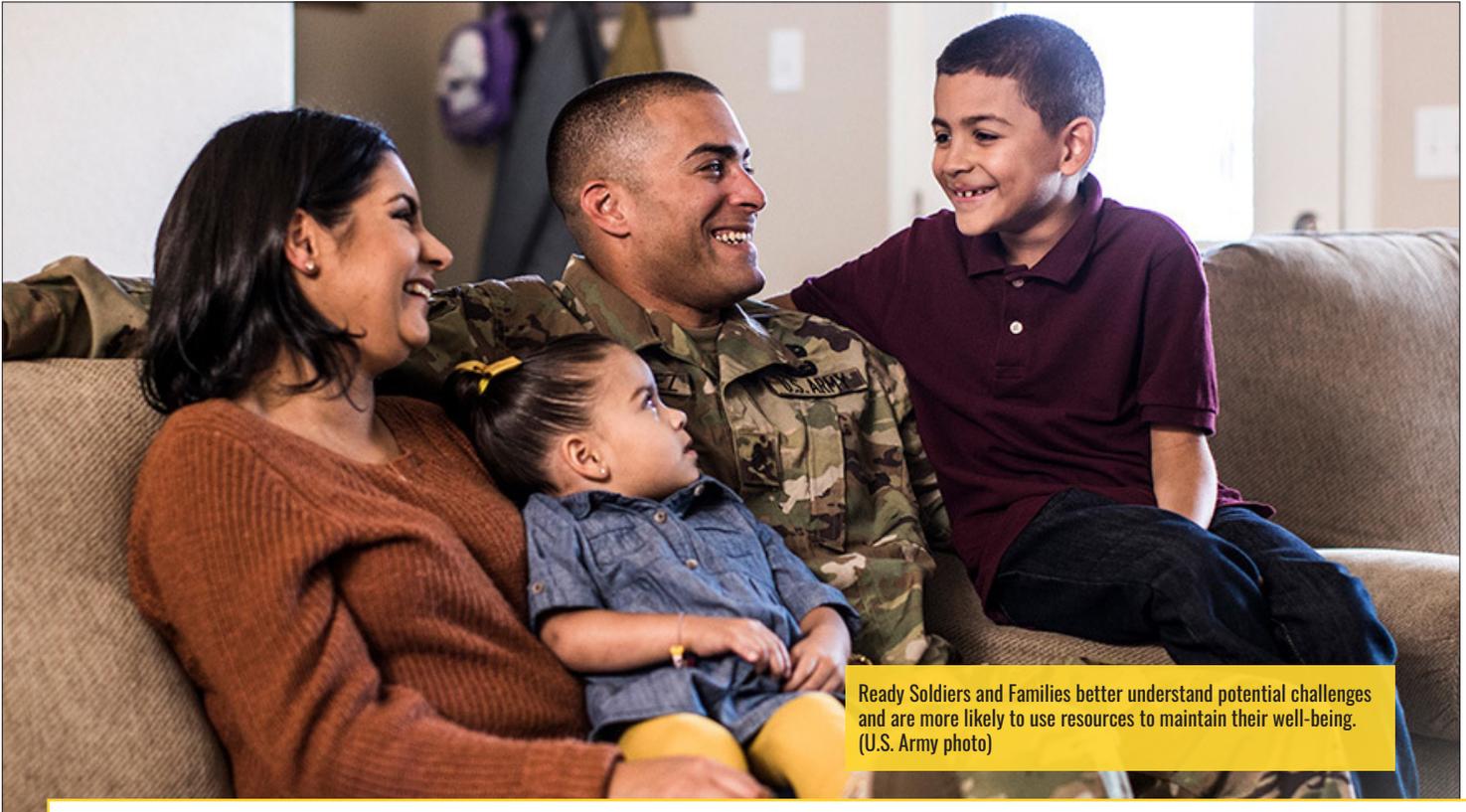




DPRR COMMUNITYLINK

THE DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2025



Ready Soldiers and Families better understand potential challenges and are more likely to use resources to maintain their well-being. (U.S. Army photo)

Military Family Readiness Is Important for Mission Readiness

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The success of Army missions starts at home with the Families who support Soldiers. When military Families are prepared, then Soldiers can better focus on fulfilling assignments and engaging in combat. This readiness eases the military's ability to carry out assigned missions and respond to challenges.

Dorie Hickson, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G9, said strong, resilient military Families have a direct impact on mission readiness, retention and the effectiveness of Soldiers in combat. Ready individuals are often more knowledgeable about the potential challenges they may face. When they are made aware of available resources, Soldiers and Families are more likely to incorporate the skills and supports to achieve and maintain their well-being.

According to DoDI 1342.22, military Family readiness is the state of being prepared within the unique context of military service to effectively navigate the challenges of daily living and military transitions. The Defense Department's focus on Family readiness is linked to Military Family Readiness DoD Instruction 1342.22, which establishes policy, assigns responsibilities and prescribes procedures and requirements for

supporting readiness through the Military Family Readiness System.

The Defense Department, along with federal, state and community-based organizations, operates this network of programs and services to provide assistance on and off post to support individual, couple, Family and community well-being. These efforts are designed to improve the quality of life, resilience and overall functioning of military-connected Families and directly contribute to Soldiers' abilities to focus on their mission and maintain combat effectiveness and lethality.

A recent [study](#) by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at the Pennsylvania State University examined the connection between military-Family well-being and mission and military readiness. Key findings from the literature review indicate that family well-being is associated with military effectiveness in the following ways:

- Service members being available for training and deployment.
- Service members being mentally, physically and emotionally fit.
- Service member resilience being connected to Family resilience.

Service members must be mentally, physically and emotionally fit to

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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Team,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, our Soldiers and Army Civilians, for all your hard work and dedication supporting the Prevention, Resilience and Readiness mission. Your hard work is paying dividends to our warfighters and their Families. They deeply appreciate it, and I couldn't be prouder of all of your efforts.

As we continue our important and challenging work supporting Soldiers and their Families, we should all practice self-care by strengthening our resilience skills. This spring and summer provide the opportunity to refocus on our goals, both personal and professional and to refresh ourselves going forward.

