



**BOB WOODRUFF
FOUNDATION**

Schools Supporting Military Kids' Mental Health Convening Report

"Our service members deserve to know that the people they love most in the world aren't being left behind. That's why the Bob Woodruff Foundation and the Military Child Education Coalition have brought you together today. It's going to take all of us: educators, clinicians, policymakers, and local military personnel working together, to make sure our military kids and the schools that serve them have everything they need to access mental healthcare service." - Dr. Jill Biden

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The Bob Woodruff Foundation was founded in 2006 after reporter Bob Woodruff was wounded by a roadside bomb while covering the war in Iraq. Since then, the Bob Woodruff Foundation has raised awareness about the tough challenges veterans and military families are facing, and invested in solutions to help support them in the next chapter of their lives. To date, the Bob Woodruff Foundation has invested over \$146 million to ensure that our nation’s veterans, service members and their families — those who stood for us — have stable and successful futures. Visit the [**Bob Woodruff Foundation**](#) for more information.

Co-hosted By



This paper shares a summary of key discussion points, without implying agreement or consensus among the convening participants.

Call 988 to be connected to the suicide and crisis lifeline. Callers who follow the “press 1” prompt are connected to the Veterans Crisis Line. Anyone who is depressed, going through a hard time, needs to talk, or is thinking about suicide can use the service. The crisis counselors are there to listen and support you through whatever difficult times you may be facing.

*“In many ways military children are kids like any other, but their understanding of the world sets them apart from their peers. They know loneliness, like celebrating another birthday without their parent. They know worry, like losing sleep over a parent’s deployment far away. They know sacrifice, how to put their own desires aside for the greater good. They deserve our support.”
- Dr. Jill Biden*

Introduction

The Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF), the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), and USAA hosted a day of collaborative discussion addressing the important role of schools in military child mental health in April 2023.

Children's mental health is a national crisis, and the military lifestyle can further exacerbate mental health challenges for the children of those who serve. This convening included military, education, and clinical experts to discuss military children's mental health, the need for school-based programs, the aspects of successful programs, and the barriers to such programs.

Convening attendees were welcomed by Margaret Harrell (BWF), Rebecca Porter (MCEC), Lindsay O'Neill (USAA), and Anne Marie Dougherty (BWF). First Lady Dr. Jill Biden addressed the room via video, underscoring that military children serve too, and that our service members deserve to know that the people they love most in the world aren't going to be left behind. The First Lady's remarks set the tone for an engaging day of panels identifying best practices and developing solutions to address military children's mental health within schools.

"Over 1.6 million brave military children, youth, and teens who never enlisted are an integral part of the Department of Defense's mission."

Patricia Barron, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, DoD



Discussion Points

Rates of children presenting with anxiety and depression are increasing nationwide.

The most recent CDC report on youth risk behaviors found that increasing numbers of children, up to 40 percent, experienced depression that impaired their functioning within the past year.¹ Equally concerning, 20 percent are reporting having serious consideration of suicide in the past year.² While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on this trend, these rates have been going up for a decade. What used to be a rare occurrence, having to prescribe medication and try to set up mental health services or referrals or trying to coordinate care for kids with either anxiety or depression, is now happening more frequently nationwide.

Primary care providers are the first line of defense against negative health outcomes, but often lack the resources to address fully a child's mental health.

While parents are unlikely to miss a child's annual physical, these visits are insufficient for identifying and addressing mental health needs. Primary care providers are limited by a lack of specialized training, as they not required to be trained in child psychiatry. They also are limited by a lack of time with each patient. A single visit with a primary care provider is unlikely to catch or clearly identify the underlying causes of a child's mental health struggles.

Parents should know the warning signs and have proactive conversations with children.

Parents should be aware that the signals indicating a child may be struggling with mental health vary by developmental stage. For young children, indicators may include bed wetting, sleep issues, issues with authority, distrust of a deployed parent, or clinging to the parent who is at home with them. For older children and teens, dropping grades and substance use are cause for concern. Parents often see these differences in their children's behavior, but don't often tie them to underlying mental health issues. Being able to recognize the signs that a child's mental health is worsening can help them access quality care in advance of a crisis. By talking to children early about the importance of their mental health, kids may feel more comfortable raising their concerns with parents and be less afraid to speak up when they are struggling. This is especially important for military kids who grow up hearing how resilient they are, and thus may be more reluctant to admit they are struggling. Parents should also keep in mind that healthy habits, such as outdoor time, spending time together as a family, getting regular sleep, and limiting screen time and social media, are an important part of fostering mental health. If a parent believes their child may be struggling, they should seek out mental health resources in their community quickly.

