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Today's Presenters



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Enhancing Military Family Well-Being: Understanding and Nurturing Economic Security

Christopher Plein, Ph.D. and Keith Tidball, Ph.D.

Learning Objectives

- Review the various factors, often called the “social drivers of health,” or SDOH, that influence health and well-being.
- Promote a mindset that empowers providers to focus on understanding the root causes of health and wellness challenges and to be change agents for positive outcomes.
- Recognize that such a mindset requires a holistic or ecological approach to understanding how underlying contextual factors, individual circumstances, institutions, and programs interact with each other.
- Examine how various organizations and institutions are fostering efforts to encourage awareness and action to address health disparities and to promote well-being – with a special focus on the U.S. military and the Cooperative Extension system.
- Identify various state and federal programs that can contribute to military family health and wellness, with a special focus on TRICARE, VA health benefits, Medicaid, and Medicare.
- Consider possible new programs and policy developments relevant to military family health and well-being.

Overview

- We will uncover specific features of environment or landscape of military family life that relate to economic security and health and wellness.
- In doing so, we will use an “ecological” approach that is systems based and considers how various social, economic, and other factors influence well-being.
- Through discussion and review, we will share tools and concepts that will empower professionals in their efforts to assist and guide families through their journey of financial readiness and well-being

Setting the Context: Thoughts and Viewpoints

- Many of you have participated in the online course, webinars, and other activities associated with this year's Military Family Readiness Academy. To get things started, we would like for you to consider the following question:



What are some of the factors or circumstances that affect military family economic readiness and well-being?

The Howards – Family Profile

Joseph Howard

- Active-duty service member, Army
- 30 years old
- Father



Margaret Howard

- Military spouse, married to Joseph
- Civilian
- 29 years old
- Mother
- Teacher

Maya Lynn Howard

- Margaret and Joseph's child
- 2 years old
- Has developmental disabilities



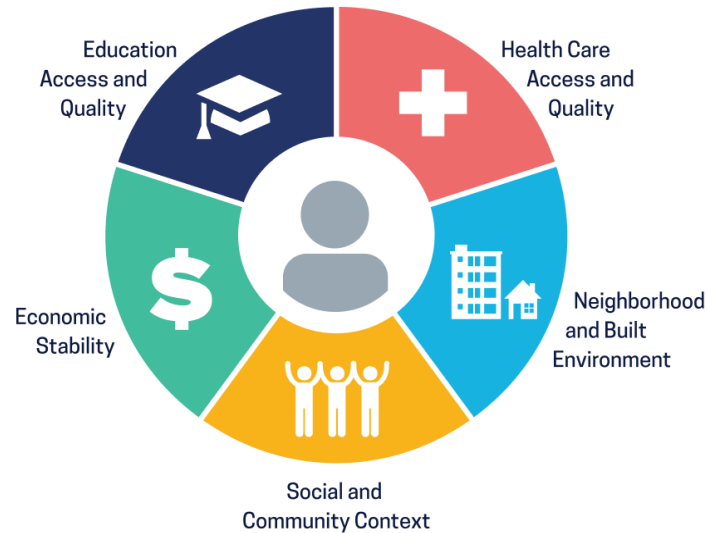
Read the entire Howard Family Case Story:
oneop.org/2024-mfra-case-story

An Ecological Perspective

- A big question is whether this environment determines who we are or whether we can make use of features of the environment, and even change the environment, for our own purposes.
- This is not just a philosophical question. It is an essential practical question that relates to the development of programs, policies, and practices affecting the lives of individuals, families, and communities.
- By looking at things from an ecological context, we gain a better understanding of how conditions and situations can influence human behaviors and circumstances.