To assist in strengthening personal resilience and encouraging help-seeking, we are launching our new Spring and Summer Resilience Strengthening Campaigns. Although we've provided a summer campaign in the past, we are introducing a spring version to assist Army team members with the additional stressors that they may be experiencing.

Along with focusing on core resilience skills, the campaign highlights established programs and capabilities that offer Army community members support on every step of their journey. Use this opportunity to follow some of the recommendations in this campaign: Take a break, exercise, spend time with friends and Family, and be safe.

Recently, our senior enlisted advisor, Sgt. Maj. Ruben Murillo, participated in a panel discussion on "Building a Resilient Army Family and Community," hosted by the Association of the United States Army.

During the session, Sgt. Maj. Murillo said: "The resilience of our Family is what allows our Soldiers to perform their warfighting mission. That's our job every single day—that's what we wake up for,

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Sgt. Maj. Ruben Murillo, Senior Enlisted Advisor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, participated in a panel discussion on "Building a Resilient Army Family and Community" hosted by the Association of the United States Army on March 5. (Photo courtesy of AUSA)

AUSA Discussion Panel Addresses Support Structures for Resilient Military Families

By Chet Curtis, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

How does the Army prepare Soldiers and their Families for the military lifestyle? How does it make them resilient to the challenges ahead? And how does the service prepare Soldiers, Families and communities for the potential of combat operations?

On March 5, military specialists and professionals convened at the General Gordon R. Sullivan Conference and Events Center in Arlington, Virginia, to answer these and other questions during the Association of the United States Army's second Hot Topic Series event of the year.

The daylong forum, for which AUSA partnered with the Army Chaplain Corps, covered "Holistic Health and the Resilient Soldier," highlighting how a holistic approach has reduced harmful behaviors within the Army and fostered healthier communities by helping Soldiers, Civilians and Family members develop character and purpose.

Jam-packed with briefings, speeches and networking opportunities, the event culminated with the panel discussion "Building a Resilient Army Family and Community," moderated by Command Sgt. Maj. James Morris of the 589th Brigade Support Battalion, 41st Field Artillery Brigade, Grafenwoehr, Germany.

The panelists discussed the massive challenges that military Families have faced over the past few decades, from war, financial instability and the COVID-19 pandemic—all of which have led to increased isolation and stress. Morris said, however, that he believes that Soldiers and their Families can become more resilient by turning to Army programs, religious support and community initiatives.

"The Army Family is key to our Soldiers' resolve to fight and win our nation's wars," Morris noted, adding that "that connection allows the Soldier to serve this nation."

Fellow panelist Retired Gen. Vincent Brooks observed, "More of our society could benefit from the nature of community that is created within the Army, which is the ability to take care of one another, celebrate great events in life together and celebrate the hardships together, because there are certainly hardships—there always have been and there will always be, with or without large-scale operations around the world."

Sgt. Maj. Ruben Murillo, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, explained how the Army creates programs, resources and support activities to build the resilience of Families and communities at home and abroad.

Also on the panel were Corie Weathers, Clinical Adviser on Military Morale and Leadership, and Rabbi Elan Babchuck, Executive Vice President at Clal, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

The AUSA Hot Topic Series is designed with input from key Army staff and major commands. Each Hot Topic event offers a unique opportunity for members of academia, the media and industry to engage with military leaders and government policymakers. Participants can collaborate on solutions to the Army's most pressing challenges while gaining insights into current capabilities, future requirements and Soldiers' needs.

To watch the recorded event, visit [YouTube](#). Learn more about the Hot Topic Series on the AUSA [website](#).

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THE NEW PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAM
PREPARES ARMY FAMILIES



MilParents Rock: Army Commits to Preventing Child Abuse

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Every April, the Army recognizes Child Abuse Prevention Month by focusing on the awareness and prevention needed to create safe, supportive environments for our children to grow and thrive. "MilParents Rock," the 2025 theme, seeks to build awareness and increase the use of positive parenting resources to help prevent child abuse and neglect. The importance of Families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect is highlighted—not just in April, but all year long.

Child abuse is any act that harms or threatens a child's welfare and can occur regardless of their life situation.

"Child abuse can occur anywhere. It can happen in a child's home, their school or in their community," said Dr. Carmen Leggett, Family Advocacy Program Specialist, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

Child abuse can include:

- **Physical:** Hitting, kicking or shaking a child.
- **Sexual:** Pressuring or forcing a child to engage in a sexual act.
- **Emotional/Verbal:** Diminishing a child's sense of self-worth.
- **Neglect:** Failing to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 marked our nation's first major step in addressing child maltreatment, leading to the establishment of National Child Abuse Prevention Month by Congress in 1983. Since then, the Army has worked to prevent child abuse and protect our children while continuing to strengthen the resilience of Families.

Historically, the rate of reported child maltreatment among military Families has been about half the rate reported outside the military population. This statistic remained constant during peacetime, according to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. However, the rates reported among military Families have outpaced those reported for nonmilitary Families since 2003.

"Child abuse can occur anywhere. It can happen in a child's home, their school or in their community."

—Dr. Carmen Leggett, Family Advocacy Program Specialist, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The Army Family Advocacy Program is charged with assessing and addressing both child maltreatment and domestic abuse and works in partnership with child welfare providers to ensure the safety of children and Family members. FAP has systems in place to investigate and address child maltreatment with programs that provide treatment and services to children and Families. Commanding officers and military service providers are required to report known or suspected child maltreatment to FAP so that reported cases can be investigated, reviewed and recommendations can be made for further services and treatment for the Family.

"As we observe Child Abuse Prevention Month, let's unite as an Army Family to raise awareness and take action," said Tanya Juarez, FAP manager, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

"The Family Advocacy Program ensures our Soldiers stay mission-ready by caring for their world at home, so they can protect ours."

FAP also provides education on child abuse awareness as well as activities and services for children and adults. Parents are encouraged to create a supportive environment, as well as consider what resources are available if a child or teen needs help, which includes:

- New Parent Support Program.
- New MilParent Specialty Consultations.

- Thrive online parenting program.
- Various child care options.