“The older kids are not necessarily reaching out. We must build those relationships to know when they're going through something. Often, the younger kids can't voice how they feel. We see their need in their behavior. We have to look into their actions to see what's happening with them.”

Dr. Bernie Roper, Lackland Independent School District, Texas



Accessing available and affordable community-based mental health services can be challenging—even more so for military families.

As a parent, especially one with a partner away from home, navigating mental health care for oneself or one's child can be extremely stressful. Even with a referral from a primary care provider, it can be difficult to find an available mental healthcare provider. The complexity of finding a provider that accepts insurance and has availability, is significant. One study found that although military families have government insurance that covers mental health treatment, up to 35 percent of them lack adequate access to psychiatric care.³ Luckily, many providers offer telehealth now, which both decreases transportation barriers to care and potentially reduces the need to switch providers when military families relocate.

Parents should limit their children's access to lethal means.

The number one mean of suicide for adults and children is firearms. Firearm safety, especially safe storage, is a crucial part of this conversation. Similarly, suicide by medication overdose recently increased. Suicide risk tends to be episodic and impulsive. Everyone in the household, and the community as a whole, should consider how they are storing these means, and if someone is at risk, consider removing all access to these means, to increase a child's chances of surviving an attempt.

Teachers should advocate for military-connected children.

The vast majority of military-connected children are enrolled in public schools in their community. In fact, only 13 percent of children of active-duty service members attend a Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) school. To meet best the needs of their military-connected students, educators should dedicate time toward gaining military cultural competency, especially as it relates to the prior or likely future experiences of their military-connected students. It is also important for teachers to recognize that military kids include risk groups consistent with the larger population, to include those in the LGBTQ+ community.



“If you have one military-connected child in your school, the entire school is military-connected.”

Dr. Sean Maika, North East Independent School District, Texas

Teachers should reach to their school principals about implementing programming for military-connected children and let them know how important these programs are for the district. Successfully advocating for a program requires candid conversations about military families and their hurdles and finding military-connected people to help advocate for the program. Building relationships with people who understand the military mindset and can be champions for the program and the population is crucial to finding support for these programs.

Teachers should also remember the power they have to make a huge difference in the lives of military-connected students.

“For a kid, there's nothing like knowing they've got somebody on their side: a parent, a teacher, a coach, a counselor, a doctor. A meaningful connection where you and what you do matters to somebody is critical to mental health.”

Dr. Stephen Cozza, Uniformed Services University



Superintendents must make mental health a priority.

Superintendents set the priorities across their districts. Thus, it is crucial for them to prioritize the mental health of their students. This includes outreach, creating intentional programming that fosters student engagement and healthy peer-to-peer relationships, and having mental health services available on campus. This is especially important coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, which isolated children and hindered their ability to build strong social networks.

“School leadership must prioritize mental health, acknowledge that behavioral issues are often related to trauma and mental health, and work with the military community.”

Dr. Nichole Ayres, The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Valley Cities, Lakewood, Washington



Superintendents should ensure that trainings for faculty and staff on the needs of military-connected children are available. When a training program is structured well, it is delivered and distributed across an entire school to the point that it's embedded into the campus culture. There are school liaisons on every military installation who can help provide professional development to educators on military culture.

Superintendents should also confer with the mental health experts in their district to understand better what is working, and what changes need to take place to benefit their students. It is crucial to remember "that which gets measured, gets done". Setting mental health related goals informed by the needs of a student body is imperative for a district to hold everyone accountable for ensuring a safe, supportive environment for students' mental health.



“We can do anything we want, just not everything. If I know what works for mental health and behavioral health, I’ll find money to duplicate that in my district.”

Dr. Jerrod Wheeler, Knob Noster Public Schools, Missouri

Superintendents should ensure their schools are building relationships in the community and using available resources to support the student body.

