



# BOB WOODRUFF FOUNDATION

The Got Your 6 Network:  
**Quantifying and  
Addressing  
Veterans' Needs**

White Paper





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## Introduction

The United States is currently home to 19 million veterans who served in the U.S. armed forces before transitioning to civilian life. Despite the conclusion of large-scale operations in Afghanistan, the U.S. military still has a robust presence around the world: U.S. service members were deployed to 159 countries in 2020.<sup>1</sup> When civilians think of veterans, they often picture service members who participated in large-scale deployments to defend the United States. But even in the absence of such deployments, U.S. military personnel continue to serve at approximately 750 bases in at least 80 countries.<sup>2</sup> Service members based overseas may not be considered “deployed,” but they are serving their country far away from their loved ones.

The conclusion of large-scale military conflict also does not eliminate the flow of disabled veterans transitioning into civilian communities. A combination of training accidents (such as vehicle crashes)<sup>3</sup> and accumulated injuries (such as musculoskeletal problems from military activities) will continue to result in veterans who sacrificed their physical well-being to their military service.

The Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) finds, funds, shapes, and accelerates programs to serve America’s veterans. Its mission is to ensure that all current and former service members, their families, and caregivers have the opportunity to thrive. Many veterans excel in civilian life, as parents, neighbors, workers, entrepreneurs, and leaders who contribute strongly to their communities. But like all Americans, some veterans also struggle from time to time. BWF’s Got Your Six (GY6) Network of grant recipients and local community partners—totaling more than 3,000 organizations across 50 states—addresses the needs of veterans who require additional support. The network consists of community-based partnerships made up of businesses, government agencies, service providers, donors, and others committed to helping veterans. BWF continually learns from the members of its GY6 Network, and it is committed to sharing their insights.



In April 2020, BWF published a paper about veterans and the emerging COVID-19 pandemic that included the following projections:

- The pandemic would significantly increase unemployment among veterans.
- Veterans lacked the financial safety net to endure unemployment.
- The trauma, loneliness, and social isolation resulting from social distancing, combined with unplanned job or wage losses, could culminate in a “perfect storm,” threatening the mental health of many veterans.<sup>4</sup>

BWF has heard directly from members of the Got Your Six Network about the extent to which the pandemic has exacerbated needs and challenges for veterans, much as it has for the rest of the country. This paper quantifies veterans’ needs and the capacities of America’s local communities to address those needs. The information comes from community partners in the GY6 Network, more than 90 percent of which responded to BWF’s 2021 survey, the Local Partner Self-Assessment Tool, or LPSAT (see the box on [page 3](#)).



# Key Findings

Communities across the United States reported high levels of need among their veterans and other military-affiliated populations in 2021, exceeding the capabilities and capacities of many communities. The LPSAT includes questions about an array of needs and asks BWF’s community partners whether “almost all,” “many,” “some,” or “no” veterans they serve face those needs. The survey also asks whether those organizations “do not address,” “partially address,” or “completely address” a given need.

### Figure 1: Overview of Clients’ Unmet Needs

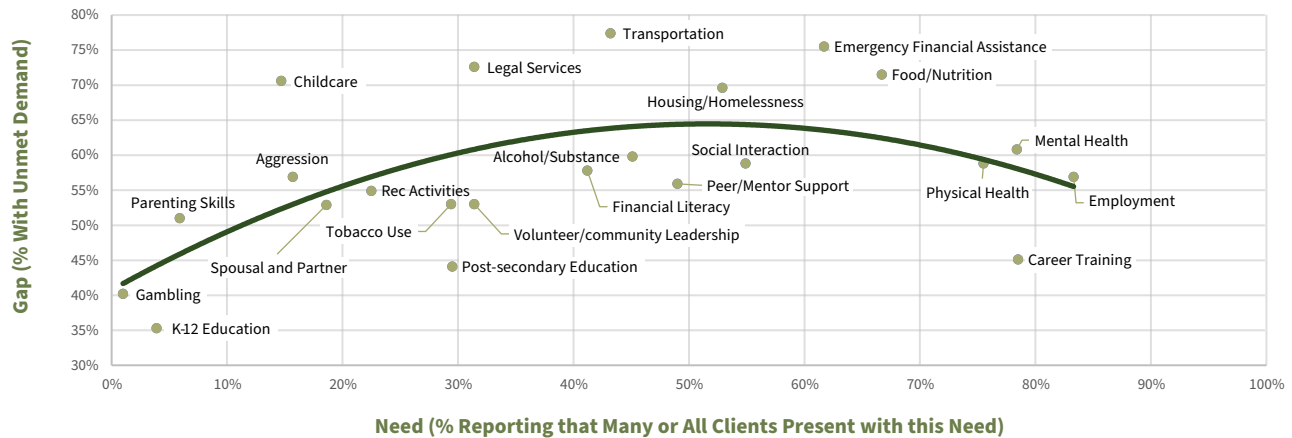


Figure 1 compares the percentage of community partners that indicated that many or almost all of their veteran clients present with a particular issue and the extent to which their community-based partnership could address that issue. Issues on the right side of the chart are ones that a high proportion of community partners reported encountering in many or almost all of their veteran clients. Issues toward the top of the chart are ones that the most communities reported being unable to completely address. Thus, the most concerning issues are those located in the upper right of the figure and above the trend line.

Issues for which there were large gaps between veterans’ needs and community partners’ capacity in 2021 include employment assistance, food and nutrition, and housing and homelessness. For example, 83 percent of the community partners that responded to the LPSAT indicated that either many or almost all of the veterans who seek their support request help with employment. At the same time, in communities where veterans present with employment needs (that is, where veteran-serving organizations checked “some,” “many,” or “almost all” for the prevalence of that need), 57 percent of communities indicated that they could not completely satisfy the need for employment assistance.