Child abuse is 100% preventable, and all children deserve to be safe. If you suspect child abuse, you are legally required, along with Commanders and military service providers, to report it to the appropriate authorities by visiting or calling:

- Military law enforcement or 911.
- Your Family Advocacy Program office.
- Local Child Protective Services.
- National Child Abuse Hotline, 24/7, at 800-422-4453.

"Together, we can create a safe and nurturing environment for every child, ensuring they grow, thrive and reach their full potential," Juarez said.

"Prevention starts with us—let's stand strong, be vigilant and support one another in the fight to protect our most vulnerable."

These programs and resources are available to help keep our children safe and bring awareness to child abuse:

- [Family Advocacy Program Toolkit](#) provides positive parenting and child abuse prevention for military Families.
- [Military Parent Resource Center](#) helps military parents through their parenting journey.
- [New Parent Support Program](#) offers home visits, parenting classes, playgroups and more to help parents find a balance.
- [MilParents Rock Fact Sheet](#) offers information for adults to help protect our military children.
- [5 Ways to Prevent Child Abuse Flyer](#) provides practical tips for parents and other parenting resources.
- [MilParents Rock Emblem](#) should be included on materials highlighting positive parenting and related topics.

This month, wear a blue ribbon to help raise awareness. Together the entire Army community can come together to keep children safe and prevent child abuse.



5 Ways to Prevent Child Abuse

Every adult in the community can play a role in supporting and protecting military children. If you're worried about the well-being of a military child, share your concerns with Family Advocacy Program staff. They can help you determine what to do next. See the Military One Source [fact sheet](#) for information on five ways to prevent child abuse.



EVERYDAY COURAGE sharing stories of resilience

Resilience keeps us flexible when life throws challenges our way. "Everyday Courage" is a series highlighting stories from the Army community about when someone's resilience was put to the test and how they were able to overcome adversity.

Kristen Murphy is an Army Civilian supporting the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, and she's honored to serve those who serve our country.

She is a proud alumna of Full Sail University, where she received her Bachelor of Science in media communications and Master of Arts in public relations. Additionally, her experience extends to the U.S. Marine Corps through her work with Marine and Family Programs. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and photography. This is her story:

Panic disorder consumed most of my childhood, teens and 20s. Even before I had a diagnosis or language for what I was going through, it was a thief that stole things from my childhood—sleepovers at my friends' houses, road trips, concerts, parties and countless other rites of passage. When it wasn't stealing experiences from me, it was consuming my thoughts. It took up valuable space in my brain—the space where a young person's daydreams begin to take the shape of goals and aspirations. It felt like my entire life had an asterisk next to it.

I was 21 when I finally joined the 2% of Americans with a diagnosed panic disorder. Still, even after so many years of suffering, the diagnosis didn't feel like a relief, even though by that time, my anxiety had become crippling. Simple things like going to the grocery store or attending my college classes were not just hard—they had become impossible. I felt like I had given up and had become just another person with a mental health disorder, but my obstinance did not make me tougher or stronger. Resisting help only deepened the chasm between me and everything on the other side of help.

For me, help came in the form of antidepressants, cognitive behavioral therapy and talk therapy. It was a lot of hard and uncomfortable work, but that was when the relief finally came. While the medication helped to keep my brain from misfiring, I was able to learn how to coexist with my diagnosis and find a path to forgiveness for all that I felt it had taken from me. To my surprise, I also found my panic disorder didn't make me weak; it actually made me stronger and even a little bit more courageous. Fear is defined differently for someone with a defective fight-or-flight response.

Living with panic disorder has been a masterclass in resilience, giving me the ability to adjust and realign my direction when life forces me to change course. I know how to fight through the tough days so I don't miss out on the good days. It also has made me a better advocate for the people around me because I know the difference having people show up for me has made in my life.

By psychological standards, I have been in remission for more than a decade, but that doesn't mean I don't still copilot life with my diagnosis. It is always there, but so is my resilience. What I learned is that my panic disorder is not my diagnosis—it's my superpower.

Your mental and emotional health matters. Start your journey with these [resources](#).



Kristen Murphy



My best photo is this cannon at the Fredericksburg Battlefield in Fredericksburg, Va



A Mental Health Diagnosis Doesn't Have to Impact Your Career

By Antonietta Rico, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The constant anger or drinking, the worrying, restlessness or unhappiness, the constant mental pain—these symptoms are not who you are. They can be signs of a common and treatable mental health condition—and ignoring them will not make them go away.

More than half a million active-duty service members were diagnosed with a mental health disorder between 2019 and 2023, with almost half of those having more than one diagnosis, according to the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report for December 2024, a peer-reviewed journal of the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Division. Annual diagnosis rates increased from 2021 to 2023, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, and most of them were for adjustment, anxiety, depressive, post-traumatic stress, and alcohol-related disorders, according to the report.

Although the pandemic helped normalize talking about mental health and getting treatment, fear that seeking help may damage a Soldier's career persists. While some temporary career goals (like a school slot) may have to be put on hold to get treatment and get better, getting help is necessary to have a long-lasting career in the Army. Those who fear career repercussions are postponing the issue to a point where they may have no choices left while letting their personal lives deteriorate, said Milagros Frank, a former Suicide Prevention Program Manager for Fort Belvoir, Va., and a current Program Analyst with the Assessments Division, Evaluations Branch, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

"Whether you get help now or later, you're going to have to cross that road," Frank said.

"If you're not getting the help you need, it will manifest at some point so your career can still end later down the road—and it may be worse because you failed to take action."

A major concern for Soldiers is losing their security clearance—but that's essentially a myth. According to DOD out of more than 7.7 million cases reviewed from 2012-2023, just 1,165 cases (or .01%) had a security clearance denied or revoked "due to psychological health and additional conditions."

"Of the 1,165 cases that resulted in a denial or revoked clearance, none of the decisions was solely for seeking mental health care but were for one or more other concerns," DOD reported. The



U.S. Army Warrant Officer Jarred Albertson, a health services maintenance technician with the U.S. Army Medical Department Activity, led two horses during an equine therapy session at Fort Stewart, Georgia. The goal of the sessions is to destigmatize mental health support. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Duke Edwards)

primary reason security clearances are denied are due to financial reasons.

Some other barriers to accessing care for the military community includes stigma, especially self-stigma, said Tramaine EL-Amin, Vice President of Mental Health First Aid, National Council for Mental Wellbeing.

