



Vermont National Guard  
Family Programs

20  
21



# ANNUAL REPORT



Director, Family Programs :  
Dave Leonard

[www.ngfamily.vt.gov](http://www.ngfamily.vt.gov)

# Index

- 3 - Message to Stakeholders
- 4 - Vermont Veterans Outreach Program
- 10 - Military Family Readiness Center
- 12 - State Soldier & Family Readiness Group
- 13 - Financial Readiness
- 14 - Mental Health Counseling
- 15 - Vermont Air National Guard Family Readiness
- 16 - Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon
- 17 - Child & Youth Program
- 20 - Military OneSource
- 21 - Survivor Outreach Services
- 23 - Transition Assistance Advisor
- 24 - Military Family Community Network
- 25 - Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots
- 26 - Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program - Army
- 27 - How Are We Doing?

“Thank you for helping me with my father's records, you have been a comfort to me during a transitional time period. I hope to be able to remain in contact with your organization going forward.”

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# Message to Stakeholders

Soon after the start of the new fiscal year (2021), our country faced a resurgence of COVID-19 cases. We experienced our second order to telework on 17 November 2020. In the midst of this continuation of the crisis, we were planning our Yellow Ribbon events for our outgoing Vermont Army National Guard soldiers. Close to 900 soldiers were being prepped to deploy in the first part of 2021. Family Programs provides Yellow Ribbon events before, during, and after deployments. The mission is to not only gather our deploying families but to bring in all the resources which our families need to be aware of. They include financial, Tricare, employment, mental health, child and youth services, to name a few. Because our families are geographically dispersed throughout Vermont and beyond, we bring everyone together in one location to make the connections between our families and the military/community resources available to them.

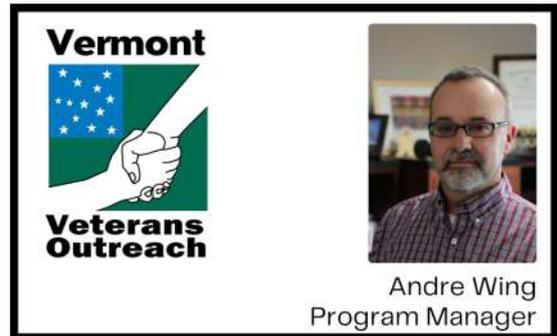
## At least that was the plan...

With the country still struggling with COVID-19, we had to conduct our pre-deployment events virtually rather than in person. A combination of COVID cases and labor issues with hotels/conference centers left us no choice. Conducting virtual pre-deployment yellow ribbon events was a major undertaking! How do we provide a quality, informative “event” to almost 900 of our families online? We were fortunate to have a very capable Yellow Ribbon coordinator and assistant as well as many, many other Family Programs staff assisting. From December 2020 through May 2021, we conducted six virtual pre-deployment events. It was a year like no other, but as always, we stayed focused on what our families needed and stayed the course.

We were fortunate to have a visit in February 2021 by Mrs. Kelly Hokanson, the spouse of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Daniel R. Hokanson. Mrs. Hokanson wanted to meet with Family Programs to discuss successes as well as any issues with which she might be able to assist. In my humble opinion, I believe Mrs. Hokanson was very impressed with how Vermont’s Family Programs takes very good care of their veterans, service members, and their families. We were so appreciative that Mrs. Hokanson came to Vermont to learn more about our Brave Little State.

# Vermont Veterans Outreach

On the 17th of November 20, Vermont's Governor issued a stay-at-home order, the team complied by utilizing SLACK—a workplace communication tool to stay in touch with each other and within Family Programs and also had access to Microsoft Teams. The Microsoft Teams platform allowed us to utilize video chat capabilities for team meetings. This stay-at-home lasted thru the 10th of May 21 and we returned our office locations. We continued to use the Microsoft Teams platform which allowed us to utilize the video chat capabilities for team meetings, training, etc.



The [Vermont Veterans Outreach Program] goes “above and beyond in meeting my needs and I am grateful.”

We are very proud of our database and are always seeking ways to improve it. Steve Hernandez, who started as our program analyst in mid-December 2020, is the driving force behind it. We recently updated the design of the database to improve the user's experience by providing a modern and more accessible interface. Even though the changes at this moment are visual, these changes have had a positive outcome on the team in the following areas: ease of use (less frustration), clearer navigation, and better organization.

The design changes include rearranging controls, maintaining consistency in design throughout, conducting user tests, gathering feedback, and refining where needed. All these improvements will lead to a reduction in confusion on how to interact with the system. The easier the system is, the less time the team will have to spend on data entry. Database updates and improvements continued in the form of monthly releases (team meetings).

In addition, we formed a focus group to brainstorm and test improvements, required updates, and so forth. The end goal of the focus group is to improve forecasting and identify trends among our veterans. Our goal is to have a new report/slide to depict trends on our monthly report starting with the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2022.

In spite of the significant restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the VT Veterans Outreach Program was able to continue building on our already excellent working relationship with the Veterans Administration. The VA's decision to limit in-person appointments and allow a significant number of employees to telework meant that the majority of our interactions with VA staff members were conducted via phone calls, email, or virtual meeting platforms like Zoom or MS Teams.

We continued to attend virtual versions of the VA's monthly Outreach Committee meeting, Director's Coffee with VSO meeting, VT Veterans Committee meetings on Veteran Homelessness, semiannual Mini-MAC meetings, and also community partners meetings (community action, hunger-free, etc.). We participated in all VA virtual Town Hall Meetings.

We continued to work with the VA's Senior Research Librarian and Outreach Committee Chair to coordinate support for a test program at the new South Burlington Library to provide computer workstations for Veterans to use for VA telehealth appointments; the launch is scheduled for May 2022.

In October 2019, we worked on an initiative from the Adjutant General and the Vermont Legislature, with the VA, VT National Guard, the American Legion, and VFW to develop a joint program to facilitate Veterans signing up for the National Burn Pit and Environmental Hazards registries. The intent was to invite veterans at the local posts and help register those who were eligible, broken down by Vermont Counties. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this initiative fell through, however, working with the VTNG PAO, we are planning on designating the month of November 21 as the Registry month. The PAO will send press releases on a weekly basis on which counties would be listed and the number to contact, the Vermont Military & Family Support Center toll-free number.