Schools can best serve their students by creating a network of care and coupling their offerings with organizations within the community. While school districts and teachers are limited by the time and resources available to serve individual military-connected kids, there are many community programs nationwide to support children outside of the school setting. Having a resource list for community-based programming can be a helpful tool to provide to new families in a district and/or classroom. When possible, providing a warm hand-off to that resource is helpful. Superintendents should also consider fostering relationships with local law enforcement and other first responders. Community-based partnerships, training, and implementing programming throughout schools are all a crucial part of ensuring a supportive environment for children’s mental health.

“When our local law enforcement encounters a home where children are present and there’s been a traumatic event, they contact the school and ask that we handle that child with care. This allows us to lead with heart when that student shows up at school. If that child hasn’t slept all night and they’re sleeping in class, rather than punish them, we get them what they need.” - Dr. Sean Maika

School districts should implement clinical and non-clinical programs for military-connected children.

Ensuring that military kids are connected to peers in a new school can make a tremendous impact. Programs like MCEC’s Student to Student (S2S) student-led, faculty-advised program helps foster peer-to-peer relationships to ensure kids find their place. This is especially important for military kids who may transition in the middle of a school year, rather than during the typical summer transitions. Finding those relationships, and getting those students connected to other students, teachers, and faculty, is crucial to their success.

As the number of “safe spaces” for kids dwindle, creating intentional programs within a school not only for individual clinical care, but also for groups of kids to come together in a positive, safe way is essential. Specialized calming rooms may provide a place for students to use as needed to cool down, process their feelings, and reset.

Having clinical mental health care available for students on campus is also a huge asset to schools and the students within them. The in-school presence mitigates transportation and scheduling barriers that often impact accessibility to community-based care. This ensures youth can meet with providers without adults taking time off from work, and without kids missing class to attend appointments across town. This also enables school counselors to provide direct and immediate referrals for students in need of mental health support. These services can be provided by school-funded providers, or community-based mental healthcare providers who have a private place within the school to meet with students.

The combination of clinical and non-clinical programming ensures that students’ mental health needs are fully met.

“When our service members are taking care of the nation, the last thing we want on their minds is whether their kids are taken care of in our schools. And that’s not just academics. That’s character development, citizenship, and most importantly, secure mental health services.” - Dr. Jerrod Wheeler

Closing Remarks

There was consensus among convening participants about the importance of clinical and non-clinical mental health programming within schools for students. Panelists unanimously agreed that resources, specifically time, funding, and priority, present the only implementation barrier. School leaders should remember that the programming developed for military-connected students will reap benefits for the entire student body. We encourage all districts to evaluate how they can better support the mental health of their student body, and consider implementing the type of programming discussed in this report. What gets measured, gets done. School leaders need to set specific, measurable goals to hold the district accountable for supporting the mental health of all students, especially military-connected children.



¹ Sherry Everett Jones and others, “Mental Health, Suicidality, and Connectedness Among High School Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic—Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey, United States, January-June 2021,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vol.71, sup. 3 (April 1, 2022), pp. 15-21, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/su/su7103a3.htm?s_cid=su7103a3_w

² Ibid.

³ Marigee Bacolod, Jennifer Heissel, and Yu-Chu Shen, “Spatial Analysis of Access to Psychiatrists for U.S. Military Personnel and Their Families,” *JAMA Network Open* (January 3, 2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.49314>.

Appendix

Resource List

MCEC Well-Being Toolkit at:
www.militarychild.org/wellbeingtoolkit

Professional Development options for
 education professionals:
www.militarychild.org/professional-development

For more information on MCEC Student 2 Student:
www.militarychild.org/programs/student-2-student

Agenda

8:00	Breakfast Available	11:15-12:15	Moderator: Rashi Romanoff School-Based Wellness and Resiliency Programs, Panelists: Kyra Bush, Misty Cantrell, Jasmyn Henderson
9:00-9:10	Welcome from the Bob Woodruff Foundation and the Military Child Education Coalition (Dr. Meg Harrell, Dr. Becky Porter)	12:15-1:15	Lunch
9:10-9:25	Anne Marie Dougherty, CEO, Bob Woodruff Foundation	1:15-1:30	Dr. Paul Cordts, Chief Medical Officer, Defense Health Agency, Dept of Defense
9:25-9:35	Lindsey O’Neill, Chief Communications & Corporate Responsibility Officer, USAA	1:30-2:30	Moderator: Dr. Shannon Razsadin School-Based Clinical Mental Health Programs, Panelists: Dr. Nichole Ayres, Dr. Chuck Weber, Dr. Edward Wilks
9:35-10:00	Mrs. Patricia Barron, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, Dept of Defense	2:30-3:15	Moderator: Dr. Meg Harrell Superintendents’ Perspectives Panelists: Dr. Sean Maika, Dr. Burnie Roper, Dr. Jerrod Wheeler
10:00-10:15	Break	3:15-3:30	Final Discussion and Wrap-Up
10:15-11:15	Moderator: Dr. Becky Porter Expert Panel on Military Child Mental Health, Panelists: Dr. Steve Cozza, Lt Col Crystal Palmatier		