"Stigma can be 'what other people will say about me' ... self-stigma is about internalizing those negative beliefs or those negative stereotypes," EL-Amin said. She said that if we have a certain belief of what being a service member, a spouse of a service member or a Veteran, means—and it includes that they "shouldn't" struggle with their mental health or substance misuse—then that will act as a barrier to seeking help.

"As service members continue to experience increased rates of mental health disorders after the COVID-19 pandemic, help-seeking behaviors to address psychological as well as emotional well-being should be prioritized to maintain force readiness," the MSMR report recommended.

Staff Sgt. Dani Debehets was stationed in Belgium and trying to make her way to base but just couldn't figure it out despite having been stationed there for years. That is when she said she had a breakdown that had been building for months. What she

remembers most from that moment was her 3-year-old daughter sitting in the back seat.

"I think if I didn't have that happen in the car with my kid looking scared to death 'cause she doesn't understand what's going on, I probably would've kept trying to push through it," Debehets said.

For months she had been "trudging" through her work, making mistakes, messing up simple tasks and having to redo her work again and again.

"... Because I was burying my head in the sand ... that's where it affected me big time," Debehets said. "I kinda lost my credibility with my superiors and my subordinates because I wasn't working and producing like usual."

Debehets had struggles with her mental health since her deployment to Afghanistan years before, including experiencing survivor's guilt.

"I went through the Korengal on a convoy, and someone died," Debehets said. The Soldier who died was a mom and had a husband.

"At the time I didn't have kids, I had no responsibilities, so to me I was like 'Why couldn't it have been me? She had a Family, I don't,'" Debehets said.

Read the full article [here](#).

Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by May 23. For any questions, contact the editor at jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com.



AROUND THE FORCE

- ▶ AER
- ▶ ACFT
- ▶ CYSS
- ▶ SHARP
- ▶ BOSS



U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa Kicks Off Army Emergency Relief Campaign With Color Run
 OKINAWA, Japan—Runners and walkers celebrated after braving rainy weather to take part in the Army Emergency Relief 5K Color Run at Torii Station, Okinawa, Japan, on March 15. The race provided an opportunity for participants to enjoy a colorful experience while raising awareness for AER. The annual AER campaign focuses on informing the Army community about available emergency financial assistance and resources. (U.S. Army photo by Natalie Stanley)



Soldiers Train for First Army Division East Best OC/T Competition With Army Combat Fitness Test
 FORT STEWART, Ga.— On Feb. 27, the 188th Infantry Brigade Best Observer, Controller/Trainer competition teams conducted training at Fort Stewart, Georgia. While training for the First Army Division East Best OC/T Competition, the teams completed the Army Combat Fitness Test and conducted land navigation, warrior tasks and battle drills to sharpen their skills and prepare for the next stage in the competition. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rognie Ortiz Vega)



Fort Gregg-Adams Child Development Center Read Across America Week Observance Highlights Storytime With Army Soldiers
 FORT GREGG-ADAMS, Va.—Col. Richard J. Bendelewski, Garrison Commander at Fort Gregg-Adams, visited the installation's Child Development Center on March 6 during Read Across America Week. Read Across America is a weeklong celebration aimed at inspiring young readers and fostering a love of books. (U.S. Army photo by Juan F. Jimenez)



Spring SHARP Academy Basic Commencement Honors Lee Hoffman Spirit Award Recipients
 FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—On March 14, the SHARP Basic Course graduated 35 students. During the graduation ceremony, individuals were recognized by the academy staff and their peers for their exceptional performance. Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Rawls, FORSCOM, (left), and Sgt. 1st Class Eric Bussey, (right), were honored with the Jay Lee Hoffman Spirit Award for their outstanding service. (U.S. Army photo)



Army SHARP Academy Recognizes Lee Hoffman Spirit Award Recipient During SHARP Basic Commencement
 FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—On Jan. 24, the SHARP Basic Course graduated 24 students. Sarah Gregorini received the Jay Lee Hoffman Spirit Award in acknowledgment of her exemplary contributions. (U.S. Army photo)



Fort Bliss BOSS Soldiers Participate in Special Operations Week 2025
 EL PASO, Texas—Soldiers from the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program shared a moment together during their Special Operations Week on the Fort Bliss Training Complex in El Paso, Texas, on Feb. 26. BOSS is a quality-of-life program that connects single Soldiers to recreation, volunteer opportunities and career-building activities. (U.S. Army photo by David Poe)



Improving Soldier Performance With Mental Skills Training

By Mia Holloman, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Mental resilience is the backbone of strength, allowing individuals to navigate uncertainty with confidence, adapt to challenges and find solutions in high-pressure situations. For Soldiers, this skill is not just beneficial—it is essential. This is why the Army prioritizes mental resilience as a core component of its R2 program, understanding that a sharp and disciplined mind is just as vital as physical endurance.

“Soldiers with mental agility can quickly adapt to change and maintain focus in unpredictable situations,” said Heather Hassinger, Chief, R2 Training Branch, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

R2 Performance Centers offer training that integrates mental agility, emotional intelligence and behavioral strategies to help Soldiers enhance their decision-making, problem-solving and leadership skills. These programs focus on various aspects of resilience and readiness, including performance enhancement, team-building, suicide prevention and bystander intervention.

Hassinger said the skills taught at R2 Performance Centers are the same strategies used by elite athletes. From NFL quarterbacks to Olympic sprinters, top athletes have used performance techniques to build and maintain mental agility. Performance experts from multiple R2 Performance Centers helped Army athletes prepare for the 2024 Department of Defense Warrior Games. Practicing and implementing

mental resilience skills helped the participants regulate their thoughts and emotions, resulting in a more fulfilling physical performance.

“This ties into the Soldier-athlete concept: Soldiers have critical missions and need to be at peak performance when called on to win and fight our nation’s wars,” Hassinger said.

“Enhancing mental skills will help give Soldiers the fighting edge.”

R2 skills can help Soldiers manage stress by teaching them how to identify triggers, shift negative thinking patterns and develop healthy coping mechanisms that enhance mental agility and emotional stability.

“If you are practicing the skills daily, it will be a lot easier to implement the skills during high-stress situations,” Hassinger said.

