

# Children in Military Caregiving Families

You're Not Alone



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- The Department of Defense and Military OneSource are committed to supporting children in military or veteran caregiving families.
- Understanding the unique needs of children and caregivers in military caregiving families, and the resources available to them, will improve your effectiveness as a counselor to these families.
- What is a Military Caregiving Family?
  - A Military or Veteran family who care for a wounded, ill, or injured service member or veteran.
- Caregivers are Often Children - Approximately 2.3 million children under age 18 live with a veteran who is disabled.

## QUOTE

*"Being a caregiver kid can be tough, but we learn ways to help. My job is to give love and to bring light to my dad's day. I want every other caregiver kid out there to know, there are millions of us. You are not alone."*

**-Gabby, Connecticut**

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- Recent studies have shown there are extensive gaps in support of children in military caregiving families.
- The result is an intensification of efforts to address the needs and serve as a call to action for all sectors to expand and build support for children in military caregiving homes.
- ***Hidden Helpers***, an initiative formed by the White House's *Joining Forces*, the *Elizabeth Dole Foundation* and *Wounded Warrior Project*, was designed to create supportive programming for and bring awareness to the millions of children of wounded, ill or injured service members or veterans.
- Attention to a child caregiver's needs are often "crowded out" by caregiving needs for the disabled family member.
- Military and Veteran families are experiencing high levels of disruption because of injury leading to distress, which severely impact emotional and psychological development of children.

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## QUICK TIPS for Healthcare Professionals

- **ASK** - Not every child or parent will disclose their family's military service or veteran illness or injury. Asking about military service invites further conversation.
- **UNDERSTAND** - with less than one percent of eligible Americans connecting to military services, there are fewer people truly familiar with the challenges and opportunities of military service. Many veterans and their family members are often eager to share their experience.
- **TALK** - Hidden Helpers often avoid seeking out support or deprioritize their own needs because of their needs of their care recipient at home. Talk to Hidden Helpers who may be struggling about what might be going on at home and when necessary, make a warm referral to a child or adolescent Mental Health professional.
- **CONSIDER** – not all injuries suffered by Service Member are physical.

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## References

**Mathematica.org.** *Hidden Helpers at the Frontlines of Caregiving: Supporting the Healthy Development of Children from Military and Veteran Caregiving Homes.* November 2021

[https://hiddenheroes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EDF\\_FinalReport.pdf](https://hiddenheroes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EDF_FinalReport.pdf)

**The White House / Joining Forces Blog.** *Joining Forces and Hidden Helpers Coalition Pledge Support to Military and Veteran Children in Caregiving Families.* November 10, 2021

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/blog/2021/11/10/joining-forces-and-hidden-helpers-coalition-pledge-support-to-military-and-veteran-children-in-caregiving-families/>

**Rand Corporation.** *Hidden Heroes: America's Military Caregivers.* 2014 [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR499.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR499.html)

**Rand Corporation.** *Improving Support for America's Hidden Heroes.* 2017

[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1873.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1873.html)

**Elizabeth Dole Foundation / Hidden Heroes.** *Quick Tips for Healthcare Professionals.* <https://hiddenheroes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EDF-HiddenHelpers-Healthcare.pdf>

## Resources

**Military OneSource / Caregivers Resources**

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/caregivers/caregivers-resources/>

**Elizabeth Dole Foundation**

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

**The White House / Joining Forces**

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/>

**Wounded Warrior Project**

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

**Hidden Heroes**

<https://hiddenheroes.org/>

**Hidden Helpers**

<https://hiddenheroes.org/resources/hiddenhelpers/>

For a More Comprehensive List, Go To:

<https://hiddenheroes.org/resources/>