Even though we had a stay-at-home order, the team was required to attend monthly Soldier Readiness Checks (SRCs) from October 20 thru May 21 to prepare for the upcoming 2022-22 deployments for the Vermont Army National Guard. We saw 1,437 Soldiers during that time period, we reviewed a multitude of items such as if they had registered on the burn pit registry, if eligible, the process to stop their VA compensation if they were deploying, VA enrollment, and any issues/concerns they may have had.

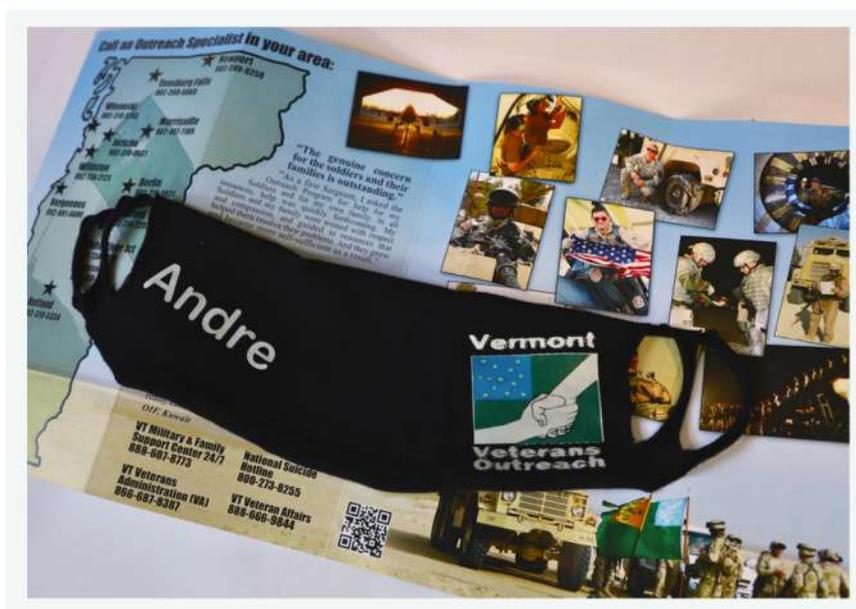
We participated in many virtual pre-deployment yellow ribbon events for units deploying in 2021. This was the first time that Family Programs held a virtual yellow ribbon; these events had no technical glitches and were professionally conducted. These events were held from December 2020 thru March 2021. If a soldier and/or family member missed the presentation, it can be found on the family program's website: <https://www.ngfamily.vt.gov/>.

“In a way it made my Dad’s service for our country recognized and my Mother coming from a large military family it has always been a part of her life. Thank you doesn’t feel it’s enough.”

# VERMONT VETERANS OUTREACH CALL CENTER

AVAILABLE 24/7

24/7 - (888) 607-8773



On the 23rd of September 2020, the Vermont Veterans Outreach (VVO) team absorbed our 24/7 Vermont Military and Family Support Center. During Fiscal Year 21, we received 141 calls with the top three categories being benefits (46), information (45), and financial (31). We created a different situation report (SITREP) to reflect more accurately Family Programs and added “additional details” where we list possible solution(s) for the caller. In most cases, this eliminates a third party being involved which results in a quicker resolution of the issue(s). This process provides the callers with a sense of security because the VVO team answering the calls are embedded in the very communities from which the calls come through. In most cases, the VVO team can provide the answer/resources right away–this is a seasoned, knowledgeable, and professional team.

## Vermont Veterans Outreach Call Center



Benefits

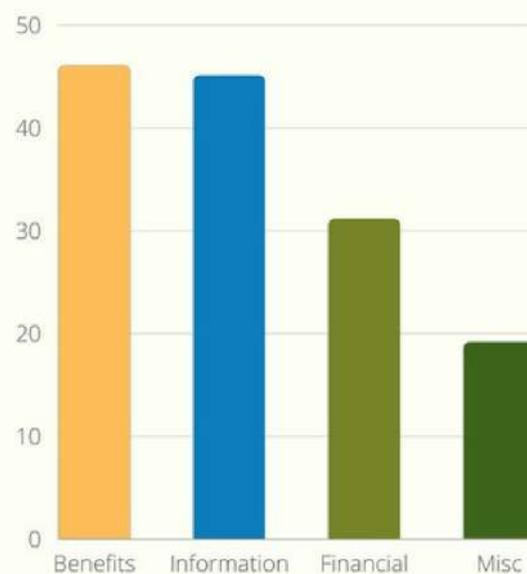


Information



Financial

### 141 TOTAL CALLS



“Exceptional service at every step in my disability claim submission. Above and beyond support for many service members that I am personally aware of.”

### **U.S. Marine Corps Veteran '06-10**

A Veterans Affairs Social Worker working in their justice program contacted the team with a request. The social worker was able to secure a space in the VA Medical Center Recovery Center for substance disorders for one of our veterans. The veteran had a comfort dog with no one to look after it and did not want to take the seat due to the pet. We were able to contact the VT Soldier's Angel organization to see if they could foster the veteran's pet, basically at a moment's notice. Working with the social worker, the veteran, and the organization, all documents pertaining to the dog (shots, deworming, etc.) were secured. A family was found by the organization to foster the dog and the veteran was able to enter the recovery center.

### **U.S. Navy Veteran '95 to '15**

This case came to us during a community partner meeting. While having a discussion with one of our staff members and a community partner about what our program does for Vermont veterans, this veteran identified himself as one. The veteran was the commander of a nuclear submarine in the Navy. This veteran is a prominent member of that community working as the director of an emergency maternity care. After discussing his active-duty service and department and his experiences, we recommended that he file a disability claim, the veteran replied: "Sure, what have I got to lose". We submitted a letter of intent through a Veteran Service Officer (VSO), helped locate his medical records, copied some 300 pages of records for his claim, and sent them to his VSO. After 6 months, the veteran was rated at 100% service-connected due to his service in the Navy.

### **WWII Veteran**

A quick update on a WWII veteran and his wife who were homeless in September 2020. This referral originally came from the VT Easter Seals and with our collaboration, this couple was housed in May of 2021. We provided assistance with computer repair, helped him receive a Veteran Affairs pension and provided furniture for their new apartment.

