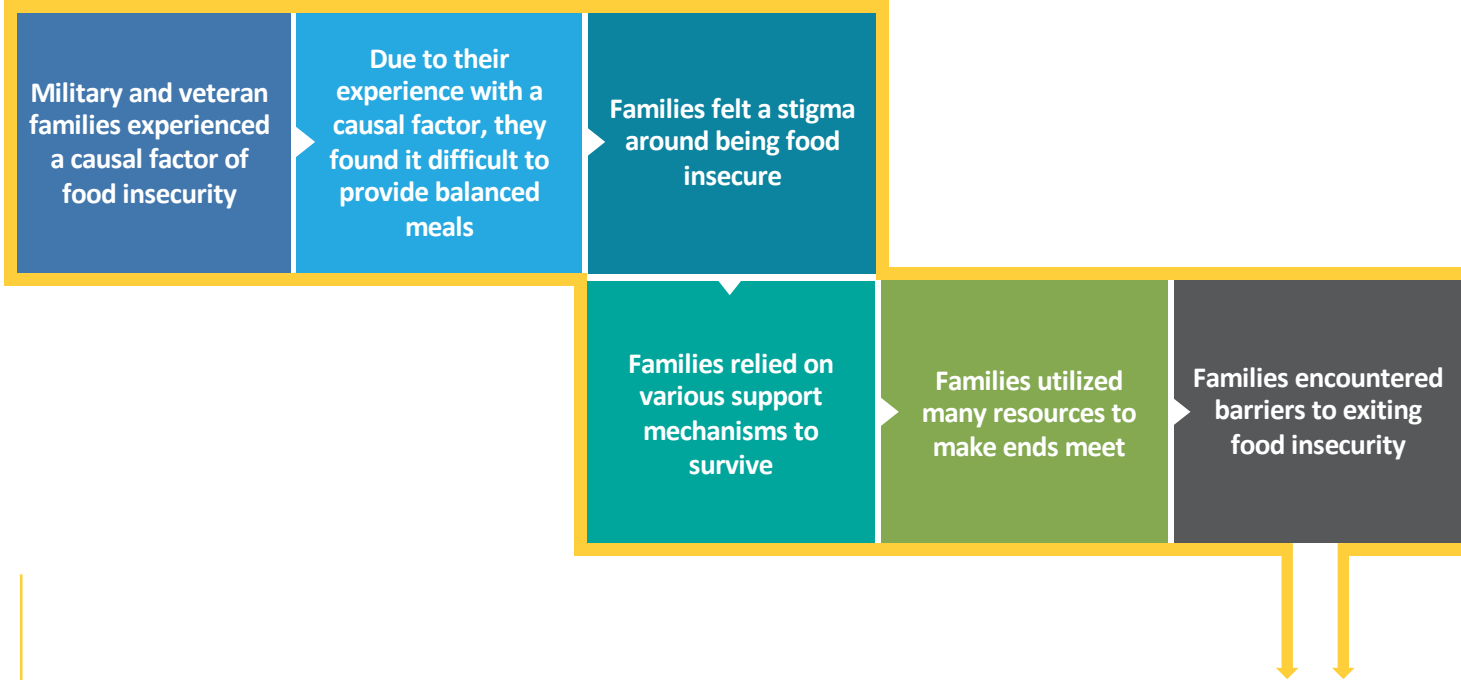


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CAUSAL FACTORS OF MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILY FOOD INSECURITY



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312 Interviews

Military and Veteran families in Texas and Tidewater, Virginia



Measuring Food Insecurity

USDA Six-Item Short Form Food Security Scale



Sharing Their Journey

Qualitative interviews to understand the causal factor, and resultant journey, of their food insecurity