“I would also recommend deliberate breathing if you notice you need to slow down. Taking two to three slow, deliberate breaths can help you center, bring your energy down to a more efficient level and ensure you are attending to the right thing in the moment.”

The brain and the body work hand-in-hand. Mental skills training strengthens this bond. By



Samantha Sullivan, (center), an Army World Class Program Soldier-athlete, helped the USA Women’s Rugby Sevens team win its first medal during the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France. She attributed her ability to manage her emotions as a skill she learned at the U.S. Military Academy. (U.S. Army photo by Bernardo Fuller)

developing mental resilience, Soldiers can navigate stress, overcome adversity and thrive on and off the battlefield.

To learn more about resilience and performance skills and training opportunities, visit the R2 program [web page](#).

Food and Mood: Digesting How Your Diet Affects Stress Levels

By Human Performance Resources by CHAMP at the Uniformed Services University

While stress is a normal part of life, it can sometimes feel overwhelming. Even though someone may not be able to rid themselves of stress completely, they can build skills to better manage and cope with it. Alongside effective time-management practices, deep-breathing techniques and journaling, a healthy diet is another stress-management tool.

Stress can make your body need more nutrients and calories, but it may also make you lose your appetite or crave unhealthy foods, which means you may not get all the nutrients you need. Similarly, not getting enough total energy (calories) or micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) can increase your susceptibility to stress. Low blood sugar, from insufficient food or exercise, can activate the body’s stress response, causing symptoms such as increased heart rate and higher cortisol levels

The brain and the gut are connected (this is called the brain-gut axis), which is why stress can affect gut health. It can slow digestion and worsen conditions including reflux, inflammatory bowel disease and ulcers. Poor gut health may lead to



Master Sgt. Jene Gray and Maj. LaCarla Fatzer show off their healthy snacks during a nutrition symposium at Fort Drum, New York. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Savannah Olvera)

slow absorption of food, causing nutrient deficiencies that may trigger feelings of anxiety and lead to a decline in mental health.

Nutrients, however, help regulate your body’s stress responses and manage the systems that help you return to baseline. Additionally, they can help protect your cells from some of the harmful effects of inflammation. But when you don’t

consume enough of these nutrients, you risk impairing your ability to manage and bounce back from stress.

While there’s no single magic food that will rid your life of stress, certain dietary regimens are associated with lower levels of perceived stress and measurable stress markers over time. Here are some simple guidelines to follow.

- **Eat small meals often.** Humans need energy (glucose) to work at their best. By eating small, [well-rounded meals](#) throughout the day, you give your brain and body steady energy, which will help you avoid hypoglycemia and be better prepared to handle anxiety.
- **Try Mediterranean meal-prep options.** The Mediterranean diet is probably the most well-studied anti-inflammatory eating plan. Dietary changes can include decreasing saturated fats and added sugars and sodium, and increasing the amount of unsaturated fats, [omega-3 fatty acids](#), colorful [fruits and vegetables](#), and high-fiber whole grains.

Read the full article on the HPRC [website](#).



The Importance of Military Readiness *RESILIENCE* Continued from page 1

stay mission-focused during deployments. Strong Family relationships have been proven effective in allowing Soldiers to work free of distractions and stress while staying mission-focused.

Hickson said that half of Army Soldiers are married and 40% have children. The study's findings indicate that frequent relocations, child care shortages, spousal unemployment, financial strain and marital stress directly affect readiness and retention. The study also found that divorce or separation is linked to approximately 15 percent of military suicides and Family relationship problems are present in over 25 percent of suicides.

"As problems are resolved spouses are more satisfied with military life and more supportive of their Soldier staying on active duty, having a positive impact on actual retention," said Hickson.

Service members in stable marriages are more likely to remain in the military, but those whose relationships are strained are more likely to separate from service.

"Retention rates for married senior officers with supportive spouses nearly double," said Hickson.

Military Families also provide essential care for wounded or ill service members, which can ensure their continued service or a successful transition to civilian life. Family members are the caregivers who manage medical appointments and rehabilitation and provide emotional support.

The connection between service member resilience and Family resilience was also demonstrated in the Clearinghouse study. Resilient Families were found to be knowledgeable, resourceful and equipped to actively manage the challenges of military life. These Families take advantage of available resources, are financially prepared and learn and use problem-solving skills that ensure Family readiness, which positively affects mission readiness.

Strengthening the Army Family *DIRECTOR'S COLUMN* Continued from page 2

what we go to work for, what we give the effort for our Families. They are the support system behind us."

I think these words get at the core of our mission to provide the support that Soldiers and Families need to serve our nation and defeat our enemies. We also recognize the sacrifices of our Army Families by honoring them.

Gold Star Spouses Day, which was observed April 5 this year, is a day to honor and remember those surviving spouses of Soldiers who died in the service of their country. The Army is committed to supporting surviving spouses through Survivor

The study found that a shared Family sense of mission enhances adaptation to military life. Service members experience greater support and fewer work-Family conflicts when their Families align with military values and purpose. Families with strong support networks experience better mental health and resilience through peer connections, on-base community resources and social support systems, all of which can mitigate stress and improve Family stability. Programs that teach effective parenting and coping strategies help Families manage military-related stressors to improve their overall readiness. Service members are able to focus on performance when there is strong Family communication.

The Army continues to make strides in its tasks of ensuring that Families are ready for the demands of military life and providing opportunities to strengthen their readiness and resilience. The well-being of military Families is important because:

- Their well-being affects an individual's decision to enter the military and whether a Soldier will remain in the service.
- Psychological or physical problems experienced within Families can potentially cost money.
- Family issues can be a distraction from readiness, rendering a Soldier not able to focus on mission.
- Families support military missions by supporting Soldiers while they serve.

Families can establish traditions, like planning dinners or game nights, to strengthen bonds. These activities can strengthen Family readiness through:

- Exercise to bolster Family connections while relieving stress and keeping the Family healthy.
- Discussions with a Family therapist and activities like Family dinners, where the day's events can be shared.
- Social activities through a local military-

Outreach Services, to ensure their well-being, to encourage their ongoing participation in activities that honor their fallen Soldier and to recognize they are enduring members of the Army Family.