In June 2021, the veteran celebrated his 95th birthday; he happened to have a VA appointment on that same day. The VA staff surprised him with a birthday party, but that wasn't the only surprise of the day. In advance, our team worked with the Vermont Office of Veteran Affairs to request two medals he had earned for his service. First, he received the Vermont Service Medal for serving in the military. Second, he received the Vermont Distinguished Medal for his combat service. At the surprise birthday party, the State of Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs Director Robert Burke presented the medals.



[Vermont Veterans Outreach] "team members each visit one-on-one with a hospice patient who is also a veteran."

### **VTARNG OEF '10**

The mother of a VT Army National Guard combat veteran was given our contact information by the VT Office of Veteran Affairs. The veteran lives with his mother and was taken to the emergency room (alcohol poisoning). I sent two of my staff (one who served with the veteran in Afghanistan) to the hospital to provide peer support and conduct a needs assessment. The veteran was both surprised and happy to see my staff member with whom he served. We will be supporting the veteran with his housing and employment needs; however, the veteran's alcohol dependency will require a great deal of work on his part with the assistance of counseling from the VA. The mother has a sense of relief knowing that her son will not be alone on what we all hope is the first step on his road to recovery.

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### **U.S. Army Veteran 10'-16'**

As a result of his combat service, this veteran was rated having a 60% service-connected disability by the VA. He is married with 3 children. He is currently utilizing the GI Bill to attend college full time. The veteran graduated from college in May 21. After graduation, the veteran had a full-time job lined up. The veteran urgently needed dental work for himself and could not afford to pay out of pocket. Unfortunately, Tricare does not typically cover the cost of a veteran's dental work. We discussed with the veteran if he could come up with \$160 out of the total bill of \$360, a local non-profit veteran service organization could cover the rest of the bill to complete the needed dental work prior for him starting his employment.

### **Vermont Army National Guard (VTARNG) Veteran**

The Veteran served in the VTARNG for fifteen years. On September 29, 2020, I was notified by the Newport Unit that the veteran died by suicide. He had a surviving spouse and five children ranging in age from seventeen to eight. I contacted the family and assisted them with funeral arrangements, applying for VA Survivor benefits with the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs, Social Security Benefits, and Survivor Benefits with the VTARNG at Camp Johnson. I attended the veteran's funeral in Newport and the celebration of life at the Newport VFW. I met the surviving spouse at Camp Johnson and assisted her with obtaining ID Cards for herself and her dependents and completing the paperwork for survivor benefits with the VTARNG. I also assisted the surviving spouse with her mortgage payment by applying for financial assistance with Blue Star Mothers and the War Veterans Assistance Group.

### **USN / Combat Veteran / '91-'08**

I had this combat veteran complete our needs assessment survey. This veteran completed a Letter of Intent to file for a service-connected disability claim. VVOT sent the veteran to the ID section for an appointment in Rutland for their family ID's. Also, VVOT assisted the combat veteran with his military Medical File scanning for an upcoming VVOA VSO appointment. VVOT completed and submitted the CV VA Form 10-10EZ application for enrollment in the VAMC and sent it to the eligibility office. CV was a submarine commander and in numerous underwater combat situations off the shores of foreign waters. The veteran's compensation was granted at 100%

### **USMC COMBAT VET OEF '06**

We started working with this veteran back in 2016 as a referral from his friend. This client had a substance abuse issue, was going thru a divorce, was denied VA claims, and had law violations outside the state. We were able to get him treatment for his substance disorder. We refiled his claim and he was awarded 100% disability and we resolved his law issues out of State. Things were headed in the right direction until I got a call on Nov 20 from the client's mom stating that her son had been stabbed and was at the ICU in Burlington. We met with the family at the hospital and together came up with a plan. We made contact with the VA and started coordinating plans for the client's next step after leaving the ICU in Burlington.

Working with the VA, we were able to transport the client to the Tampa, FL VA where he spent the next 7 months in intense rehab. We assisted in getting bills paid for the ER and ICU treatment in Burlington and we secured volunteers to clean out his apartment. The veteran had dogs and we were able to find someone to foster his dogs while the veteran was gone. We help the mom get power of attorney and get set up with banking for her son. We looked for housing when the client returned to Vermont.

The client returned to Vermont in the summer. We were able to find him housing and a caregiver to assist him. The client continues to go to physical therapy, AA meetings and is working towards being able to drive again and get back to work. Presently we are assisting the client to get enrolled into the VA's VOC Rehab.

# Military & Family Readiness Center

In the last fiscal year, despite the challenging circumstances brought on by the pandemic, our team made it a priority to support the Vermont Army National Guard's deployment cycle. There were numerous deployments to various overseas locations in support of ongoing operations, which affected many military households. To assist those affected by these deployments, the Military & Family Readiness Specialist team partnered with military service providers and organized the Deployment Strong series - virtual sessions to connect geographically dispersed family members. Each of these webinars provided an educational component, an opportunity to speak with the Rear Detachment, and a chance for family members to build relationships with one another. This series was held monthly for the duration of the deployment, with three additional webinars for our volunteers who helped to conduct wellness calls to other family members.



All in all, our online deployment support group efforts **reached a total of 378 family members across seven states!**

Throughout our first year as a team, we prioritized building relationships with command teams across the state and expanding our community capacity network. These connections serve as invaluable resources and referrals for our client caseload, enabling us to provide comprehensive wrap-around support to meet everyday needs. We maintain ongoing communication with various service providers, including:

- **Childcare Coordinators**
- **Community Partnership Collaborations**
- **Education/Technical School Representatives**
- **Employment Representatives**
- **Financial Resources**
- **Government Aid Organizations**
- **Legal Support**
- **Social Workers**

Overall, our team wants to remind everyone that the Military & Family Readiness Specialist team is here to support all currently serving military personnel and their families in Vermont. It doesn't matter which branch or component you're in, we're here to help. Our goal is to continue strengthening our network of support and build stronger relationships with service members, families, and communities. By doing so, we can continue to provide the highest level of support and service possible to the Vermont military community.