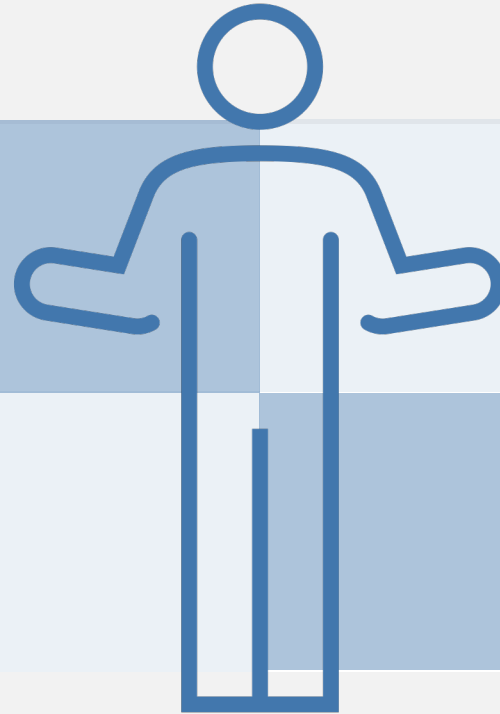


Persona 5: External Systems Shock

Families in Texas experienced an uncharacteristic ice storm that sparked food insecurity

Persona 1: Military Spouse Unemployment

Military spouses faced unemployment due to PCS, COVID-19, and childcare responsibilities



Persona 3: Recent PCS

Families experienced a recent Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

Persona 2: Growing Families

Families' expenses grew exponentially after having kids

Persona 4: Unexpected Expenses

Families incurred unexpected expenses they could not be prepared for

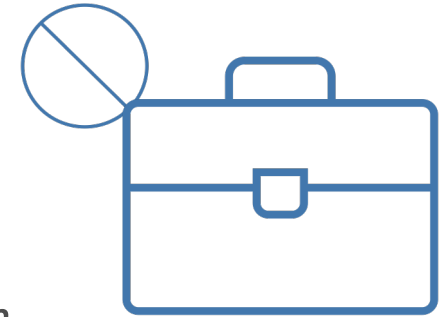
Persona 6: Rising Cost of Living

For families in Tidewater, Virginia, military pay did not keep up with the rising cost of living



Persona #1:

Families Experiencing Spousal Unemployment



“It’s been very difficult. I’m in health care. I have 12 years health care experience. I’m a certified phlebotomist. I’m a certified MA. Certified PPT. I have my associates degree. I’ve never not had a job and I’ve never had such difficulty finding a job until I moved here, you know, even before the pandemic happened, it was difficult...I am very transparent with employers [that] my husband’s military. You know if my kids get sick, he’s not always around. I can’t rely on him, it’s all me. I don’t like to say single parent because I’m not...and I get it from their point of view. They need someone who can come in when they need them.”

—Active duty spouse in Tidewater, Virginia



Persona #2: Growing Families

“And with the military, when you apply for food stamps, they count your BAH, they count everything on the LES, even when you don’t see a lot of it. You know? ‘Cause obviously the rent goes to the housing and stuff like that, but they still factor that out as an amount that your household is getting. So, to them, we’re getting too much money, whether we’re starving or not.”

—Active duty spouse in Texas



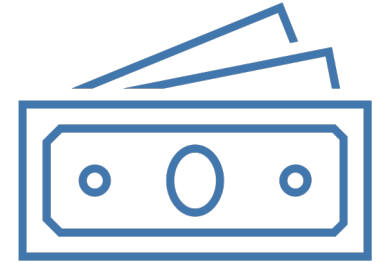
Persona #3: Families Who Had a Recent PCS

“We still haven’t gotten the money too, like we haven’t gotten the allowance for that and we’ve been here since August. I mean, that’s all on our credit card, like we don’t have it. So, that’s huge.”

—Active duty spouse in Texas



Persona #4: Families Who Incurred Unexpected Expenses



“Then we had a cat that came down with feline leukemia that turned into lymphoma. And then we had dentist bills and then our car broke down, all while my husband was deployed.”