Similarly, 67 percent of BWF’s community partners reported that many or almost all of their veteran clients request food or nutrition assistance, but 72 percent of communities seeing any food-related needs among veterans could not satisfy them fully. Likewise, 53 percent of surveyed communities reported significant needs for assistance with housing or homelessness, but 70 percent of communities where veterans face housing needs were unable to satisfy them completely.

Even issues located toward the bottom of Figure 1 represent some degree of unmet need. For example, although only a small percentage of community partners reported that many or almost all veterans present with a need for gambling assistance, 40 percent of communities where veterans have that need said they could not address it completely.

The charts in the rest of this report provide additional detail about the extent to which veterans are presenting with specific needs and the capacity of communities to address those needs. The issues are grouped thematically: They consist of basic needs for subsistence, issues related to physical and mental health and substance abuse, assistance with civilian employment and education, needs for social connection, and family-related issues.



## BWF's Local Partner Survey (LPSAT)

The Local Partner Self-Assessment Tool is a biennial survey created by the Bob Woodruff Foundation. The survey aims to identify the strengths and areas of improvement of BWF's nationwide network of community-based partnerships that support veterans and other military-affiliated populations. Data from the LPSAT illustrate the ways in which American communities across the spectrum of locations, economies, cultures, and infrastructure are trying to meet the needs of those populations.

The first LPSAT was conducted in the fall of 2019 and gathered data from 81 percent of BWF's community partners.<sup>5</sup>

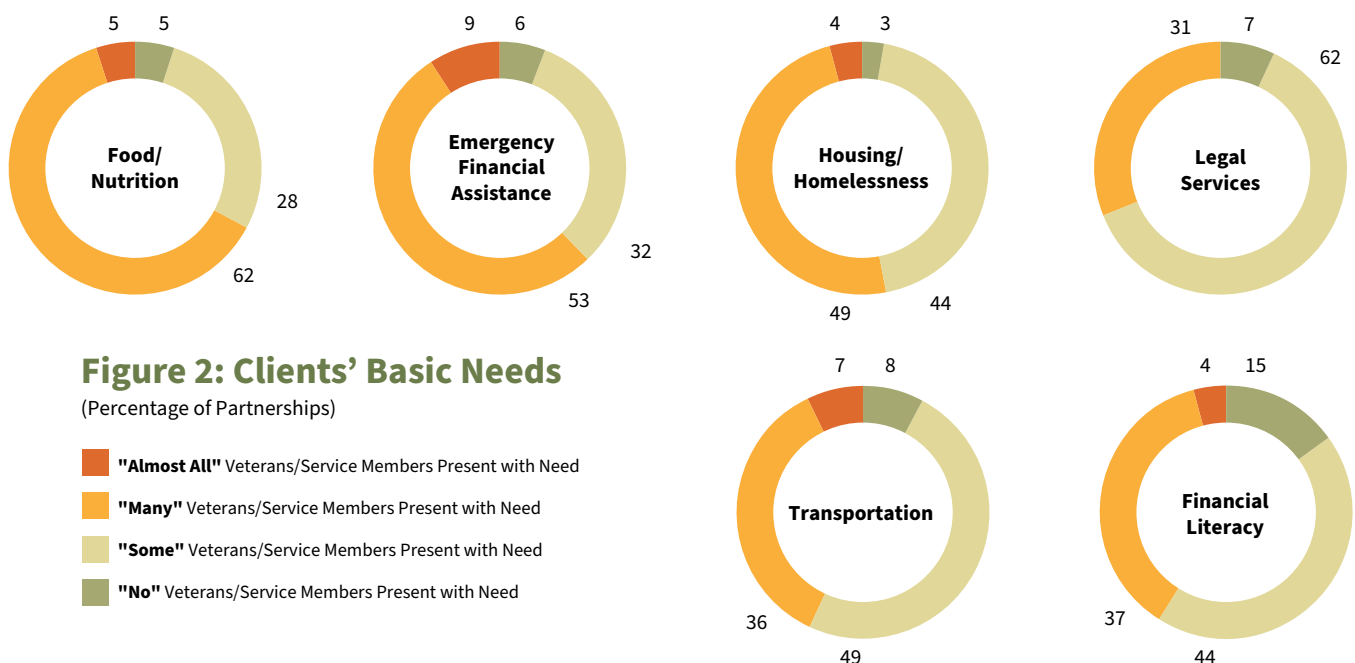
Two years later, in June and July 2021, the second LPSAT was completed by 91 percent of BWF's community partners. As a result, BWF now has data from before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing further exploration of the unique and ongoing issues affecting community-based partnerships. The Bob Woodruff Foundation's continuing goal is to analyze community partners' experiences and contribute to national and local discussions about how best to serve U.S. veterans. By amplifying the needs of veterans and the organizations that serve them, BWF will inform the national effort to support Americans who are collaborating to have an impact on the lives of veterans.

## Basic Needs

Some of the most compelling needs that the veteran community has faced during the pandemic involve basic requirements such as food, financial assistance, shelter, and transportation.

Before the pandemic, about 10 percent of U.S. households were estimated to experience **food insecurity**, with higher rates in the military and veteran communities.<sup>6</sup> The pandemic exacerbated that problem: Multiple sources estimate that 20 percent of military and veteran families have struggled with food insecurity during the pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

Data from the LPSAT illustrate the worsening problem of food insecurity among veterans. In 2019, 37 percent of BWF's community partners indicated that many or almost all of the veterans seeking help from them needed food or nutrition assistance. In 2021, that figure soared to 67 percent (see Figure 2). Among respondents, for example, the Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative reported that food assistance was one of the top five needs of veterans and military families in Los Angeles during the summer of 2021, and the Veterans Outreach Center of Rochester, New York, indicated that the pandemic increased the number of veterans suffering from food insecurity in that area.