# Military & Family Readiness Team



**MFRC Specialist  
Herman Moore  
(802) 338-0994**

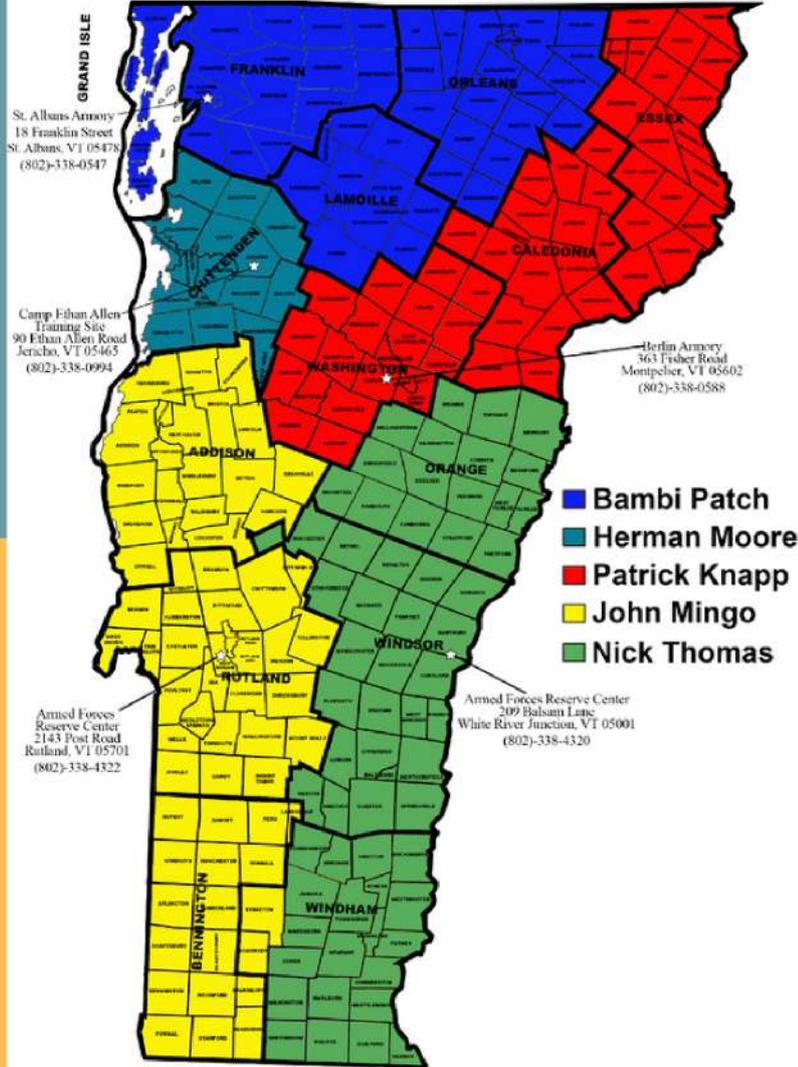


**MFRC Specialist  
Bambi Patch  
(802) 338-0547**



**MFRC Specialist  
Patrick Knapp  
(802) 338-0588**

## Military and Family Readiness Program Team Area of Responsibilities Map



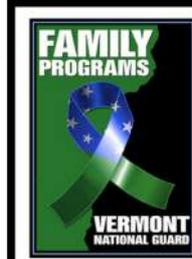
**MFRC Specialist  
John Mingo  
(802) 338-4322**



**MFRC Specialist  
Nick Thomas  
(802) 338-0876**

# State Soldier & Family Readiness Group

Since the absorption of the Family Readiness Support Assistant Program into the Military and Family Readiness Program, our efforts to provide continuous care to our military families has been our top priority! To help with this transition, on June 4th, the State Soldier and Family Readiness Group (SFRG) Leader position was established. This volunteer position is the only one of its kind nationwide and would oversee and assist the unit level SFRGs with coordination and distribution of donated items and/or funds. Thankfully, Jessy Smith immediately volunteered and embraced this opportunity to serve as the primary point of contact for organizations that would like to donate goods, services, or funds to the families of the Vermont Army National Guard. She also mentors the unit level SFRGs and assists with planning of fundraisers and family events. Ultimately, Jessy serves as a liaison between the SFRGs, Family Programs, the Military Points of Contact, and the chain of command when necessary and act as an advocate on behalf of the SFRG volunteers. All of which has been put in place to better serve our military community here in Vermont.



Jessica Smith  
State SFRG Leader



The State Soldier and Family Readiness Group Leader, Jessy Smith, partnered with Military Kids Vermont to receive a donation from Vermont Teddy Bear in support of Military Children & Youth impacted by deployment.

# Financial Readiness

This fiscal year has been a busy one as we continue to find our way out of the pandemic! There have been so many different financial needs that following trends have been difficult, however, understanding individual goals and helping people to understand the process to achieve them has been plentiful. Here are some success stories:

Multiple visits with a client who was just starting her military career and had questions about budgeting, credit management, and retirement planning to have a solid financial plan to move forward. She has expressed her hope to move forward while making better choices when it comes to spending money.



Megan Sather  
Personal Financial Counselor

Worked multiple times with a couple that felt like they couldn't achieve any of their goals, we started by creating a budget and then making small specific goals to begin with and as they achieved those then they could step up to the next goal they set. They were creating very broad goals and without a specific finish point they never felt like they could reach them, now they can see progress and feel motivated to continue.



Newly married couple wanting to buy their first home, we were able to create a new mortgage budget and talk through home ownership costs and they decided to wait a year to pay off bills and get in better financial shape before making this purchase.

Spoke with a family as their son was getting ready to deploy for the first time. Provided education on saving and investing options that become available during deployment. Additionally, we talked through the logistics of paying bills while deployed and options for automatic bill pay. The parents felt better knowing they had support back home while their son was gone.

Met with a spouse, her husband is deployed, about purchasing a house when he returns. Discussed budgeting for a house and the basics of the home buying process. I referred her to a Home Ownership Education class, which will give her everything she needs to know as a first-time home buyer. She felt better knowing she had a savings goal to reach, and she and her husband could both watch the savings account grow.



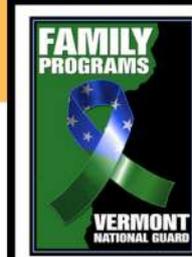
Ongoing sessions with a client to create a realistic financial plan that she can stick to and slowly pay down her debt and build up her savings. She feels confident that with the help of quarterly check-ins she can keep herself on track.