Ecological Models in Use: Identification

Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health
Copyright-free

 Healthy People 2030

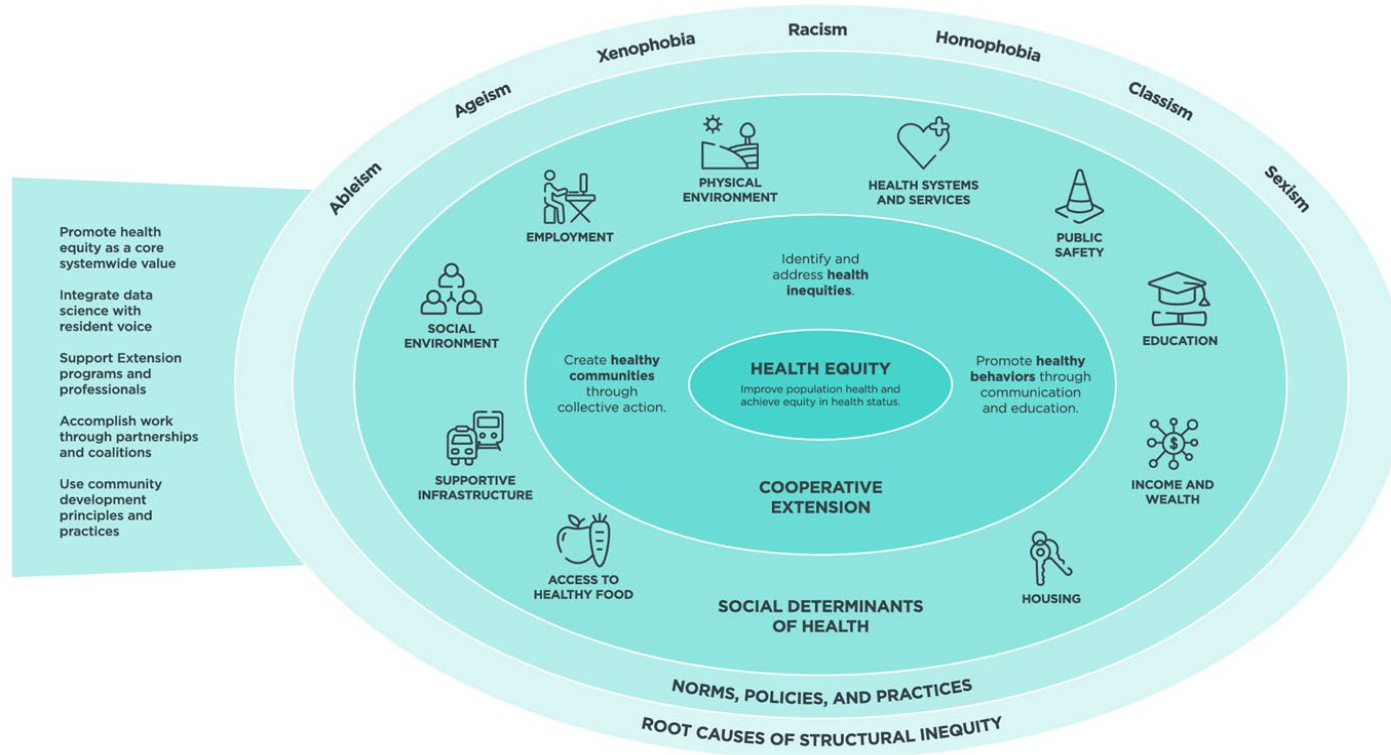
From CDC 2024.

Ecological Models in Use: Response

An ecological perspective allows for organizations and institutions to develop more resilient and adaptive programs and systems to address individual, family, and community well-being. Two approaches of special interest to us are:

- The Cooperative Extension Service Health Equity and Wellness Framework (see ECOP 2021)
- The DoD's Total Force Fitness Framework (see DoD Military Health 2024).

Cooperative Extension System



Cooperative Extension System

- The CES recognizes its role as a change agent and catalyst in addressing health and wellbeing disparities and in promoting equity through education, programming, and engagement.

Military Total Force Fitness

DoD recognizes domain interrelationships and that all must be considered in promoting total force fitness.

Total Force Fitness



Health and Economic Readiness: A Closer Look

For today, we are especially interested in the intersection of healthcare access and economic security and well-being. Thinking of what you have learned through the MFRA and from your own professional experiences:

How do issues relating to health and wellness relate to financial readiness and well-being?



The Importance of Healthcare Coverage and Benefits to Financial Readiness

- Financial readiness is akin to maintaining a diversified portfolio of resources and assets – health coverage and benefits are part of the benefit.
- Major healthcare assets include TRICARE, ECHO, VA, Medicare, Medicaid.
- Health coverage and benefits become crucial in major life transitions and touchpoints discussed in the MFRA



Recognizing the Link Between Policies, Programs and SDOH

The utility of ecological frameworks, like the SDOH, is illustrated by evaluation and actions that have been taken to make policies and programs more responsive. For example:

- Medicaid has increased focused on nutrition and housing supports.
- VA healthcare system is prioritizing overall life conditions of beneficiaries.
- TRICARE and DHS have sought to reduce barriers to access
- VA and DoD exploring Outdoor Rx – actually prescribing time outdoors for its health-giving benefits

What's with
the "Rx"?

Rx: A medical prescription. The symbol "Rx" is usually said to stand for the Latin word "recipe" meaning "to take." It is customarily part of the superscription (heading) of a prescription.

NAME Military Families
DATE Today

R_x

Go outside!