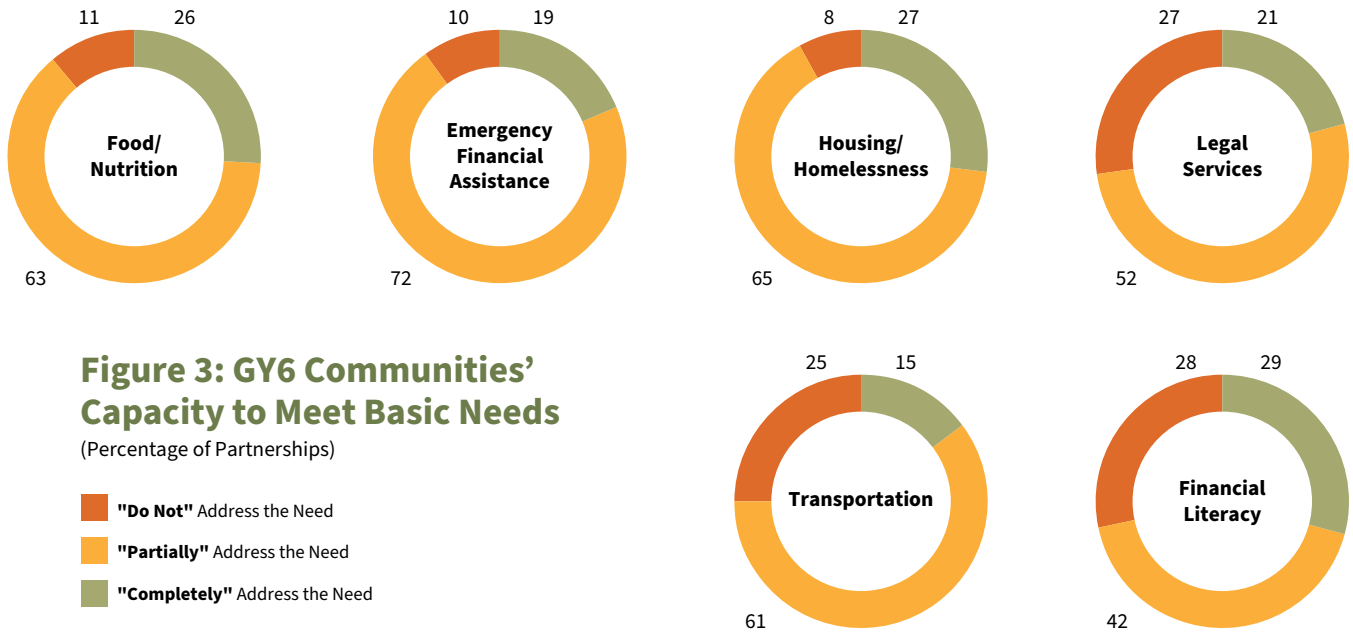


**Figure 2: Clients' Basic Needs**  
(Percentage of Partnerships)

- "Almost All" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need
- "Many" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need
- "Some" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need
- "No" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need



Eighty-nine percent of BWF’s local partners said their community has some capability to address veterans’ food and nutritional needs, but only 26 percent said they could do so completely (see Figure 3), in part because of the broad range of veterans’ needs. For example, after receiving funding from BWF, the Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative reported that “we were excited to be able to support our community to provide funding for food insecurity, but we could not overlook the other barriers to overall health and wellness.”



**Figure 3: GY6 Communities’ Capacity to Meet Basic Needs**  
(Percentage of Partnerships)

- "Do Not" Address the Need
- "Partially" Address the Need
- "Completely" Address the Need

The need for **emergency financial assistance** (EFA) also increased significantly during the pandemic. In 2021, 62 percent of BWF’s community partners said that many or almost all of their veteran clients seek EFA, up from 39 percent two years earlier. More of those communities are now offering EFA, but only 19 percent indicated that they could fully address the need for such assistance. Many of the veterans seeking EFA need the funds for rent or utility payments.

On a related note, 53 percent of responding communities indicated that many or almost all of the veterans they serve experience needs related to **housing or homelessness**. Seventy-three percent of community partners reported being unable to address those needs fully.<sup>8</sup>

Community partners have stated that the housing crisis among veterans stems partly from a lack of available affordable housing to meet continuing demand. For instance, Paul Keeton, Director of Veteran Services at West Texas Counseling and Guidance, indicated, “The lack of a shelter is the largest challenge. That is a funding issue. If a client is at risk of homelessness, there are resources to leverage; if they are already homeless, it becomes much more difficult.” Similarly, Margaret Middleton, the CEO of Columbus House, a program that serves veterans who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless, explained that an apparent record number of veterans with housing vouchers cannot find housing near New Haven, Connecticut. In that area, Margaret reported, almost 200 unhoused individuals (not just veterans) have been matched with a housing subsidy but are unable to find a home.



For some service providers that participate in the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) homelessness programs, pandemic-related safety measures have created or exacerbated a need for supplementary funding to support their programs. For example, U.S. VETS, an organization that administers VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, indicated that enforcing social distancing in its shelter to ensure clients' safety had led to lower occupancy and less federal reimbursement for staff time. The ripple effects have worsened the challenges of addressing homelessness among veterans. As one representative of a major metropolitan area emphasized, "affordable housing is frighteningly unavailable."

**Legal needs** are linked closely to homelessness and housing needs: Surveys by VA have found that 7 of the top 10 unmet needs of veterans experiencing homelessness involve a need for legal assistance.<sup>9</sup> Other veterans have legal needs as well. According to the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), the nation's largest funder of community-based legal aid, 71 percent of low-income households with veterans or service members reported in 2017 that they had at least one civil legal issue in the prior year, and 21 percent had six or more legal issues.<sup>10</sup> One legal issue that some veterans face is the need to upgrade a military discharge to qualify for veterans' benefits. BWF has recently taken steps to help veterans and their legal advocates with that issue (see the box on the right).