Saw a client a few times to start getting her finances and credit ready to buy a house in 2 years. We talked through the home buying process and came up with a plan to save for the closing costs. She wasn't going to use her VA eligibility because she thought it could only be used once, so now she can move up that goal since she won't need a down payment.

# Mental Health Counseling

## Perseverance and Success = Resilience The Highs and Lows of the Year

The ability to reach "one's" goals in daily life is a developmental journey. Developing awareness, skills, and resources through perseverance is what will help those in need to move forward, thrive in life, and become more resilient. A goal is to create a real sense of hope that our times will begin to change and that new prosperity will surface out of the "masks" of the pandemic.



Charlene Caiano  
Mental Health Counselor

Recognizing the strengths that came out of the pandemic tragedy as well as the urgencies and struggles of daily living during this time, gave a new understanding of one's current position in life and a new emerging of hope. In addition, the realization of how we made it through, taught us a lot about ourselves and how the virus behaves which in turn has helped us with the "ongoing" pandemic. By allowing, processing, and becoming more self-aware of the endless loop of our fears, concerns, memories, and realizing "I have had enough of this" and "I am willing to accept them" is what will keep one moving forward and persevering.

Furthermore, normalizing and being mindful of our experiences (sensations, pictures, and emotions) of what went wrong and of what went right will help one to achieve their potential and break through their physical and mental barriers. Our military families are looking for ways to re-find themselves. Some are reaching out more to their families, their friends, their coworkers, their church, Family Programs, their providers as well as a licensed professional counselor. As the Vermont Veterans Mental Health Counselor, the key in helping clients in becoming more resilient is to: build a therapeutic and trusting relationship,, developing a mindfullness communication relationship, building self-efficacy as well as having the awareness, ability and skill to manage personal/familial change and build balance (self-hood balance) to survive.



Monthly Status Report  
Mental Health Counseling-Vermont  
Contract Number: W912N-17-1032

Site: Vermont National Guard  
Mental Health Counselor

Reporting period:	TAG BRIEF I	TAG BRIEF II	Monthly Totals	Comments
Dates				
<b>CLIENTS SERVED:</b>				
Initial contact			0	Service Members: 29
On going				Veterans: 64
Follow - up	188		188	Combat Veterans: 19
Outreach	136		136	Family: 193
Presentations/Briefings			0	Couples: 109
Other			0	Spouses: 205
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>324</b>	
<b>ASSESSED ISSUE:</b>				
Academic/Educational	39		39	
Anxiety	536		536	
Benefits (VA)	14		14	
Bereavement/Grief	44		44	
Caregiver Problems	160		160	
Child/Adolescent	229		229	
Communication Skills	513		513	
Conflict/Anger	274		274	
Deployment/Reintegrati	260		260	
Depression	301		301	
Financial	141		141	
Lifestyle	521		521	
Suicide Ideations	0		0	
Physical Health	325		325	
Employment	175		175	
Relational/Family	499		499	
Religious	82		82	
Skill building/coping	619		619	
Substance Abuse	7		7	
Other				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4739</b>		<b>4739</b>	
<b>Referral given to:</b>				
Command Services				
Department of Defense				
Insurance				
Medical				
Military Family Support			0	

# Air National Guard Family Readiness

In fiscal year 2021, as the world transitioned out of the pandemic phase and into the endemic phase, the Vermont Air National Guard worked hard to provide opportunities for our airmen and their families to stay engaged and connected with one another. Full time staff and service providers met on a regular basis utilizing various planning committees to discuss the needs of our Air Force families.

**4 EVENTS = 2,037 ATTENDEES**



While meeting, collaborators identified a trend of unemployed individuals due to business closures, unavailable childcare, and/or the desire to do a career shift to accommodate a better work-life balance. As the State of Vermont granted the ability to allow larger groups to gather, the 158th Fighter Wing's Morale Committee began to host afternoon networking opportunities. These opportunities took place after the workday, where airmen and their significant other could informally connect with one another.



During the networking opportunities, military-friendly resources and service providers were available to talk about various topics: financial, employment, education, self-care, etc. Through these efforts, health and wellness was an additional trend that was identified, thus creating the opportunity for Wing Staff to plan their first Wellness Week! Wellness Week took place at the end of the fiscal year and offered stress reduction workshops, such as chair massage, aromatherapy, adult coloring, yoga, and tips for planning a reduced cost vacation. Although FY21 was another challenging year, our Airmen and families were given opportunities to stay connected and seek opportunities for rest and relaxation.

**5 SESSIONS = 113 AIRMEN/FAMILY MEMBERS**



Beau, the base therapy dog, provides comfort to Airmen and their families

**51 MEETINGS = 625 COLLABORATORS**

# Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon

With the challenges of Covid-19 still prevalent, the Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program continued to find creative measures to conduct pre and post deployment events for our airmen and their families. During these sessions, not only did we highlight the availability of all military resources, we also promoted the importance of self-care when a loved one is away for a significant period.



Kelli Langlois  
Yellow Ribbon Support Specialist

127 military affiliated individuals received reintegration resources

47 Airmen/18 Family Members were impacted by a short suspense mission

Offered 6 virtual Deployment Support Group sessions, supporting 42 families.



Despite a pandemic and because the world did not stop spinning, the Vermont Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program completed their mission in FY21. The mission was to make sure our families and Airmen had the resources and care needed before, during, and after their deployments. The most critical elements of deployments are communication and connections, and we exceeded those expectations.

# Child & Youth Program

## Mission:

To positively impact soldier and family readiness, resilience, and retention by providing secure, timely, flexible, and high-quality youth development opportunities and resources which promote the overall well-being of Vermont National Guard Children and Youth.

## Goals:

Provide life-skills and peer-to-peer connections to increase overall soldier and family readiness. Build community capacity by developing partnerships with education and community resources that support geographically dispersed military youth and families. Expand access to and awareness of federal, state and community benefits that support military youth. Utilize leadership and service learning opportunities in ARNG children and youth. Capitalize on research-based curriculum as a means of increasing the resilience skills in ARNG youth to promote soldier and family readiness and retention.