We also need to support our communities and lend a hand when needed. Volunteer Appreciation Week, April 20-26, recognizes the contributions of volunteers who give their time and energy to provide quality programs and services to military Families. I encourage you to expand your social connections by volunteering in your communities to support Families, whether military or not.

Family support group, which keep participants informed and strengthen their social network.

- Spirituality or religion as a source of strength for the Family; this can be personal practices, support groups or a connection with friends.

More information is available for Soldiers and Families on the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness website at [Programs and Capabilities](#).



Army Support for Special Moves

This time of year, many Soldiers and Families receive orders for a permanent change of station. Here's where to find support for special circumstances.

- **Foreign-born spouse:** The Army Community Service [Relocation Readiness Program](#) can help with resources and referrals.
- **Special needs:** The [Exceptional Family Member Program](#) ensures that a Family's special medical or educational needs are considered during the assignment process.
- **Pet arrangements:** [Military OneSource](#) details how to transport your pets safely during your move.
- **Emergency financial aid:** A move can often stretch finances. The [Financial Readiness Program](#) provides free personal financial counseling. [Army Emergency Relief](#) may also be able to help.

For more PCS resources, visit the DPRR [website](#).

For many, summer also means PCS season. This can be an exciting and trying time for Families, so preparation is key. Remember to start early, keep a checklist, communicate openly with Family members, keep important documents accessible if needed, and keep an inventory of your belongings.

Thank you, again, for all you do for our Total Army Force—our Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Families. Have a wonderful spring and summer!

—Dee Geise, DPRR Director



Creating Healthier Communities Through Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The indicators of a healthy community encompass more than just trendy fitness studios or organic produce offerings at the local grocery store. The journey toward good health should start within Families, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces. The Army is working to build an integrated prevention system that focuses on improving conditions affecting factors such as housing, health care, education and beyond.

The Army Prevention Plan of Action 3.0 explains that a prevention system is made up of several fundamental parts. First, there are people, including strong leaders, trained prevention specialists and the Army community. Next, there are important tools, like policies, resources and data systems that focus on prevention. Lastly, dedicated staff members work to collaborate across organizations and efforts.

“The prevention system serves as the foundational framework for effective prevention planning, implementation and evaluation,” said Dr. Marjorie Dorak, Supervisory Integrated Prevention Specialist, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

Studies show that people thrive when their communities have sufficient resources. Prevention-focused efforts can enhance community quality of life by promoting healthier lifestyles, fostering social wellness and improving public safety, ultimately contributing to a stronger, more resilient community. This can include opportunities for stable housing, access to child care and safer communities around military bases.

“Addressing these circumstances can give Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Family members a chance to live a healthy life and make the healthiest choices,” Dorak said.

The Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation program directly supports quality of life and readiness by providing a variety of community, Soldier and Family support activities and services as a part of the Community Connections **effort**. Joel Miller, Chief, Family and MWR Division, explained that the primary goal of Army MWR programs is to provide a working and living environment that attracts and retains outstanding Soldiers.

“Our programs help promote and maintain the mental and physical well-being of the Army community by supporting combat readiness and effectiveness,” he said.

Army MWR does not simply fulfill the entertainment needs of the Army community, Miller said. Participation in the programs can also create important pathways to self-care, stress management, personal development and stronger interpersonal relationships.

Activities offered through MWR aim to strengthen the community by helping to reduce risk factors for harmful behaviors. Risk reduction often involves



Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation supports quality of life and readiness by providing recreational resources and activities to the Army community. (U.S. Army photo by Janet Meredith)

identifying the things in a community that contribute to problems, then taking steps to lessen those factors. By being proactive and addressing these issues, “Army MWR programs can bolster protective factors such as cohesion, connectedness, morale and work-life balance, which can ultimately prevent harmful behaviors,” Dorak said.

Soldiers and their Family members are encouraged to explore the following resources and activities.

- **Armed Forces Recreation Centers** offer affordable vacation options for military personnel and their Families.
- **Army libraries** support Soldiers and their Families with story hours, internet access, training materials and librarian assistance.
- **Arts and crafts programs** offer educational activities that advance fine-arts skills, crafts and vocational arts.
- **Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers** focuses on the recreational needs of active-duty Soldiers.
- **Entertainment and dining** programs deliver musical performances and theater productions.
- **Fitness and sports programs** include gyms and pools that help improve fitness and health through various activities.
- **Outdoor recreation programs** offer sporting goods and equipment, access to marinas and stables, and much more.

The Army aims to improve outcomes and strengthen community ties through **MWR programs**, establishing a network that stops harmful behaviors before they start. As the Army adapts to the evolving needs of its people, focusing on prevention will continue to be an important part of its efforts to promote a healthier and more resilient fighting force.

Summer Resources for Army Families

By Human Performance Resources by CHAMP at the Uniformed Services University

Although the spring has only just sprung, it’s not too early to start thinking ahead to even warmer months. This summer, plan some indoor and outdoor activities with your Family to discover new places and have new adventures at little to no cost.

Hiking, camping and learning activities are good for everyone’s minds and bodies—and they don’t have to break the bank. For a wallet-friendly summer, consider enjoying free admission to national parks and museums across the country. Check out tips from Human Performance Resources by CHAMP to meet your military work-life goals, build family unity and grow your connections:

- Explore our national parks. **Free annual passes** to our vast **national park system** are available to current U.S. service members and their Families, including Reserve and National Guard members. The hardest part might be choosing **which national park to explore**. Save money and time by packing water and snacks from home, and don’t forget to pack the bug spray and **practice sun safety**. Once you’re there, look for junior ranger programs and ranger-led talks and hikes for all ages.
- Find unique learning opportunities. As a military Family, you can get **free admission** to more than 2,000 nature centers and art, science, history and children’s museums through Labor Day. Museums encourage active learning and help kids to build social and mental development skills. Kids especially enjoy hands-on activities, interactive exhibits and new learning experiences with their parents at children’s museums.
- Tap into military discounts. Check out your local **Information Tickets and Travel** office for info on events and other attractions near you. You can get military discounts on activities, lodging and more.
- Discover local nature. Chances are, there are parks, nature centers and hiking trails in your area that you might not be aware of. Take some time to **discover new outdoor hangouts** for you and your children. Kids who hike and camp tend to have more positive attitudes toward nature and the environment. Spending time outside actually **improves kids’ health and focus** and can help them develop their social skills.
- Consider going to camp. **Summer camp** gives kids a chance to learn new skills, explore different activities and make new friends. Many **local military installations** offer summer programs (and even during some school breaks). Several independent camps, as well as organizations such as the **National Military Family Association**, also offer free camps for military kids and Families.