Participants



Dr. Nichole Ayres

Clinic Director, The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Valley Cities

Dr. Nichole Ayres is the Clinic Director at The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Valley Cities, located in Lakewood where she oversees all clinical operations while following evidence-based practice guidelines. She brings more than ten years of experience to the clinic, with a special focus on the treatment of trauma/complex trauma, trauma-informed care, military social work, maternal mental health, and clinical risk management.

Dr. Ayres has additional experience in providing training supporting the implementation of trauma-informed care practices, measurement-based care, suicide prevention, understanding the whole-person impact of trauma and motivational interviewing for health care professionals. She earned a Doctor of Social Work degree from the University of Tennessee and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Southern California.

As a military spouse of over 10 years, Nichole is also an active member of the JBLM community supporting military families through the challenges of deployment and redeployment.



Patricia Barron

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy

Mrs. Patricia “Patty” Barron was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy in January 2021. Mrs. Barron is currently responsible for a broad portfolio that includes policy, advocacy, and oversight of all community support to service members and their families, including quality-of-life issues; key legislative and policy issues affecting military families; family, child, and youth programs; the Military OneSource program and non-medical counseling resources; military spouse career advancement; morale, welfare, and recreation; defense resale policy for commissaries and exchanges; and family advocacy programs. Her oversight also includes casualty and mortuary affairs, and military funeral honors.

Prior to joining Military Community and Family Policy, she served as the Director of the Family Readiness Directorate at the Association of the United States Army and supported all AUSA family programs and events by providing management and oversight to all directorate activities. Previously, she served as the Director of Outreach, Military Family Projects, at Zero to Three and also worked as the Director of Youth Initiatives at the National Military Family Association where she oversaw NMFA’s Operation Purple Camp program.

As an Army spouse for 30 years, she has been involved in myriad efforts to support military families. She served on the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council, Zero to Three’s “Coming Together Around Military Families” Advisory Committee, the Sesame Workshop “Talk, Listen, Connect; Phase Two” Advisory Panel, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network Advisory Board, the Child Care Aware of America Advisory Board, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America National Military Leadership Council.

Mrs. Barron earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of San Francisco, a Master of Science in Education from Long Island University, an Executive Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Georgetown University, and an Executive Education Certificate from The Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Mrs. Barron is married to retired Army Col. Michael Barron. They have three adult children: Michael, Megan, and Joseph; a son-in-law, Vance; and two granddaughters, Sofia and Violet.



Kyra Bush

Coordinator for Guidance Services, North East ISD

Kyra Bush is an experienced educator and counselor, currently serving as the Coordinator in the Guidance Services Department of North East ISD. With 13 years of experience in NEISD supporting students, Kyra has been dedicated to helping students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Kyra began her career with North East ISD as an Elementary School Counselor, where she worked with young learners and built strong relationships with students, teachers, and families. Her passion for counseling and education led her to take on leadership roles in the district, and she has been serving as the Coordinator in the Guidance Services Department since 2015.

In her current position, Kyra has several roles. She oversees the district-wide Student 2 Student Program, which focuses on supporting military-connected students in their transition to new schools. She also works closely with School Counselors to implement the Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling, ensuring that students receive comprehensive, data-driven counseling services that promote their academic and personal success. Kyra also serves as the District's Foster Care Liaison, advocating for the needs of students in foster care and coordinating support services for them. Additionally, she coordinates General Education Homebound services, working with teachers and students to ensure that students who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons receive appropriate educational support. Kyra's background in school counseling deeply informs her passion and purpose. She is committed to promoting positive mental health and well-being among students.