—Active duty spouse in Tidewater, Virginia



Persona #5:

Texas Families Who Experienced an External System Shock

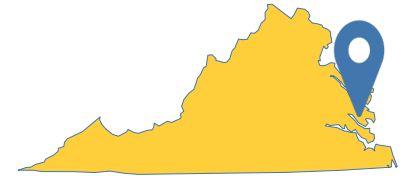


“Well earlier this year we had the ice storm. Nobody anticipated that and so most of our food went back because there was no power where we live so it’s just too little. I have two toddlers and so we kind of struggled to have these balanced meals after that. So, we had to use emergency food, like cans and stuff that we bought. We did have a little food, but there was a food shortage after the storm, so we had to cut back and ration...After the snowstorm we kind of had to pick ourselves back up and spend a lot of money on other things for emergencies. You know, equipment and other payments that we have, like bills, and all the food. And so, I just had to start over again. So yeah, I guess you could say that was the significant event that kind of started the food insecurities.”

—Active duty service member in Texas



Persona #6: Tidewater, Virginia Families Experiencing a Rising Cost of Living



“The prices of food – it’s just gone up. It’s ridiculous. And of course, the military pay, I mean, it kind of stays the same. It’s real stagnant, and really, it’s not like my husband can work overtime and get more money. It doesn’t matter, you know, the hours. We’re on a fixed income. So, like I said, the food prices have just gone up. Now, we’re seeing it with gas too, and it’s scary. And now, we’re like looking at the gas like, ‘Oh, my goodness.’ It’s going to cost us more at the pump, which is going to take away from trying to buy the kids healthier options.”

—Active duty spouse in Tidewater, Virginia



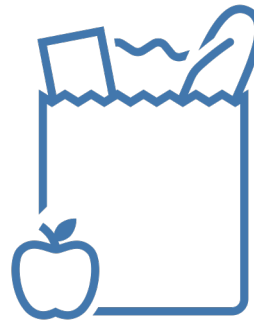
Families That Experienced Food Insecurity Asked for the Following Supports:



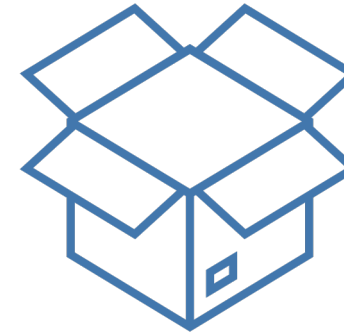
**Information on
Support
Systems and
Resources**



**Affordable
Childcare**



**Eligibility for
Benefits like
SNAP**



**Reduced
PCS Costs**



**Higher
Pay**



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MFAN's Approach to Programmatic Response & Scalable Solutions