REFILL 0 1 2 3 NR PRN
SIGNATURE _____

Types of Rx

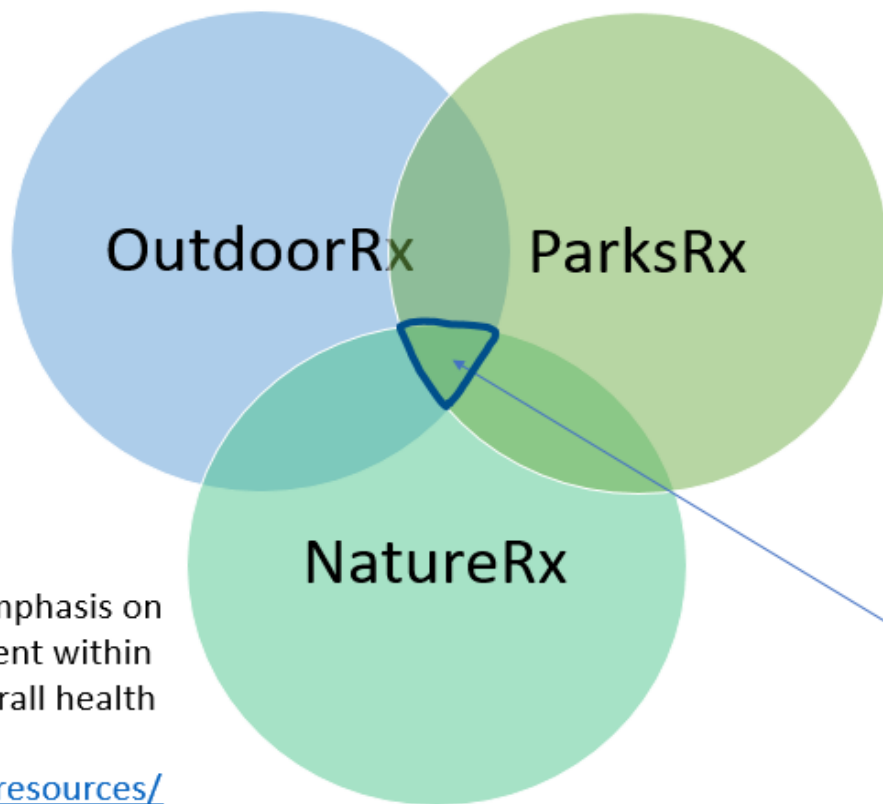
OutdoorRx

Veteran and servicemember-centric. Started in NY Legislature and currently spreading. Features both back-country and front-country outdoor-based therapeutic approaches.

NatureRx

Student-focused with an emphasis on natural setting and time spent within them as “good for your overall health and well-being.”

<https://health.cornell.edu/resources/health-topics/nature-rx>



ParksRx

Formal park designation-centric, with heavy emphasis on the spectrum of attributes of “Nature” as therapeutic. Not only as recreation, but as setting as well.

<https://www.parkrx.org/>

EcoRx

Responding to Urgent Biophilia - the “Rx”

- Therapeutic recreation (TR) practitioners have used nature-based interventions and activities to address functional outcomes and provide recreation opportunities for military and veteran populations with Post-Traumatic Stress (Hawkins et al., 2016, Craig et al., 2020).
- Multiple types of nature-based approaches utilize the natural environment for specific therapeutic outcomes (Poulsen et al., 2015).
- Evidence suggests that nature-based recreation approaches merit continued investigation to evaluate efficacy and implementation (Townsend et al., 2018).
- There are efforts to move the clinical community to consider prescribing times spent outdoors to address health and wellbeing concerns beyond PTS.



The Role of Military Family Support Professionals

Guides: helping service members and families understand the landscape, providing advice to help build skills, placing things in perspective, encouraging future-oriented thinking

Trusted Sources: through study of interpretive frameworks (like the ecological models), policy and program developments, review of best practices.

Connectors: Understanding the landscape helps us identify and use installation and community resources effectively.

Connecting to Capacity: The Role of Capitals



Effectively Supporting Today's Military Families

- Promote a mindset that empowers providers to focus on understanding root causes of health and wellness challenges and to be change agents for positive outcomes.
- Recognize that such a mindset requires a holistic or ecological approach to understanding how underlying contextual factors, individual circumstances, institutions, and programs interact with each other.

References/Resources

Braun, Bonnie. et al. 2014. Cooperative Extension's National Framework for Health and Wellness (Washington, D.C. NIFA).

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U.S. Department of Defense, DoD Instruction. 2021. 1342.22 Military Family Readiness. [DoDI 1342.22, Military Family Readiness, August 5, 2021 \(whs.mil\)](#)

U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Forces. 2024. Summary of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. [FY24 NDAA Agreement Executive Summary \(senate.gov\)](#)



Find a list of additional resources
on the webinar learn page!

Recommended OneOp Resources

- PowerUp Article – “Maximizing Financial Wellness: Cooperative Extension's PowerPay for Military Service Providers”
- Practicing Connections Podcast Episode – "An Ecosystem of Military Family Support with Nicola Winkel" <https://oneop.org/learn/learning-from-each-other-s-5-ep-5/>
- Course – “The Cooperative Extension System: A Force Multiplier for Military Family Readiness” <https://oneop.org/learn/the-cooperative-extension-system-a-force-multiplier-for-military-readiness/>



ECONOMIC READINESS AND
MILITARY FAMILY WELL-BEING

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- 1.0 CE from the **American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS)**
- 1.0 CE from the **Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE)**
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- 1.0 CE from the **National Council on Family Relations (NCFR)**
- 1.0 CE from the **Patient Advocate Certification Board (BCPA)**
- 1.0 CE from the **University of Texas at Austin, Steve Hicks School of Social Work (Social Work, LPC, LMFT)**
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