Misty Cantrell

Academic and Career Advisor, Pieper High School

Misty Cantrell is currently working at Pieper High School with Comal ISD in San Antonio, Texas, as an Academic & Career Advisor and Student 2 Student Sponsor. She has been a passionate educator for 17 years, serving as a parent volunteer, aide, teacher, counselor, and now a college and career advisor. Prior to her career in education, she served in the Army for six years. Misty has been a military wife for over 20 years, has 3 kids and a new grand baby, and is now a proud military mom to her son who is serving in the Air Force.



Dr. Paul R. Cordts

Deputy Assistant Director (DAD), Medical Affairs

Doctor Cordts is the Deputy Assistant Director, Medical Affairs (DAD-MA). He is responsible for Military Health System (MHS) clinical quality, patient safety, and risk management policies, procedures, and direction. Additional responsibilities include Graduate Medical Education, patient experience, and civilian physician recruiting, as well as advancing the tenets of High Reliability and external transparency. Prior to this role, Cordts served as the Deputy Assistant Director, Strategy, Plans, and Functional Integration (J-5), and MHS Functional Champion, Department of Defense's representative for the clinical, business, and operational communities. He was the "voice of the customer" in implementation of MHS GENESIS, the Department's \$4.3B Electronic Health Record.

Cordts retired from the U.S. Army Medical Corps in 2014 after 30 years of service, serving as a physician and leader at every level of Army Medicine. He served as Hospital Commander at Fort Stewart, Georgia and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Cordts was deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom as a vascular surgeon. He was previously stationed at the Office of The (Army) Surgeon General (OTSG), Falls Church, Virginia; William Beaumont Army Medical Center (DCCS), El Paso, Texas; and Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii, where he was Chief, Department of Surgery; Chief, Vascular Surgery Service; and General Surgery Program Director.

Cordts is Board-certified in General Surgery, Vascular Surgery and Surgical Critical Care. He is a graduate of The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and holds a medical degree from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS). He received a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. Cordts is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a Distinguished Fellow for the Society for Vascular Surgery, and Associate Professor of Surgery at USUHS. Dr. Cordts has authored or co-authored more than 20 articles in peer-reviewed journals, as well as 2 book chapters.



Stephen J. Cozza, MD

Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the Uniformed Services University

Stephen J. Cozza, MD is Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the Uniformed Services University where he serves as Associate Director, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS) and is responsible for the Child and Family Program. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He received his medical degree from the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. He completed his residency in General Psychiatry and fellowship in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. Dr. Cozza is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in the specialties of General Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. He has served in a variety of positions of responsibility in the Department of Psychiatry at Walter Reed Army Medical Center to include Chief, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service, Program Director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship Program and Chief, Department of Psychiatry.

He retired from the U.S. Army in 2006 after 25 years of military service. Dr. Cozza's professional interests have been in the areas of clinical and community response to trauma in both military and civilian communities, including the impact of deployment and combat injury, illness and death on military service members, their families, and their children. Dr. Cozza has highlighted the impact of deployment, injury, illness and death on the children and families of military service members. He has also examined the risk for prolonged grief disorder, a unique grief-related clinical condition, in families affected by sudden and violent deaths, including those bereaved due to combat, suicide, homicide, accident, and terrorism. He is published in the scientific literature and has presented on these topics at multiple national and international scientific meetings. Dr. Cozza serves as a scientific advisor to several national organizations that focus on the needs of military children and families.



Anne Marie Dougherty

Chief Executive Officer, Bob Woodruff Foundation

Anne Marie Dougherty, Chief Executive Officer of the Bob Woodruff Foundation, oversees and funds the nation's largest nongovernmental network of veteran service providers, which, according to Forbes, helps veterans not only navigate the 40,000+ organizations that provide services to them, but also helps veterans heal from the physical and psychological wounds of war.

With A-list celebrities and philanthropic institutions at our side – Bruce Springsteen, the NFL, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, MacKenzie Scott, Jon Stewart, Lee Ann Womack, Mickey Guyton and our country's highest-ranked military and national security leaders, we have invested more than \$100 million in best-in-class veterans programming across the country. Our product is peace of mind – for veterans, for veteran-serving organizations, and for philanthropists looking to invest efficiently and effectively in veteran services.

As a military spouse, Anne Marie's connection to the Bob Woodruff Foundation's mission is personal. She has lived experience as a Marine spouse during war time combat deployments and through multiple duty station moves. When she tells veterans, their families, and their caregivers that the Bob Woodruff Foundation has "Got Your 6," she means it. She regularly speaks to media outlets ranging from ESPN, to NPR, TIME, CBS, and Fox to raise awareness for veteran needs.