Despite the prevalence of legal needs among veterans, many veteran-serving organizations are ill-equipped to identify those needs or do not actively collaborate with legal organizations.<sup>11</sup> For example, in the 2021 LPSAT, only 31 percent of BWF's community partners indicated that many or almost all of their veteran clients present with legal needs. And 27 percent of the community-based partnerships in BWF's GY6 Network did not include a legal organization among their partners. Some local partners have reported that they encounter concerns from legal organizations about attorney-client privilege and the sensitive nature of legal services, but many community-based partnerships have been able to collaborate to resolve those concerns.

## Helping Veterans Upgrade Military Discharges

In response to the poor outcomes that some veterans receive at the military's discharge review boards, the Bob Woodruff Foundation has funded the creation of a legal practice manual for upgrading military discharges.<sup>12</sup> The manual is intended to help attorneys navigate procedural processes and increase the number of successful cases for veterans who meet the criteria to have their discharges upgraded, so they can gain access to benefits they earned through their military service. The resource guide was written by staff members at the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center and Harvard Law School's Veterans Legal Clinic and was published in August 2021 by the American Bar Association.

In the hands of a capable and competent advocate, the new manual can help a veteran living with an unjust other-than-honorable discharge receive tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars in back pay for disability and other compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. It can also help such veterans receive full access to VA medical care and housing benefits.

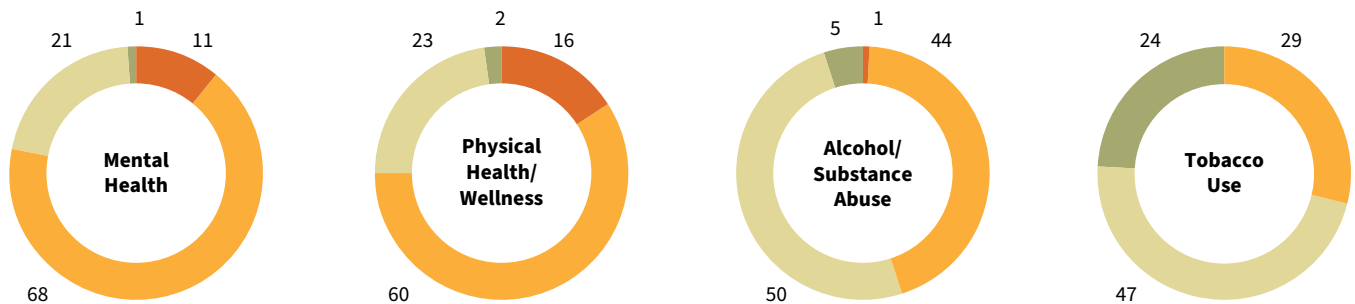
**Transportation** is another significant unmet need for veterans. Although 43 percent of BWF's community partners reported that many or almost all of the veterans they serve need help with transportation, only 15 percent of community partners said they could address that need completely, and 25 percent did not address it at all. That situation has worsened since 2019, when 21 percent of community partners said they fully addressed veterans' need for transportation, and 18 percent lacked the capability to address that need at all.

BWF's community partners report that their veteran clients especially need transportation for medical appointments and grocery shopping. When community-based partnerships try to build transportation fleets to address that need, they encounter challenges such as finding vehicles suitable for people with disabilities, keeping drivers, and covering insurance costs. Laura Whitfield, Senior Director at Mission United Miami, explained that "since the pandemic, with loss of income and increases in the cost of living here, veterans are struggling to keep the vehicles they have or to purchase cars. Transportation needs will likely be an increasing emphasis for us, especially when determining the essential wraparound services needed for stability."



# Health-Related Needs

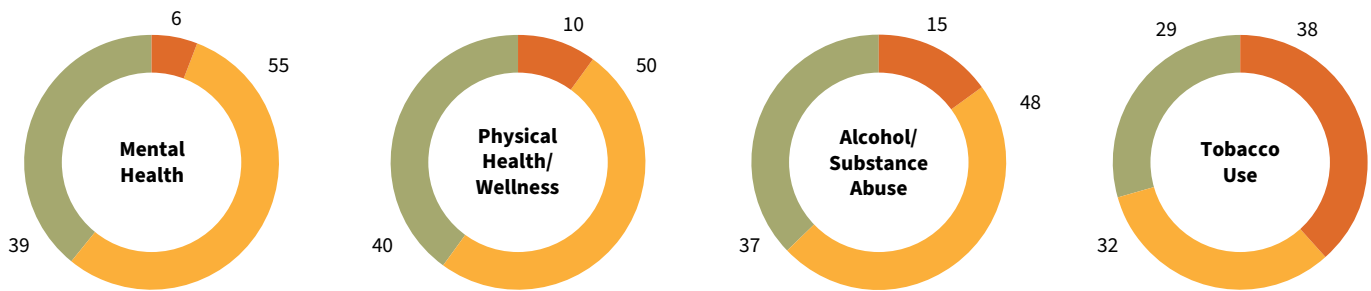
Especially concerning is the continuing high rate of the prevalence of veterans who need **mental health** services. In 2021, 79 percent of community partners indicated that many or almost all veterans seeking their assistance have mental health needs (see Figure 4). The paper BWF published in April 2020 about veterans and COVID-19 predicted that preexisting traumas, compounded by the pandemic and by the loneliness of social distancing and isolation, could increase mental health challenges for veterans.<sup>13</sup> The latest LPSAT data bear out that prediction. Meanwhile, only 39 percent of the community-based partnerships that responded to the survey said they can fully address mental health needs (see Figure 5).



### Figure 4: Clients' Health-Related Needs

(Percentage of Partnerships)

- "Almost All" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need
- "Many" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need
- "Some" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need
- "No" Veterans/Service Members Present with Need



### Figure 5: GY6 Communities' Capacity to Meet Health-Related Needs

(Percentage of Partnerships)

- "Do Not" Address the Need
- "Partially" Address the Need
- "Completely" Address the Need



Responses from some of BWF's community partners reflect the difficulties they face in helping veterans find mental health services. For instance, the Veterans Community Action Network of South-Central Wisconsin stated, "while one of our greatest needs is improving access to culturally competent mental health care, . . . our challenge is that we are a newly formed organization with limited time and financial resources." The Santa Barbara County Veterans Collaborative in California said, "mental health challenges and issues affecting women veterans are two areas of need that we currently do not have the ability to address. We are working to recruit people to our collaborative to help address those needs." The Heart of Florida United Way in Orlando reported that "mental health resources are available but insufficient."