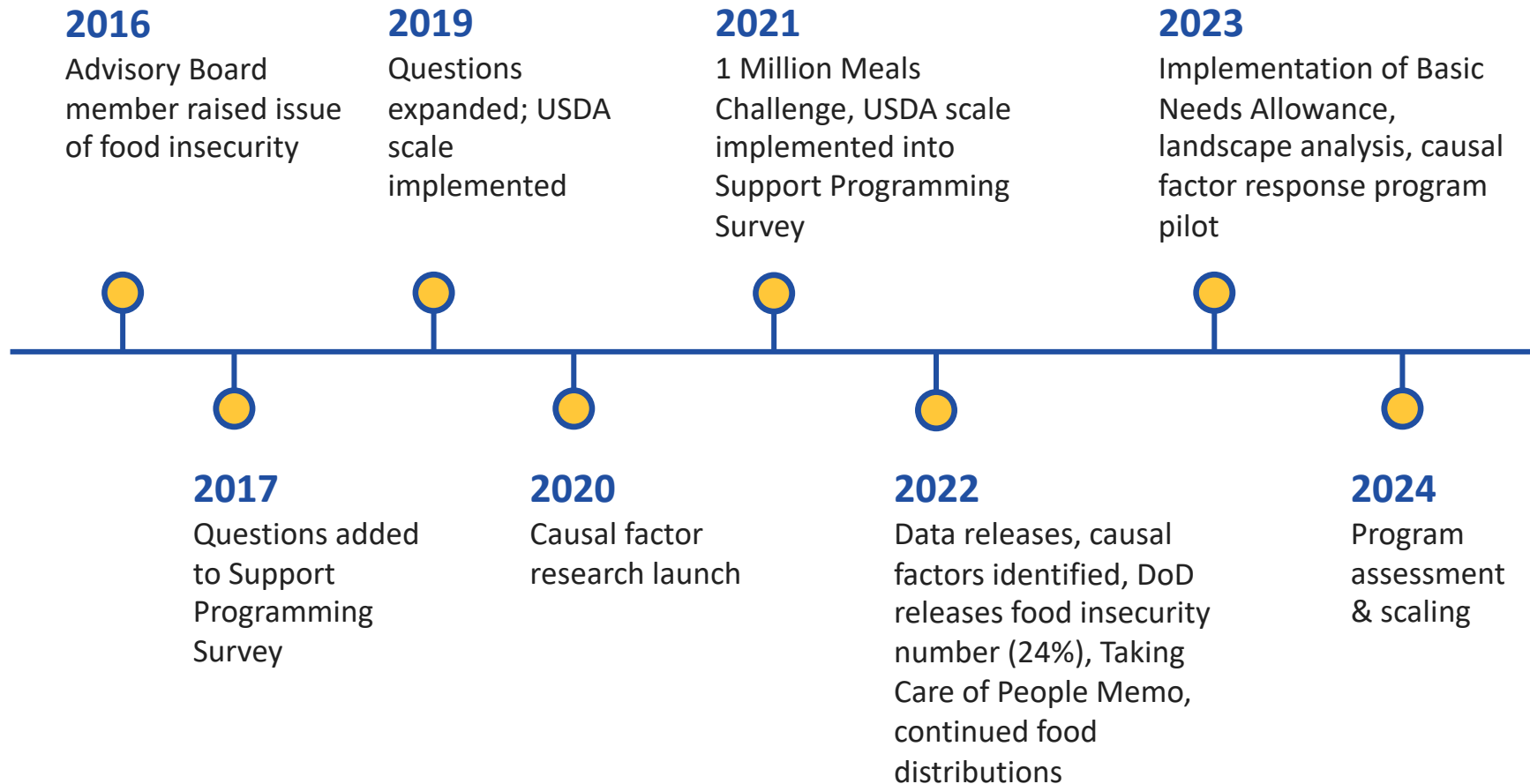
Understand and amplify:

- Raised food insecurity as an issue in the military community, elevated to national awareness
- Determined the causal factors that often lead to food insecurity among military families

Inspiring change:

- Distributed 1.5 million meals at 20 food distribution events
- Served over 11,000 families
- Convened Combat Military Hunger Task Force with 11 industry partners
- Designing a program that responds to causal factors while promoting health and dignity

Food Insecurity - Program Evolution



+ MFAN's Recommendations

Reduce Stigma and Promote Help-Seeking Behavior

Identify groups who may struggle in silence.

Lessen the Financial Burden of PCS

Support expedited and complete reimbursement, support educational programs for the whole family, and consider pre-paid cards.

Mitigate Barriers to Dual Income Earnings

Provide alternative, flexible spouse employment, increase availability and capacity of childcare services, consider childcare stipends.

Enhance Benefit Eligibility

Revise Federal benefit eligibility for families to exclude BAH.

Texas: Promote Importance of Emergency Savings

Lower barriers to emergency support during natural disasters and unpreventable emergencies.

Virginia: Right-size BAH, Ensure Adequate Housing Inventory

Support pay and allowance increases commensurate with rising cost of living and ensure adequate rental inventory.



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Questions & Answers



- ✓ Understand.
- ✓ Amplify.
- ✓ Inspire.

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