Anne Marie is active with her two young boys in their local community, including through their sports teams and schools. She serves on the Board of Directors of the UN Women for Peace Association, as an Advisory Board Member for Game Changers Institute, and as a NationSwell Council Member. Anne Marie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communications from Drexel University.



Dr. Margaret “Meg” Harrell

Chief Program Officer, Bob Woodruff Foundation

Dr. Margaret “Meg” Harrell is the Chief Program Officer at the Bob Woodruff Foundation. She formerly served the Obama Administration as the Executive Director of Force Resiliency, within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where she was responsible for sexual assault prevention and response; suicide prevention; diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity; personnel safety; and for Department of Defense collaboration with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Dr. Harrell spent 25 years at the RAND Corporation and her research portfolio includes approximately 70 publications pertaining to military and veteran issues, including Working Around the Military; Challenges to Military Spouse Employment and Education, which was the basis for the DoD Military Spouse Employment Program. Concurrent with her time at RAND, Dr. Harrell served as a presidential appointee to the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force, 2013-2014. From July 2011 to August 2012, Dr. Harrell served as Senior Fellow and founding Director of the Military, Veterans, and Society Program at the Center for a New American Security. She is a prior voting member of the Army Science Board, and has briefed international audiences, testified before Congress, spoken extensively at conferences, and guest lectured at the United States Military Academy. She holds a B.A. with Distinction from the University of Virginia, a M.S. in Systems Analysis and Management from the George Washington University, and a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Virginia, where her dissertation focused on the role expectations for Army spouses.



Jasmyn Henderson, LPC

Military Family Life Counselor, State of Texas

Jasmyn Henderson is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) within the State of Texas. She currently serves as a Military Family Life Counselor who is committed to assisting military members and their families. She has 10 years of experience as a Master's level Mental Health Therapist. Mrs. Henderson also has an in-depth clinical experience obtained while serving in acute care mental health programs as well as residential treatment and private counseling. She holds a master's degree in psychology received through Our Lady of the Lake University.

She prides herself on her commitment to serving her community. She enjoys leisure time with family, friends and crafting. Jasmyn Henderson contributes to society by helping to improve the lives of others with a caring heart and a sharing hand. It is her desire to serve others and to help guide them into purposeful living.



Dr. Sean Maika

Superintendent of Schools, North East Independent School District

Dr. Sean Maika is entering his 28th year in education, serving the students and community of the North East Independent School District for 14 of those years. Most of his career has been spent in schools – first as an elementary school teacher, an elementary school principal and then a middle school principal. After serving three years as the principal of Harris Middle School, the District leadership brought Dr. Maika to the central office to serve as Executive Director of Campus Administration. He mentored school principals in this role, which was a natural fit for his leadership style of listening to understand and challenging others to excel.

In July 2017, he was promoted to assistant superintendent of Instruction and Campus Administration. The District’s Board of Trustees approved Dr. Maika as superintendent on September 25, 2019. In his short time as superintendent, Dr. Maika has earned the reputation of being everywhere. He ends all of his messages with, “I’ll see you around the District” – and he means it. He has made hundreds of school visits, interacted with numerous parents and students, and visited with many professional and community organizations. He encourages the community to discover North East ISD and experience the amazing students, teachers, programs and opportunities that attract families to one of the largest school districts in Texas.



Lindsey O'Neill

Chief Communications & Corporate Responsibility Officer, USAA

Lindsey O'Neill proudly serves military and local communities in her role as Chief Communications and Corporate Responsibility Officer, leading corporate communications, corporate responsibility, The USAA Foundation, Inc., and The USAA Educational Foundation. Lindsey's team is responsible for creating compelling communication strategies that advocate for and support USAA's 13 million members and nearly 38,000 employees.

Lindsey brings nearly 20 years of experience in communications, marketing, media relations, reputation management, business intelligence, and strategy and planning to her role. She joined USAA in 2014 and held a series of senior roles in corporate, external, and internal communications before serving as chief of staff to the CEO. She led National Instruments global communications before joining USAA, which provides insurance, banking, and investment products to more than 13 million members. Lindsey graduated from Texas Tech University with a BBA in Marketing and Biology.