Brian Stoudnour  
Lead Child & Youth Coordinator

## FORCE IMPACT



2,260 - Adults 452 - 13-18yo 997 - 6-12yo 3,709 pax	61 - Adults 2 - 13-18yo 13 - 6-12yo 76 pax	39 - Adults 6 - 13-18yo 13 - 6-12yo 58 pax	450 - Adults 205 - 13-18yo 433 - 6-12yo 1,088 pax
<b>5,221 SMs and Dependents Served</b>	22 - Adults 0 - 13-18yo 4 - 6-12yo 26 pax	59 - Adults 5 - 13-18yo 15 - 6-12yo 79 pax	7 - Adults 7 - 13-18yo 0 - 6-12yo 14 pax
	25 - Adults 3 - 13-18yo 11 - 6-12yo 39 pax	43 - Adults 18 - 13-18yo 53 - 6-12yo 114 pax	14 - Adults 0 - 13-18yo 4 - 6-12yo 18 pax
	487 (0-5yo), branches unknown **Marine, Navy, and Coast Guard numbers listed above are inclusive of Reserve Components**		

## HOW WE IMPACTED



- 3 Command, Unit, and FRG Briefings
- 7 Educational Outreach Briefings
- 8 Community Outreach Briefings & Events
- 10 Yellow Ribbon Briefings



- 2 Partnered Events
- 3 Overnight Camps
- 14 Day Camps

**371.5  
Programming  
Hours**



- 3 Unit Family Day Youth Activity Areas
- 5 Teen Council Meetings & Trainings
- 10 Month of the Military Child Programs



**Teen Council Impact:**

VT's seven (7) member teen council convened a total of five (5) meetings/trainings and facilitated two (2) Unit Family Days–Youth Programming. This year we chose to focus on **Youth Deployment Readiness**. Early in the year they developed the "VTNG Youth Can Thrive, Not Just Survive Deployment–Resource Binder". The intent is to afford Military Youth of VT a one-stop resource and activity guide, which reached at least 226 households of VTNG children and youth facing deployment! Further efforts led them to committing to providing youth programming for two (2) large unit family days which took place during summer 2021.

- 1-2 Hour curriculum for 19 youth
- 6 Skills provided to 68 households delivered via ARNG-CYS activity packets

**Resilience Impacted:**

Trainings Provided: Character Strength / Real-Time Resilience / Assertive Communication / Mental Games / Put It In Perspective / Avoid Thinking Traps \*Adopted MRT Teen Curriculum for Problem Solving and Mental Games for the ARNG-CYS Virtual MRT Training Videos.



**Volunteer Impact:**

Volunteers are a force multiplier for our youth Program. Throughout FY21 they remained committed and flexible throughout the ever-changing stages of public health and safety. Here are a few ways they back to our youth:



- April Vacation Partner Camp
- Camp-In-A-Box packing and distribution
- Conservation Camp
- Hero Bear Distribution
- Unit Family Days

- 35 Volunteers committed 411.5 hours



Vermont Teddy Bear stepped up to provide lovable & huggable support for the deployment facing Military Children & Youth of VT by providing 600 "Hero Bears"! As of 30Sep21 427 bears have been issued.



We teamed up with the Rutland Youth Coalition in March 2021 to create a 'subscription' camp in a box: "Out Of The Box- es". This afforded 70 VTNG Kiddos coping with deployment 4 weeks of STEAM Programming!

## PARTICIPANT IMPACT

"I had so much fun at Conservation Camp! I learned how to shoot crossbow, muzzle loader, and even bait my own fishing hook—and I hate worms.. The best part was meeting other military kids, and talking about what it's like when my dad goes away with the Army, my other friends don't get it." ~Rayna Kosakowski, daughter of SFC Kosakowski, VTARNG



"Our kids loved the Out of the Boxes, camp in a box subscription! We are one of the deployed families, and these boxes have helped to make them feel special, and loved. The activities inside are always fun, engaging, and educational. Not to mention, the live, in-person, event to go along with it where they got to make slime, and greeting cards for their dad."

~Ashley Arcovitch, mother of 3 & spouse of CPT Arcovitch, VTARNG



# Military OneSource

Military OneSource is your 24/7 connection to information, answers and support to help you reach your goals, overcome challenges and thrive. As a member of our military family, you are eligible to use this Department of Defense-funded program anytime, anywhere. Turn to Military OneSource for tax services, spouse employment help, webinars and online training, relocation and deployment tools, and much more. Learn about some of the ways we serve you.

Military life is different from civilian life with its unique challenges. Military OneSource offers a wide range of individualized consultations, coaching, and non-medical counseling for many aspects of military life; including support with:

- **Expanded Hourly Child Care Service**
- **Adoption**
- **Special Needs**
- **Elder Care**
- **Building Healthy Relationships**
- **New MilParent**
- **Transitioning Veterans**
- **Education**
- **Health & Wellness Coaching**
- **Spouse Education and Career Opportunities**
- **Financial & Tax Consultation**
- **Document Translation**
- **Language Interpretation**
- **Peer-to-Peer Support**
- **Spouse Relocation & Transition**
- **Mobile Solutions**
- **Wounded Warriors & Caregivers**

Accomplishments/Highlights: During fiscal year 2021, the Vermont Military OneSource consultant participated in almost 400 (392) community capacity opportunities reaching over 5,124 service providers (less opportunities than the previous year BUT over 3500 additional attendees) and supported 40 (up from 12) events with approximately 7,575 attendees. Additionally, the consultant initiated 56 small group information sessions that directly reached approximately 1,162 (nearly doubled from the year before) service and family members. The consultant also identified and initiated relationships with 29 new community, state, and national resources to aid the current military population and shared the information with state contacts. These efforts were done while in recovery state from the pandemic and in support of the state initiative to focus on raising awareness of employment and financial education readiness and providing the military community with mental health resources to aid with building resiliency, health and wellness, relationship challenges, and lifestyle stressors. Additionally, support was provided to the Army National Guard Soldier Readiness Process, Yellow Ribbon, American Red Cross, American Legion Auxiliary, Franklin-Grand Isle Community Partnership, Project Vision, Community Health Promotion Council, Goodwill Northern New England, Greater Burlington YMCA, Civil Air Patrol, Military Family Community Network, the Navy Operations Support Center White River Junction, Military Kids Vermont, and Recruit Sustainment Program.

