

USC/ MCEC California Public Engagement Final Summary, Actions, and Recommendations

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California Vision Statement

"Creating an integrated web of care that envelopes and elevates the lives of children whose families serve and protect our great nation."

Narrative Summary of Working Group Recommendations

Sector workgroups were tasked to develop action plans based on a strategic opportunity statement (see "Strategic Opportunity Statements" for the complete list of statements). Upon reviewing these action plans, three overarching themes were identified:

- (1) Any community response and effort must recognize, respect, highlight and leverage the strengths and resiliency of military-connected families, and the communities they reside in. Universities need to be engaged to support this societal effort.
- (2) Increase public awareness of the presence, needs, and culture of military-connected youth and families.
- (3) A massive community and state response is needed through policy, collaboration and further legislation. This must include the sustainable coordination of existing resources and the development of new responses to emerging needs.

Each plan included specific action steps, the responsible agency or organization, and indicators for short- and long-term success. *Sector action plans are summarized in the narrative below. Redundancies between the sector recommendations were taken out and incorporated for ease of reading and greater focus.*

Business

The business sector workgroup identified and articulated the immediate need for a comprehensive, web-based list of resources available to military-connected youth and families. The group recommended that the Los Angeles County Collaborative should be responsible for the development of this online list of resources. The action item would be considered a success if this list is made available to companies, schools and other partners as a link on their website or via their intranet. The business sector workgroup also hoped to create an "app" to connect individuals with the online list of resources with the help of the California Business Roundtable. They hoped to achieve this goal within six months and would consider this effort a success if the app was made widely available for download and traffic to the online resource bank was heavy. For long-term sustainability, the business sector plans to approach and encourage companies like Google to direct their users to the online list of resources and/or app. The workgroup also recommended that a survey be conducted periodically to help determine ongoing needs and/or enhancements. They felt that such an effort would keep the list of resources were both current and useful.

Healthcare and Faith

This sector highlighted social media as an essential tool for raising awareness and proposed the creation of a YouTube video on military children with an overlay of statistics on military-connected children and families. The workgroup also identified the widespread engagement of

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leadership agencies and groups across the state as a measure of success and felt that this could be achieved under the guidance of the University of Southern California.

Overall, the workgroup's proposed action plan could be integrated with the business sector workgroup's proposed action plan. Both groups agreed on the need for a centralized clearinghouse/list of resources and hoped to support the development of such a resource that would be similar to the 211 system. The clearinghouse would be easily accessible and culturally appropriate to the unique needs and circumstances of military-connected youth and families. The healthcare and faith workgroup also suggested engaging marketing experts to craft a powerful and common message that increases public awareness of and support for military-connected youth and families.

In addition, the healthcare and faith workgroup proposed the creation of a roundtable or collaborative between agencies across the state, similar to the San Diego Military Family Collaborative. This group would help identify existing resources and partners as well as the roles and responsibilities of each agency/partner. The workgroup believed that this action item could be accomplished under the leadership of the steering committee.

Service Providers, Organizations and Clubs

To increase awareness, this sector called for a comprehensive campaign targeting all media, the government, and school and church communities. As with the other sectors, this group also stressed the importance of identifying services available to military families and organizing this information into a comprehensive online directory of resources that could be accessed through California.gov. The group further articulated the need to organize resources by group (e.g., veterans, active duty, National Guard/Reserve, families). The group believed that the Military Family Collaborative could serve as lead using the 211 system as a template/starting point from which to expand and incorporate additional resources. The group also suggested identifying community support agencies capable of educating the general public on the needs of military-connected youth. Within six months, this sector planned to review the status of these marketing/social media campaigns and evaluate their success using feedback obtained from districts, schools, and families. The group would measure success in terms of funding and programming developed as a result of the campaigns and data collection efforts. Within the same six months, this sector also hopes to see a federal or state mandate issued to school districts requiring them to create a military student identifier and to include military-connected youth as a reportable sub-group, ensuring the sustainability of resources and awareness.