Dr. Crystal Palmatier (Lt Col)

Pediatrician, Lackland Air Force Base

Dr. Crystal Palmatier (Lt Col) is an active-duty Air Force (AF) general pediatrician who is stationed at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio TX. She actively practices general pediatrics in both the outpatient and inpatient clinical settings and is on the teaching staff for the San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium pediatric residency program. She is the pediatrics medical director at Wilford Hall and in July of 2022 was selected as the Pediatrics Consultant to the Air Force Surgeon General providing guidance for AF pediatrician assignments, readiness training, graduate medical education placement and clinical quality improvement. As AF consultant she is also a member of the Section on Uniformed Services chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics executive committee. In her past assignments she has been pediatrics medical director and flight commander at two prior Military Treatment Facilities (Eglin AFB, FL and Hurlburt Field AFB, FL) as well as pediatrics medical director at MacDill AFB, FL.

Dr. Palmatier holds a B.A in Chemistry and B.S. in Biology from Converse College, an M.D. degree from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, and she completed a Pediatric Residency at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.



Dr. Becky Porter

President and CEO, MCEC

Dr. Becky Porter joined MCEC® as the President and CEO in 2019 following her retirement from active-duty service with the U.S. Army. Becky is a 1983 Distinguished Military Graduate from the University of Washington and holds a Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in clinical psychology from Fielding Graduate University. She earned her Master of Arts in counseling psychology from Chapman University and a Master of Science in national security and strategic studies from the National War College. She also earned an executive certificate in nonprofit management from the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy in 2020.

She is a board-certified clinical health psychologist, a fellow of the American Psychological Association, and a member of the Order of Military Medical Merit. Her awards and recognition include: The Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Military Psychology, the Legion of Merit (3 awards), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and the Meritorious Service Medal (6 awards). Additionally, she also holds the Army Surgeon General's "A" Proficiency Designator as recognition of her significant contributions to the U.S. Army Medical Department. Becky's military career spanned more than 30 years, and she served in all three components of the U.S. Army with the Washington National Guard, the U.S. Army Reserves, and on active duty. She retired at the rank of colonel. She is a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and former special assistant to the U.S. Army's 34th Chief of Staff, Gen. Eric Shinseki.

Her assignments included: Germany; Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii; the Pentagon; the United States Military Academy; Walter Reed Army Medical Center; and the Joint Task Force National Capital Region Medical, Bethesda, Md. She commanded the Dunham U.S. Army Health Clinic, Carlisle, Pa.; the DiLorenzo TRICARE Health Clinic at the Pentagon; and Public Health Command Europe. Becky and her husband John, also a retired U.S. Army officer, live near Fort Hood, Texas.



Shannon Razzadin

MFAN President and Director

Shannon Razzadin is a nonprofit executive, commentator, and communications strategist.

As MFAN’s president & executive director, she is an advocate and national spokesperson for service members, veterans, and their families. Shannon is a subject matter expert on the military-civilian divide, family well-being and preparedness, financial readiness, food insecurity, housing, and more. Mrs. Razzadin is a regular contributor to AP, CBS Evening News, CNN, Fox, NPR and other global-reaching media entities. She has delivered thought-leadership remarks to higher education, Fortune 500, research and policy, and military audiences. Mrs. Razzadin has served as one of three civilian advisors to the Secretary of Defense on the Military Family Readiness Council, and currently holds several leadership positions with military- and veteran-service organization coalitions.

In September 2022, Shannon spoke on a panel at the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health — ensuring military and veteran families were included in the Biden-Harris Administration’s national strategy to end hunger by 2030. Shannon is known as a bridge-builder. Her collaborative approach to solving the critical, evolving issues facing military families has been embraced by elected officials, military leadership, and private sector partners alike. Prior to MFAN, Shannon served as Director for Reingold, an award-winning strategic communications and marketing firm, as well as Program Coordinator for The George Washington University. An active-duty Navy spouse, Shannon resides in Newport, Rhode Island with her husband and two children.



Rashi Romanoff

Executive Vice President, Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Rashi Venkataraman Romanoff serves as the Executive Vice President for the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, where she oversees all programs and is steering new strategic partnerships to enhance the Foundation’s reach and resources. Prior to joining the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Rashi worked at America’s Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) as their Executive Director for Prevention and Population Health. In this role, she led programs, activities, and industry-wide initiatives related to prevention, wellness, and public health and launched AHIP’s strategy to address the social determinants of health.