Problems with **physical health** are also common among veterans. Seventy-six percent of respondents indicated that many or almost all of the veterans they see have physical health needs, similar to the percentage in 2019. Forty percent of local partners said their community-based collaborative has the capacity to address physical health issues completely. In other cases, the Veterans Health Administration may be addressing veterans' physical health needs, separate from a community-based partnership, depending on the veterans' eligibility status for VA health benefits.

Forty-five percent of community partners said in 2021 that many or almost all of the veterans they see have needs related to **alcohol or substance abuse**. That figure was down from 58 percent of respondents in 2019. Thirty-seven percent of the community partnerships reported being able to completely satisfy veterans' alcohol or substance abuse needs, but 15 percent said they did not contain any member organizations that could address those needs.

A smaller portion of community-based partnerships (29 percent) indicated that many or almost all of their veteran clients have issues related to **tobacco use**. It is unclear whether that low share reflects a lack of need or whether organizations are not screening for tobacco-related problems, given that 38 percent of them reported having no capacity to address that need. Likewise, very few community partners (1 percent) said that many or almost all of their veteran clients need programs to address gambling, but 60 percent of collaboratives did not include members capable of addressing that need. In the case of both tobacco and gambling problems, the lower numbers for need could suggest a lack of awareness: Veterans do not expect to receive such assistance from community-based partnerships that serve them, and they are not screened for those needs.

## Spotlight on a BWF Community Partner: West Texas Counseling and Guidance

West Texas Counseling and Guidance Veteran Services (WTCGVS) is a community collaborative based in San Angelo, Texas, led by West Texas Counseling and Guidance (WTCG). The collaborative provides a wide range of services to its local veteran and military communities, though it does not address all of their needs.

Mental health is a key component of WTCGVS's mission. Despite that focus, it cannot completely address veterans' need for mental health services. Paul Keeton, Director of Veterans Services at WTCG, underscored the size of that need: "WTCG has 41 therapists now on staff and is the primary mental health provider in the community. But we still have a waitlist with about 15 veterans on it. We are out of space to hire more therapists, and we are just about out of providers to hire due to our rural nature."

Housing and homelessness issues are another area where WTCGVS's member organizations cannot satisfy the entire demand. The collaborative can assist veterans at risk of homelessness by using existing resources. If veterans are already homeless, however, the lack of shelter space is a larger community issue that is difficult to overcome.

Social interaction is another need that the collaborative's member organizations address but cannot fully satisfy. Paul said the local community lacks strong social groups designed with veterans in mind. WTCG is continuously exploring partnerships with new member organizations that may be able to help. For example, it recently partnered with an art museum to provide opportunities for social interaction aimed specifically at veterans. Given the wide range of individual veterans' needs, collaboratives like WTCGVS strive to include the necessary organizations to provide the full range of services to address those needs.

Although local veterans have a large need for peer support and legal services, WTCGVS does not currently have member organizations that can address those needs. Paul spoke of challenges in trying to partner with the only formal peer-support program in the area. "We still leverage each other but are not really partnered or working in sync," he said. Similarly, he indicated that the only local nonprofit organization providing legal support is reluctant to partner with many agencies because of the sensitive nature of its services. "We leverage each other but are not formally partners," he reported.

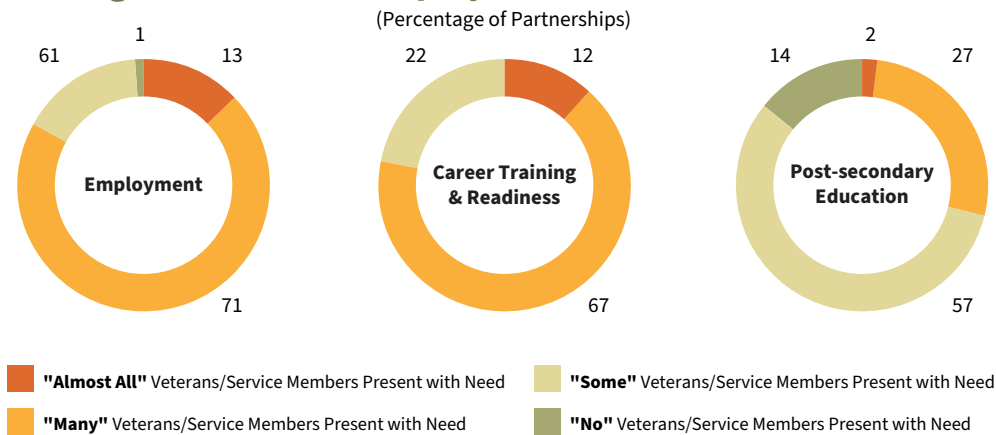
The intertwined challenges of needs and membership dynamics illustrate the complexity that community-based partnerships face in ensuring that veterans needs' are met. Those challenges also serve as the basis for BWF's involvement to provide support to its community partners.