## Special Projects:

- **Wellness Workshop with the SARC/Victim Advocacy team**
- **Air Force Boosting Resiliency series**
- **“Out of the Box” Initiative (activities in a box that were mailed or picked-up) in Rutland and St. Albans**
- **United Through Reading**

**MILITARY  
ONE SOURCE**



Marcie Caulfield  
Military OneSource Consultant

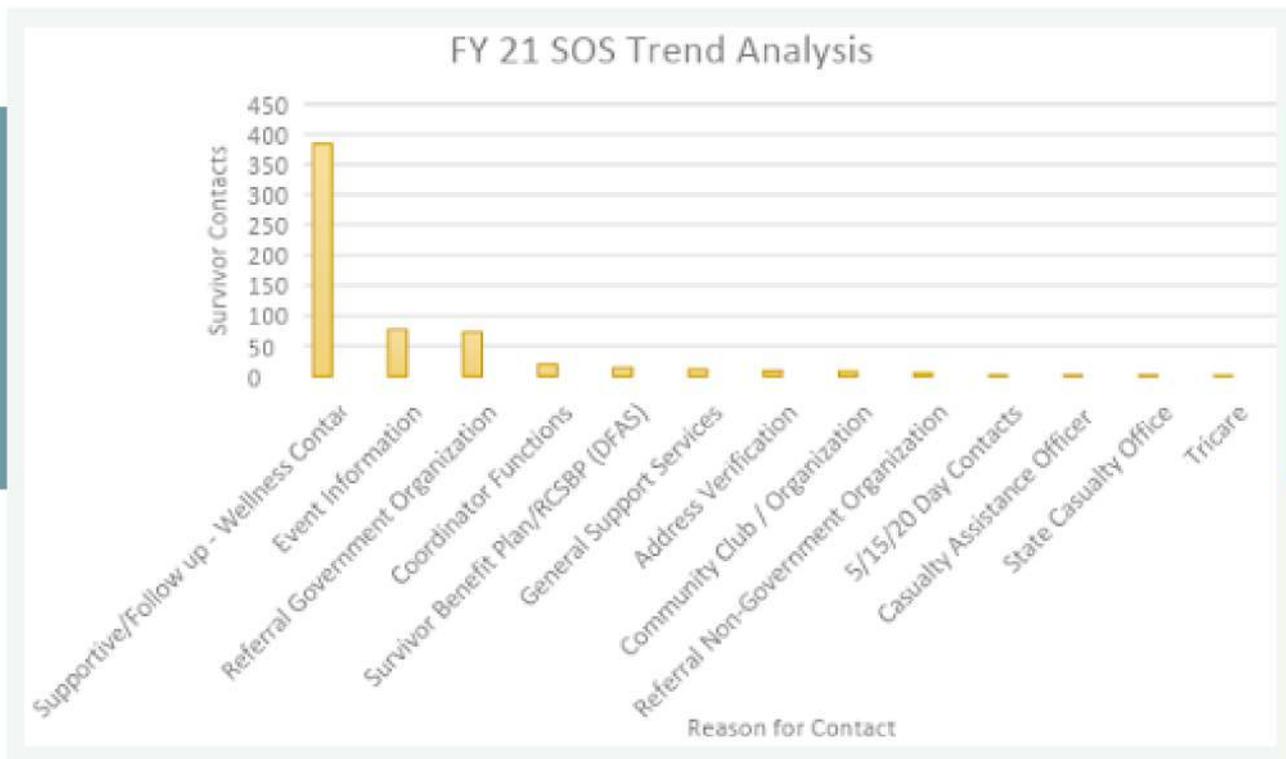


# Survivor Outreach Services

Our Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) Support Coordinator provides oversight and services to Vermont's Gold Star Families as well as the Families of the Fallen. The coordinator keeps our SOS families up to date on benefits and services they are eligible for. Our SOS families stay in touch through outreach, events, and social media. They are a part of the Vermont Family Programs for as long as they would like. We owe our Gold Star families a debt that cannot ever be repaid—the loss of their loved one in battle. It is our absolute duty to assist them when needed; provide an ear to listen, shoulder to cry on, our time whenever our families need it.



The SOS Program's purpose to deliver the Army's commitment to Families of the Fallen. SOS connects Survivors with people and services that can help them throughout the grieving process. The program offers a holistic and multi-agency approach to delivering services by providing access at garrisons and communities closest to where Surviving Families live.



During Fiscal Year 2021, Vermont transitioned into the new “norms” of COVID-19. The SOS Coordinator continued to host virtual meetings for Survivors in addition to partnering for in-person events such as the Fallen Heroes Remembrance Day Event in May, and the Vermont Remembers Run in September. In May, Tammie Connors, SOS Coordinator of 8 years, retired. Tammie’s compassion and expertise was a key part of building relationships with Survivors, creating beneficial and educational events, and set the steppingstones of the success with the SOS program in Vermont. Even in her retirement, she still assisted the new SOS Coordinator with the Vermont Remembers Run. Tammie’s empathy and commitment to Vermont’s Survivors was essential in the smooth transition to the new SOS Coordinator, Michaela LaCoss. Survivors never experienced a gap in service.

# Survivor Outreach Services



Michaela LaCoss was hired in June, since then she has completed all SOS training and is fully integrated with Survivors, community partners and Family Programs staff.

## **FY 21 Events:**

- **Fallen Heroes Remembrance Event May 2021**
- **Vermont Remembers Run September 2021**



## **Goals for FY 22 are to:**

- **Update all Survivors contact information and preferred contact methods.**
- **Be involved with existing Survivor Events. Such as the Fallen Heroes Remembrance Event and Vermont Remembers Run.**
- **Distribute the first addition of Vermont's SOS Newsletter.**