As part of their action plan, this group also called for using emergency cards to identify military-connected children as well as to promote resources available to them. Since these cards are already required for all students, the addition of a military identifier would be seen as a measure of success. The workgroup recommended that schools and student service professionals take responsibility for this action. Their second action item is to review the California Standards for Family Strengthening and Support and develop and/or adapt a training module focused on military-connected youth for family strengthening organizations. To ensure sustainability, this sector plans to measure success by whether military family information is included on emergency cards at the county level and then is scaled up by mandate statewide.

Education (combined)

The education workgroups recommended that resolutions and policies be passed so military-connected youth become as a subgroup in educational data and accountability systems. They

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believe that such efforts would not only raise awareness of military students, but also ensure that more resources are correctly allocated to military families. The groups also proposed educating current and future teachers, counselors and other education professionals that military-connected youth are a diversity group. They recommended a requirement for schools to report on the academic achievement of military-connected students as part of the accreditation process and want this reporting to be part of the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. The groups planned to involve universities and parent-teacher associations as partners for accomplishing this task through advocacy, policy directives, and teacher education.

The education workgroups recognized the research already being conducted by universities on the education of military children. But they also noted gaps in knowledge, which make it difficult to provide support to military-connected youth and families (including veterans' children) and track their progress toward college. They also noted gaps in pre-service training for teachers and stressed that it is critical to include military culture in their undergraduate and graduate programs.

Similar to the recommendations of the service provider, organization, and club workgroup, the education workgroups noted the need for a standardized process or survey that allows for the anonymous identification (no personal identifiers of individual children, just how many there are in each school) of military children in public schools. The workgroups believed the California Department of Education should take lead on this action item. The education sector further recognizes the importance of ongoing funding for military-connected programs and initiatives as well as the engagement of Congress and state legislators to ensure sustainability. The group recommended a visit to Sacramento and Washington DC by education, military and civilian leaders to ensure implementation of the Interstate Compact.

Community Leaders

This sector plans to contact the California Interagency Council on Veterans to discuss ways to make it easier for veterans and their families to claim the benefits and services they have earned through military service. This sector would also encourage the Council to raise awareness of military-connected youth and the challenges they face. They also planned to track federal initiatives (e.g., EO 831) in partnership with organizations like the National Military Family Association and the Military Officers Association of America.

The workgroup would measure success by the completion and email dissemination of a policy brief on military-connected youth and families to participants who could then forward the information to members of their profession or professional networks. The group believes that Kathleen West, research and policy analyst for the Center for Innovation and Research, Debbie Gregory, president of Military Connection, and Patrick Kuykendall, executive director for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, were best positioned to compile this brief. Within six months, the sector plans to reach out to elected officials and identify partnerships and resources for funding. The group would measure the success of this action item in terms of legislative commitments and the number of newly identified partnerships. In terms sustainability, the group recommended that any new funding resources, partnerships, and/or initiatives be passed on to the federal interagency council for consideration. Finally, the group proposed a coordinated campaign recognizing military children and promoting the Month of the Military Child.

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All groups recommended that the steering committee help orchestrate advocacy efforts at the local, state, and federal levels to achieve the above actions.

Steering Committee Will Be Asked to Help Organize Delegations Representing the Sectors to:

- 1) Sacramento—a) to meet with Governor, legislature, and California Department of Education leaders regarding a state assessment strategy, b) to tighten rules around implementation of the interstate compact California has already signed, c) develop an accountability tracking system so that we know which schools have military children.
- 2) Washington DC—a) to target strategic policymakers with post-election legislation that could accomplish the goals listed above nationally.
- 3) Silicon Valley—to meetings with Google and the California Business Roundtable to help create a statewide clearinghouse with resources.
- 4) CSU and UC to meet with chancellors, provosts, presidents and deans about integrating military culture and services into university training programs and measures to create military-friendly college campuses.