

Military spouses transition too! A call to action to address spouses' military to civilian transition (2020)

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PUBLICATION BRIEF

Military spouses also experience military-to-civilian transition alongside veterans and benefit from transition supports.

WHY IS THIS TOPIC IMPORTANT?

- **Military to Civilian Transition (MCT) can be challenging** for military family members in the following areas: education, employment, health, romantic relationships, help seeking, service utilization and community integration.
- From 2003-2017, approximately 250,000 military personnel left military service each year. With half of US military personnel married, and many others in long-term relationships, **spouses and committed partners play an important role in the transition process.**
- While there are many supports and programs for transitioning veterans, **effective supports for spouses are underdeveloped and not widely available.**
- As of 2020, the authors found only two systematic reviews of literature on spouse/family transition.

HOW WAS THIS PUBLICATION DEVELOPED?

This paper highlights **why and how spouses are impacted by MCT**, synthesizing published materials grounded in the military transition theory around education and employment, community, culture and identity, marital relationships and family, health and well-being, as well as help-seeking and service utilization.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Drawing on previous research, this paper highlights that...

- **Many military spouses experience employment disadvantages** that may stem from a pervasive labor force penalty for being married to someone serving in the military (the need for frequent relocations).
- Veteran spouses benefit from **connecting with other veteran spouses to exchange experiences and provide support** in the context of a continued group membership.
- There is a scarce amount of research on the health of spouses through their transition, along with help seeking / service use and the possible long-term impact of military service on spouse health.
- Limited research focuses on the **need for specialized services for military spouses during MCT.**
- This is an opportunity to **improve the long-term functioning of the entire military family system** if research can successfully inform practice/policy changes.

ACTION STEPS

- Services during and following transition from military to civilian life must be developed and promoted.
- The Department of Labor and Veterans Affairs Transition Assistance Program should **explicitly and meaningfully include spouses.**
- Specific resources are needed around career counseling/employment, education, mental health, culture/identity, romantic relationships, family health and wellbeing, help-seeking behaviors, and financial supports for the spouse as well as the service member/veteran.
- **Offering peer support for spouses during transition** can aid in community integration as well as offer needed emotional and practical support.