The New Parent Support Program Prepares Army Families

By Lytaria B. Walker, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The Army's Family Advocacy Program is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of Soldiers and their Families. One of the standout components of FAP is the New Parent Support Program, a vital resource for Families that aims to ease the challenges of early parenthood by providing practical resources to help parents navigate the complexities of raising children in a military environment.

"The New Parent Support Program is a priceless resource for military Families, offering guidance, education and reassurance when things are good as well as during life's challenges. Whether through home visits, parenting classes or community connections, this program empowers parents to provide the best possible start for their children while navigating the unique demands of military life," said Dr. Carmen Leggett, FAP Specialist at the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

Although the Army has always recognized the importance of Family support, the NPSP was established to provide a more direct, tailored service to address early-childhood development. The program has evolved over time, with an increasing focus on preventive measures and proactive Family support.

The NPSP is primarily designed for Army Families, specifically those with active-duty Soldiers, whether they are stationed domestically or overseas. It serves parents who are expecting a child or those who have infants and toddlers under age 3. Recognizing that parenting in a military environment can sometimes be isolating, the program also offers a support network for both first-time parents and seasoned caregivers.

The program is available regardless of rank or service branch, meaning that Soldiers of all backgrounds can benefit from this important support system. The NPSP is designed to provide free resources, from pregnancy through the early years of a child's life, ensuring that Families have the guidance they need during this transformative time. Since military Families often face financial constraints, especially when one parent may be on parental leave or on



Participants practice holding and repositioning babies during a newborn care class offered by the New Parent Support Program. (U.S. Army photo by Prudence Siebert)

deployment, the cost-free aspect of the program makes it a highly accessible resource.

Signing up for the NPSP is easy and straightforward. Eligible parents can reach out to their local Army Family Advocacy Program office to enroll. Once enrolled, parents will be assigned a support team member, who will reach out to schedule home visits and provide guidance. The NPSP offers comprehensive services tailored to meet the needs of new parents. Some key services include:

- **Home visits:** Trained professionals make home visits to offer personalized support and guidance. These visits provide parents with practical tips on infant care, child development and parenting techniques.
- **Parenting education:** The program offers educational materials and workshops on topics such as child safety, infant care, positive discipline techniques and managing parenting stress.
- **Emotional support:** Parenting can be emotionally taxing, especially in a military environment. The NPSP offers nonmedical counseling services to help parents cope with stress, anxiety and other emotional challenges.
- **Referrals to additional resources:** The program connects parents with other relevant services,

such as financial assistance programs and child care resources.

The NPSP is managed by a team of professionals, including registered nurses, social workers and parent educators. Together they form a well-rounded support system that addresses both the practical and emotional needs of military Families.

The Army's NPSP plays a crucial role in supporting military Families during one of the most challenging and rewarding times in their lives—parenthood. By offering free expert advice and resources, the program helps ensure that Army parents have the tools they need to succeed in raising healthy, happy children, even in the face of the unique challenges posed by military life.

"The strength of our Army lies not just in its Soldiers but in the Families who stand beside them. The New Parent Support Program empowers military Families with knowledge, resilience and support, as strong Families allow Soldiers to support mission readiness, which in turn builds a stronger force," Leggett said.

To learn more about the NPSP or FAP's resources, visit their web page: [DPRR: U.S. Army Family Advocacy Program](https://dprrr.army.mil/fap).

Personal Readiness: Family Dimension

Major transitions like frequent moves and deployments can be tough for Army Families. By building mental and emotional strength, Soldiers and their loved ones can stay resilient for the challenges ahead. Families can improve their readiness by:

- Maintaining healthy friendships and relationships through connection.
- Engaging in self-care practices that bring them joy.
- Asking for help when they need it.



To learn more about the five dimensions of personal readiness, visit: [DPRR: Five Dimensions of Personal Readiness](https://dprrr.army.mil/five-dimensions).





Are 'Buy Now, Pay Later' Programs Too Good to Be True?

By Kristen E. Murphy, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Buy Now, Pay Later programs, also known as point-of-sale installation loans, have made a name for themselves in the last three years. BNPL programs offer appealing short-term financing options on online purchases, with some offering in-store options when connected to mobile payment options like Apple Pay. Most programs are interest-free and do not typically affect credit scores if payments are made on time.

The process offered by BNPL programs isn't new to consumers, but it is a process that is more common with larger purchases like homes and cars. These programs bring a similar, though much simpler and trimmed-down version of that process to smaller, everyday purchases like clothing, plane tickets, electronics and even groceries. These options offer convenience when necessary purchases arise suddenly and cash or credit limits are barriers to making a purchase, but are they too good to be true?

How do Buy Now, Pay Later programs work?

In most cases, the total purchase amount is divided into quarters paid in two-week installments, with

the first quarter due at the time of purchase. For example, a \$100 purchase would be separated into four \$25 payments made every two weeks for six weeks, beginning with an initial \$25 payment. For larger purchases, monthly payment options typically come with interest and are paid over 12 or 24 months.

What to consider when deciding whether to use a Buy Now, Pay Later payment option.

- **Is the purchase necessary?** It is always wise to consider the necessity of purchases, but with the appeal and convenience of BNPL payment options, impulse can easily triumph over necessity.
- **Does the plan have interest?** If BNPL loans seem too good to be true, it is because they often are. Not all programs offer the same conditions. Even though split payments provide convenience on the front end, you may pay up to 35% more on the back end. While some are interest-free, others charge interest or have flat-rate convenience charges embedded into the total, adding unnecessary costs to purchases that already require a short-term loan.