# Civilian Employment & Education

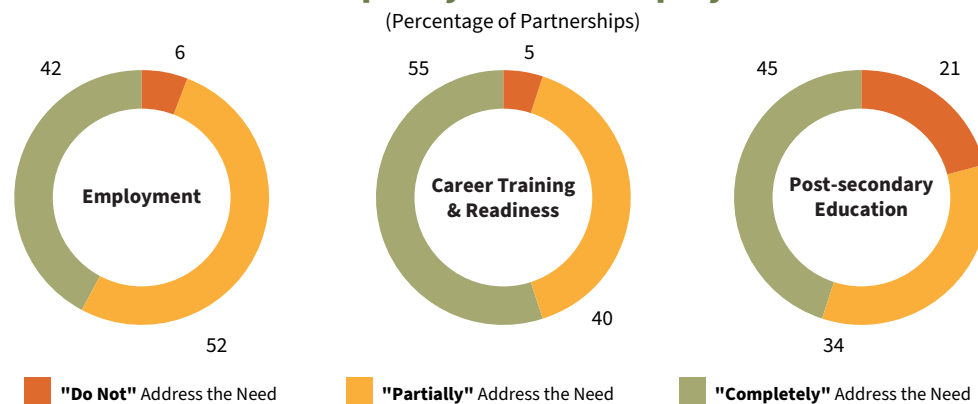
An important challenge for veterans is transitioning from military service into civilian careers or higher education. In 2021, roughly 80 percent of BWF’s community partners said that many or almost all of the veterans they see need help with **employment** or with **career training and readiness** (see Figure 6). That share increased slightly from 2019.

### Figure 6: Clients’ Employment and Education Needs



Some community partners have shifted more of their focus and resources to civilian career issues in recent years. As a result, despite the increase in demand, 42 percent of respondents said their community-based partnership could completely address clients’ need for employment assistance, and 55 percent said they could completely address the need for assistance with career training and readiness (see Figure 7). Even so, the majority of community-based partnerships indicated that they could not fully address veterans’ need for employment assistance, and almost half could not completely satisfy veterans’ need for help with career training and readiness. Moreover, roughly 5 percent of the community partnerships did not include members that could provide either employment or career-training services.

### Figure 7: GY6 Communities’ Capacity to Meet Employment and Education Needs



After leaving military service, many veterans attend colleges or universities full time instead of immediately seeking civilian employment. Yet only 29 percent of community partners indicated that many or almost all of their veteran clients seek help with **higher education**, and 21 percent said their collaborative did not include an organization that could address needs related to higher education. As with tobacco and gambling problems, those low numbers probably reflect a lack of awareness: Veterans do not tend to seek higher-education support from community-based partnerships, and many partnerships do not inquire about that need because they are not able to address it.



# Social Needs

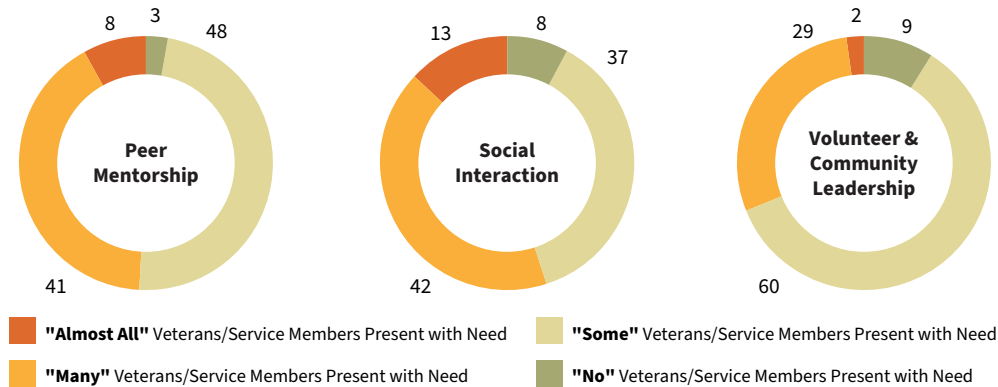
Many veterans turn to their local veteran-serving collaborative for social interaction, though less so than they did before the pandemic. In 2021, 49 percent of community partners indicated that many or almost all of their veteran clients are seeking **peer mentorship** (see Figure 8), down from 63 percent in 2019. Fifty-five percent said that high numbers of veterans are seeking **social interaction**, compared with 59 percent in 2019. The share of community-based partnerships that said they could completely address those needs remained fairly stable, at 42 percent for peer mentorship and 37 percent for social interaction (see Figure 9).

In all, almost 90 percent of collaboratives reported that they had members and programs that could address those needs either partially or fully.

Veterans also seek opportunities to lead and give back to their communities. Thirty-one percent of community partners reported that many or almost all of the veterans they serve are interested in opportunities for **volunteering or community leadership**. That share has fallen significantly during the pandemic, down from 49 percent in 2019. Forty-one percent of collaboratives said they were able to address that need completely, and a similar share said they could address it partially.

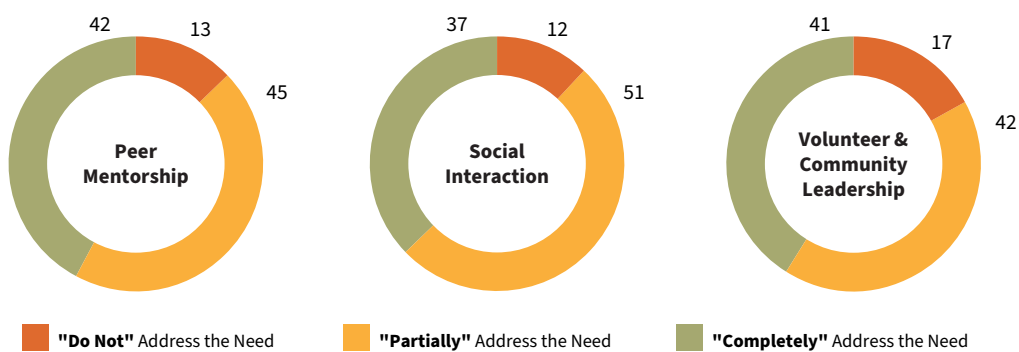
### Figure 8: Clients' Social Needs

(Percentage of Partnerships)



### Figure 9: GY6 Communities' Capacity to Meet Social Needs

(Percentage of Partnerships)