Originally from Pittsburgh, PA, Rashi is an experienced health care professional with a demonstrated history of working in the public and private sectors. From 2010 to 2017, Rashi worked at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), starting as a Presidential Management Fellow and eventually serving as the Director of Operations for the VA Center for Strategic Partnerships. In this role, she was responsible for directing collaborative projects valued at more than \$150 million to better serve our nation’s Veterans and their families. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, Rashi holds a Bachelor’s degree in Biology and Public Policy and a Master’s Degree in Health Care Policy & Management. She is also the previous recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship (2008) and Presidential Management Fellowship (2010).



Dr. Burnie L. Roper

Superintendent, Lackland Independent School District

Dr. Burnie Roper was selected as the seventh superintendent of the Lackland Independent School District in April 2009. He officially took over the school District on July 1, 2009, after serving five years as the high school principal. Dr. Roper began his career in education as a mathematics teacher in the San Antonio Independent School District at S.J. Davis Middle School in 1991 and moved into school administration in 1996 working as an assistant principal for Southside ISD, Judson ISD, and Fort Sam Houston ISD before coming to Lackland ISD as the Secondary Principal in 2004.

Along with his public-school career, Dr. Roper was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army in 1989. He retired from the US Army Reserves after 35 years of service on January 1, 2020, at the rank of Colonel. Dr. Roper earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio and holds a Master’s degree from Texas A&M Kingsville and an Ed.D. from Nova Southeastern University. He is married to Dr. LaWanda L. Roper and they have one son, Alvyne, who is a graduate of Texas State University.



Dr. Charles Weber

Founder and Chief Medical Director of the Family Care Center

Dr. Charles Weber is currently the founder and chief medical director of the Family Care Center, currently at 18 locations as the leader in comprehensive outpatient mental health / Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) in Colorado, Tennessee, and Texas.

He is prior enlisted infantryman in the US Army and was the Chief of the Department of Behavioral Health at Ft. Carson, CO, retiring in 2016 after 27 years in uniform. He has deployed twice overseas and notably was the 1st Cavalry Division psychiatrist in Iraq. He graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point and attended Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2002. His transitional internship was at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and psychiatry residency at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii. He is a board-certified Psychiatrist in Addiction Medicine. He is the number one TMS provider in Colorado, having done over 800 mappings and re-mappings and personally overseen over 30,000 treatments. Dr. Charles is extremely passionate about mental health system of care, TMS, and both the military and civilian community.



Dr. Jerrod H. Wheeler

Superintendent, Knob Noster Public Schools

Dr. Jerrod H. Wheeler is Superintendent of Knob Noster Public Schools, the resident public school district of Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. Wheeler is an active leader in various support organizations and continues to advocate for unified efforts focused on strengthening military-child education to enhance quality of life and mission readiness.

Board Member – Association of Defense Communities

Vice Chairman – Military Child Education Coalition

Board Member – Missouri Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission Vice President – Whiteman Area Leadership Council

Board Member – Whiteman Base Community Council

Jerrod received a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Louisiana, Monroe, a Master’s in Educational Administration from the University of Louisiana, Monroe, and a Bachelor’s in Education from Northeast Louisiana University, where he was also a two-time National Champion in Collegiate Waterskiing. Dr. Wheeler completed post studies through the Harvard Graduate School of Education Leadership Institute for Superintendents. Wheeler also participated in the National Security Forum Institute through Air University in 2021. Wheeler and his wife, Amie, have been married for 22 years and have two children, Jorgie (15) and Jaxon (13). Wheeler is a third-generation Missouri Superintendent.



Dr. Edward Wilks

Pediatric Psychologist, School Behavioral Health Service at Robert G. Cole High School & Middle School at Fort Sam Houston

Dr. Edward Wilks is currently in his 6th year of working as a pediatric psychologist at the School Behavioral Health Service at Robert G. Cole High School & Middle School at Fort Sam Houston, Child and Family Behavioral Health Service, Brooke Army Medical Center. His interest in working with military-affiliated communities led him to complete a psychology internship at Brooke Army Medical Center as well as a Pediatric Psychology Fellowship at Brooke Army Medical Center. Dr. Wilks was raised in a military family. Dr. Wilks was educated at Our Lady of the Lake University, University of Connecticut, and University of Texas at Austin.