Buy Now, Pay Later programs provide interest-free short-term financing for online and in-store purchases. (U.S. Army photo)

- **How does the loan payment fit into your budget?** Although most BNPL loans are typically short, lasting only six weeks, it is important to ensure that the convenience of these payment plans does not interfere with other financial responsibilities, such as savings contributions. It's essential to evaluate your budget and determine the source of each payment. Will you be dining out less often or making your own coffee instead of visiting your favorite coffee shop?

Read the full article on the DPRR [website](#).

The Power of Teamwork: Hospital Staff Sharpen Connections

By Erik Moshe, Ready and Resilient Training Branch

Trainers from the Fort Johnson R2 Performance Center hosted a team-building event recently during the 32nd Hospital Center's Foundational Training Day. The 32nd Hospital Center oversees Army Health Systems and can deploy up to two field hospitals during major combat operations and civil defense support missions. Teamwork is critical to their mission. Feeling valued and accepted can boost motivation and mental health, while a lack of belonging can lead to isolation, loneliness and decreased team effectiveness.

Trainers Janeane Hernandez, Kimmie Fontenot, Isaac White, Trevor Eidsen and Andrea Alvarez led a series of six team-based competitive activities designed to strengthen bonds, improve teamwork and communication, and overcome operational challenges. In the two-hour training session, service members from different sections and ranks collaborated through cognitive activities, choosing how to solve problems and share ideas. Success depended on teamwork and using one another's strengths.

Soldiers of this unit conducted tedious inventories, layouts and field-hospital setups.

"Communication and team cohesion between personnel is crucial to ensure critical care is provided and there is accountability of expensive medical property," Hernandez said.

"The different medical detachments and sections of the field-hospital often work together to perform these operational duties."

Teams were provided with a packet that included anagrams, a map, a scavenger hunt list and the points breakdown. Each group decoded the anagrams to reveal their assigned order of stations. They then traveled to each point on the map and completed the four cognitive stations and scavenger hunt. After they finished the challenges, they debriefed on what they learned about communication, strengths of character and team cohesion.

Clear, open communication is vital for aligning a team toward the same mission.

"Communication creates a culture of trust within a team," Hernandez said.

"When people feel comfortable communicating their feelings, needs and experiences, this can lead to a sense of understanding and increased connection with others. Feedback helps team members to hold each other accountable to the mission, expands potential for growth and strengthens relationships."

Hernandez also said that recognizing and leaning on one another's strengths as a team can reinforce the idea that every person plays a vital role within the unit.

"You can increase your sense of confidence and self-efficacy by being on the same team as someone who is more experienced and successful," she said.



32nd Hospital Center staff participated in R2 team-building activities designed to improve communication and overcome operational challenges. (U.S. Army photo)

"For example, asking someone more experienced, 'How would you go about approaching this?' More experienced team members can also learn from newer, less experienced members by being flexible, receptive to feedback, and by considering alternative solutions when old strategies aren't working."

After the training, the 32nd Hospital Center Commander, Col. Danielle K. Rodondi, expressed her gratitude to the trainers for designing and leading the event.

"You helped us to break down barriers, build trust and connect with each other on a deeper level," Rodondi said.

"It's amazing to see our team's collective creativity and problem-solving skills in action."

Reach out to your nearest R2 Performance Center to schedule training to enhance your team's cohesion. Visit <https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/I-Want-to-Schedule-Training.html>.



DPRR

DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

APRIL 2025

HAIL AND FAREWELL

We invite the DPRR community to join us in extending a fond farewell to our outgoing team members.

Farewell

- Terrence Elliot, R2I&T Division
- Carolyn Massiah, R2I&T Division
- Lt. Col. Jennifer Powers, Senior Leader Engagements Division
- Dave Shikha, Integrated Prevention Division
- Ozzie Smith, R2I&T Division

We've Got Your Six

DPRR's Quality of Life and Prevention campaigns developed under the tagline "We've Got Your Six" offer printed and digital resources for critical Army support programs. They are designed to build awareness and increase program visibility and accessibility.



The materials are now available for download and printing on the DPRR Products on Demand website.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY

Military Spouse Appreciation Day

May 9: Military Spouse Appreciation Day is a day set aside for us to pause to recognize the military spouses around us who have the greatest impact on our lives and our military communities. The observance honors spouses for their support of the mission while keeping the home fires burning.

20th Annual Conference on Crimes Against Women

May 19–22: The CCAW educates and trains first responders and community stakeholders on best practices for identifying, investigating and prosecuting crimes against women.

Location: Dallas, Texas **Learn more:** Visit the CCAW [website](#).

Society for Prevention Research 33rd Annual Meeting

May 27–30: The SPR's annual meeting provides a forum to discuss public-health-related research. This year's theme is "Prevention Science for Action: Leveraging Data Science & Technology to Enhance Research, Practice & Policy."

Location: Seattle, Washington **Learn more:** Visit the SPR [website](#).

JUNE

National Alliance on Mental Illness Convention 2025

June 10–13: NAMICon's annual convention brings together professionals from around the world to elevate mental health. This year's theme is "Meeting Where You Are."

Location: Virtual **Learn more:** Visit the NAMI [website](#).

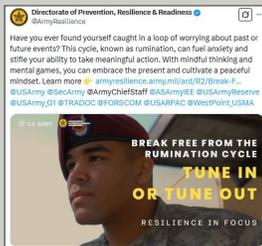
TOP-PERFORMING POSTS

FACEBOOK



Impressions: 1,120

X



Impressions: 143

INSTAGRAM



Impressions: 243

LINKEDIN



Impressions: 507

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Please coordinate with your Public Affairs Office to share or retweet @ArmyResilience content on command or installation Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn platforms. Contact Kevin O'Brien for questions regarding DPRR social media at kobrien@strategyconsultingteam.com.

Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

DPRR COMMUNITYLINK
April 23, 2025, Volume 10, Issue 3

The DPRR Community Link newsletter is an authorized bi-monthly publication produced by the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness for the Army community. The contents of the DPRR Community Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. The editorial content of the DPRR Community Link is the responsibility of the Communications & Outreach Division at DPRR. For questions, or to subscribe or submit articles and photographs to DPRR Community Link, please contact the editor at jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com. This publication is available for download at <https://www.divdshub.net/publication/1102/r2-community-link-newsletter>.

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Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by May 23. For any questions, contact the editor at jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com.

Connect With DPRR!

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