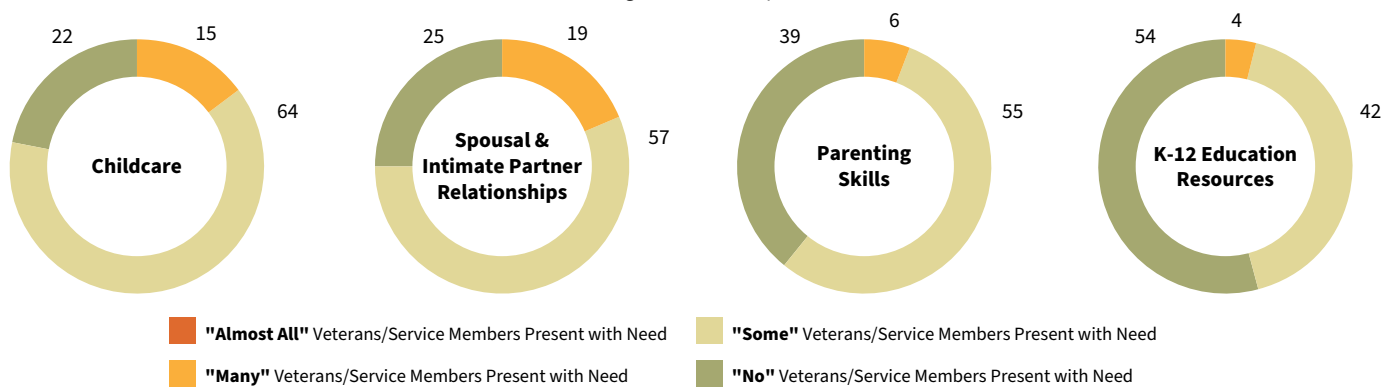


# Family-Related Needs

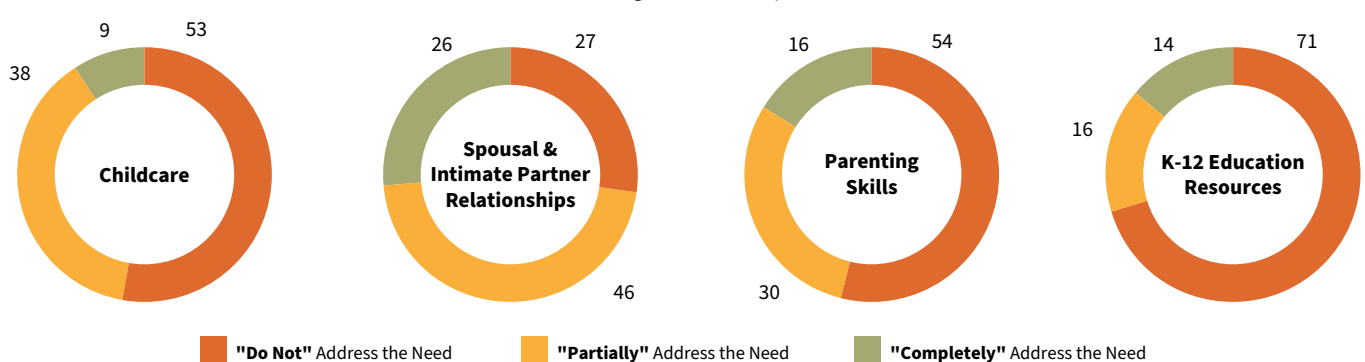
Families of veterans and service members experience many of the same needs as civilian families, including issues related to **childcare, domestic violence prevention, parenting skills, and K-12 education**. Community-based partnerships appear to focus less on those needs than on the types of needs discussed earlier in this paper. In 2021, no more than 20 percent of BWF’s community partners indicated that many or almost all of the veterans they serve present with those needs (see Figure 10). That prevalence was much lower than community partners reported in 2019. It is unclear whether veterans’ needs for family-related services decreased during that period, or whether veterans and community-based programs instead increased their focus on employment and financial issues in the context of the pandemic.

No more than 26 percent of BWF’s community partners said they could completely address family-related needs (see Figure 11). For example, Penny Anderson of Operation Stand Down Tennessee said her organization does not offer any K-12 education resources, in part because Nashville has a robust community of such resources available through other nonprofits (including PENCIL, Boys & Girls Clubs, Y.E.S., Preston Taylor Ministries, and LEAD). “As an agency, we are partners in the broader nonprofit community and have offered our space for free to use for their meetings, etc. But we have yet to have a veteran present with needs in this area and do not have any formal relationship with these agencies.”

**Figure 10: Clients’ Family-Related Needs**  
(Percentage of Partnerships)



**Figure 11: GY6 Communities’ Capacity to Meet Family-Related Needs**  
(Percentage of Partnerships)



Other sources of data have suggested significant needs for childcare among veterans’ and service members’ families. For instance, a 2021 survey by VA found that childcare is one of the top three unmet needs of male and female veterans experiencing homelessness.<sup>14</sup> Community-based partnerships that serve veterans are likely to be underestimating family needs for two reasons: because veterans anticipate the lack of those types of support and thus do not bring such needs to a collaborative’s attention, and because collaboratives do not actively screen veterans for those needs, given that many of them lack members to address such issues.



## Conclusion

The responses to BWF's 2021 LPSAT survey confirm how complex, varying, and overlapping are the needs of transitioning veterans. The community-based, cross-sector, collaborative approach of BWF's local partners is important to address the wide range of needs that reintegrating veterans experience.

The latest LPSAT data confirm that collaborative efforts in American communities are providing a wide range of services to veterans and other military-affiliated populations. Those services address such issues as basic subsistence, health and substance abuse, employment and education, social integration, and family needs. However, relatively few communities are completely satisfying the full range of veterans' needs. Instead, the ongoing pandemic has exacerbated individual needs and stressed the capacities and capabilities of local efforts to address veterans' care and well-being. **Most needs that veterans experience are only partially met in American communities.**

Through the LPSAT survey, BWF has quantified veterans' needs—and local communities' ability to address those needs—both before and during the pandemic. The 2021 data tell a sobering story of the challenges that some veterans are confronting and the challenging work that American communities face in helping them. In particular, the percentages of BWF's community partners that report seeing widespread need for mental health services, food and nutrition support, and emergency financial assistance among veterans were much higher in 2021 than they were two years earlier.

No one can effectively predict the direction of the pandemic or the extent to which other factors will exacerbate the needs of America's veterans. But it is critically important to continually monitor, address, and resolve the needs of people who have served their country.

**The Bob Woodruff Foundation is steadfast in its commitment to building the strength, capacity, expertise, and influence of the community partners in its Got Your Six Network, to ensure that all service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers thrive after military service.**



## Sources

<sup>1</sup>Michael A. Allen, Michael E. Flynn, and Carla Martinez Machain, “U.S. Global Military Deployments, 1950–2020,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* (July 28, 2021), <https://tinyurl.com/2p8rkz3f>.

<sup>2</sup>Those numbers are as of July 2021. See David Vine, “Lists of U.S. Military Bases Abroad, 1776–2021” (American University Digital Research Archive, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.17606/7em4-hb13>.

<sup>3</sup>According to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office, 3,753 non-combat training accidents involving tactical vehicles occurred in the Army and Marine Corps from 2010 to 2019, claiming 123 lives and causing untold injuries. The most serious types of those accidents occurred at an average rate of 34 per year during that period. See Government Accountability Office, *Military Vehicles: Army and Marine Corps Should Take Additional Actions to Mitigate and Prevent Training Accidents* (July 7, 2021), [www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-361](http://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-361).

<sup>4</sup>Bob Woodruff Foundation, *Veterans and COVID-19: Projecting the Economic, Social, and Mental Health Needs of America’s Veterans* (April 2020), <https://tinyurl.com/yeythcwc>.

<sup>5</sup>Bob Woodruff Foundation, *Community Collaboration for America’s Veterans: Insights from the Bob Woodruff Foundation’s Local Partner Self-Assessment Tool* (June 2020), <https://tinyurl.com/mr2k3dta>.

<sup>6</sup>The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that 10.5 percent of U.S. households were food insecure at some point in 2019. Surveys by the Military Family Advisory Network in 2017 and 2019 found that about 15 percent of families of military personnel or veterans experienced food insecurity. See Alisha Coleman-Jensen and others, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2019* (USDA Economic Research Service, September 2020), [www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99282/err-275.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99282/err-275.pdf); and *Military Family Advisory Network, Military Family Support Programming Survey, 2019 Results* (May 2020), pp. 32–33, <https://tinyurl.com/3tbzvfxf>.

<sup>7</sup>Military Family Advisory Network, *Food Insecurity Among Military and Veteran Families During COVID-19*, <https://tinyurl.com/yu84xa4c>; and responses by National Guard and Reserve members to the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey from April 14 to June 7, 2021, available at <https://tinyurl.com/2zc59vwp>.

<sup>8</sup>For more information about the challenges facing homeless veterans, see Bob Woodruff Foundation, *Bridging the Gap: How Existing Systems of Care Can Collaborate to Address Homelessness Among Veterans* (March 2022), <https://tinyurl.com/2p97zuh2>.

<sup>9</sup>Those needs include help upgrading a military discharge, expunging a past criminal record, or dealing with financial- or family-related legal issues (such as court fees, debt collection, child support, divorce, or tax problems). See Department of Veterans Affairs, “Fact Sheet: Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG)” (April 2021), pp. 5–6, [www.va.gov/HOME-LESS/docs/CHALENG-2020-508.pdf](http://www.va.gov/HOME-LESS/docs/CHALENG-2020-508.pdf).

<sup>10</sup>Legal Services Corporation, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans* (July 2017), p. 49, [www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/images/TheJustice-Gap-FullReport.pdf](http://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/images/TheJustice-Gap-FullReport.pdf).

<sup>11</sup>A recent report by LSC’s Veterans Task Force identified the need for legal-aid organizations to collaborate actively with community-based programs to better identify and serve veterans. See Legal Services Corporation, *2021 Report of the Veterans Task Force*, <https://tinyurl.com/2s35k28x>.

<sup>12</sup>Margaret Kuzma and others, *Military Discharge Upgrade Legal Practice Manual* (American Bar Association, August 2021), [www.americanbar.org/products/inv/book/410982321](http://www.americanbar.org/products/inv/book/410982321).

<sup>13</sup>Bob Woodruff Foundation, *Veterans and COVID-19: Projecting the Economic, Social, and Mental Health Needs of America’s Veterans* (April 2020), <https://tinyurl.com/yeythcwc>.

<sup>14</sup>Department of Veterans Affairs, “Fact Sheet: Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG)” (April 2021), pp. 5–6, [www.va.gov/HOME-LESS/docs/CHALENG-2020-508.pdf](http://www.va.gov/HOME-LESS/docs/CHALENG-2020-508.pdf). Also see *Military Family Advisory Network, Military Family Support Programming Survey, 2019 Results* (May 2020), pp. 149–152, <https://tinyurl.com/3tbzvfxf>.



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### About the Bob Woodruff Foundation:

The Bob Woodruff Foundation (BWF) was founded in 2006 after reporter Bob Woodruff was wounded by a roadside bomb while covering the war in Iraq. Since then, BWF has led an enduring call to action for people to stand up for heroes and meet the emerging and long-term needs of today's veterans, including mental health, caregiver support, food insecurity, and service-connected fertility issues. To date, BWF has invested over \$85 million to Find, Fund and Shape™ programs that have empowered impacted veterans, service members, and their family members, across the nation, reinforcing the message that BWF has 'Got Your Six'. For more information, as well as stories of success and innovation from BWF's network of partners, please visit [bobwoodrufffoundation.org](http://bobwoodrufffoundation.org) or follow us on Twitter at [@bwforg](https://twitter.com/bwforg).