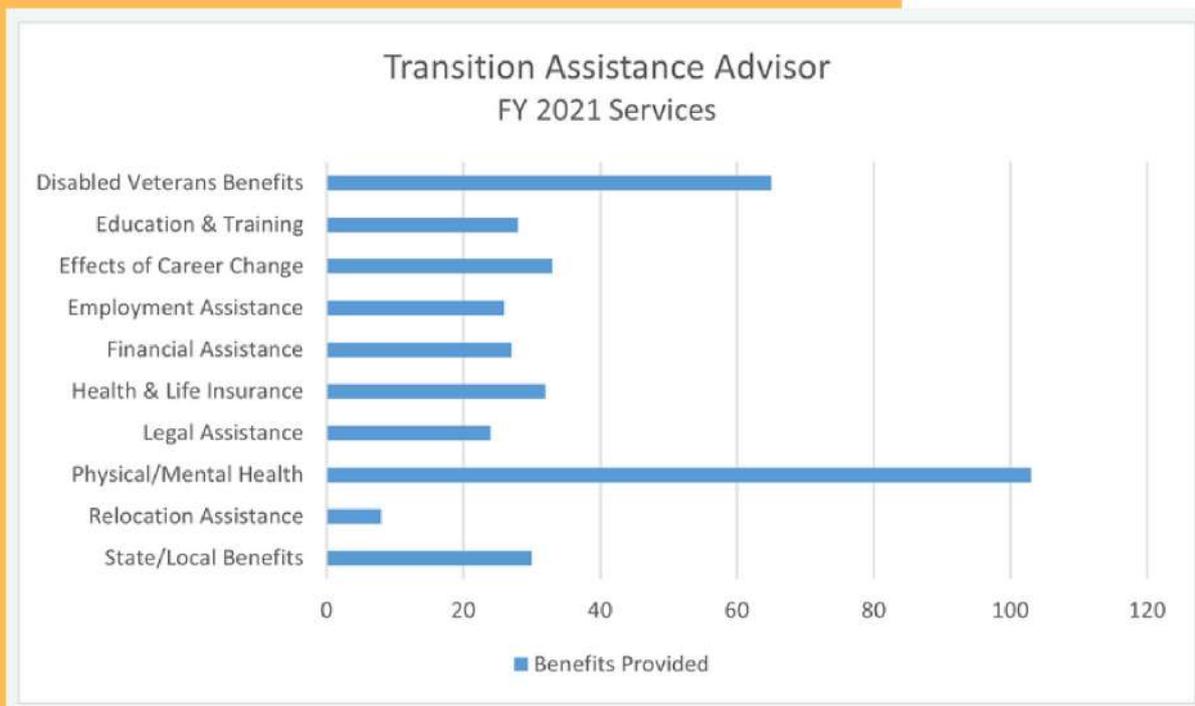
# Transition Assistance Advisor

Starting a new chapter in one's life can be a challenging experience, especially when it comes to transitioning out of the military. Whether it's starting a new job or moving to a new area, the process of leaving military service can be daunting. Fortunately, there are resources available to help make the transition smoother.



Transition Assistance Advisors (TAA) are available to provide guidance to service members as they navigate the many programs and services available to them and their families. If you served more than 180 days of continuous active duty, you are eligible for service from TAAs. Their primary role is to help reserve-component service members secure all the benefits, entitlements, and services earned through their military service.

Our TAA is dedicated to ensuring that our service members and veterans receive the utmost care and assistance as they transition out of their military service. They offer invaluable peer-to-peer support to make the process as smooth as possible for our military members, and they focus on providing assistance with benefits such as state, education, disability, physical and mental health, financial, and legal. Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic, the Vermont TAA has had a busy year, as evidenced by the caseload data presented in the table below.



At Family Programs, we want to ensure that our service members fully understand the benefits they have earned from their service. Our TAAs are available to provide helpful assistance to those transitioning out of the military. If you're in need of support during this time, please don't hesitate to reach out for help.

# Military Family Community Network

MFCN was established in 2005 in response to VTARNG soldiers experiencing heavy fighting in Iraq's Sunni Province and the reality that the VTARNG was not prepared for their return. It was apparent at this time that we would continue to be sending and receiving soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan for the foreseeable future. The leadership of Family Programs and the VTARNG, Center for PTSD in WRJ and the VA knew we couldn't do it alone. The plan was to bring together military and community service partners, stakeholders, and community partners in an effort to identify the resources available for our soldiers and their families. The resources to address the physical and emotional issues that surface when families are faced with loved ones deploying into hostile territories. MFCN is still going strong—the mission is still to identify the issues facing our veterans, service members, and their families and uncover the resources available to them and hopefully produce positive outcomes.



Miriam Boyle  
Family Readiness & Program Manager

Due to the continuing uptick in COVID 19 cases, MFCN only met once during the Fiscal Year 2021. It had been a year and a half since the network had met in person on Wednesday, July 14, 2021. Everyone was absolutely “giddy” to be able to gather in person after a year and a half of absence. The attendance of this meeting— 80 participants (in person, online, on the phone)— showed how much everyone appreciated coming together again.

On the minds of everyone at this point was the 8 different deployments happening for the VTARNG. To that end, we received a report from the “Rear Detachment” Brigade Administrative Officer, MAJ John Hearn on how the deployments overseas were going. In addition, we received an update on how the Soldier & Family Readiness Groups (SFRGs) were making calls to the families, conducting family days, etc. This brief was given by the new State Soldier and Family Readiness Group Leader, SSG Jessie Smith.



# Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots



Marcie Caulfield Michaela LaCoss Candice Broe

Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots continued to provide outstanding webinars with topical content in fiscal year 2021. The top three topics of interest among our participants were Pre-Deployment information, Peer-to-Peer Support and Youth Resiliency. In addition, the team recorded three “Second Time Around” (STA) Multimedia Education Series to be posted on the Family Programs website. All STA webinars can be found on the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service or DVIDS. DVIDS is a media and public relations operation run by the U.S. Third Army on behalf of the Department of the Army. This platform reaches a wide audience around the world.

In response to the upcoming VTRNG deployments, the Kitchen Spoons & Combat Boots team delivered the “Deployment Strong” virtual series with the support of guest speakers, such as military command, family members who have deployment experience, and service providers. These webinars focused on how to remain resilient in the face of a deployment and how to best prepare yourself and the Homefront. These webinars were well attended!

**For FY21, KS&CB held 11 scheduled webinars and 5 bonus webinars! Supporting more than 195 attendees.**



# Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

The Vermont Army National Guard's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a legislatively mandated, comprehensive program that provides a continuum of support to service members and their families throughout all phases of the deployment cycle to help reduce stressors and challenges created by deployment. Despite the pandemic, we still provided impacted military households with the information, services, referrals, and proactive outreach programs that they need to connect them with their local support community through our office and through events we hold across Vermont.



During fiscal year 2021, we had five virtual pre-deployment events that supported 995 service and family members. Though technology was not flawless, all support personnel, military service providers, and command leadership worked hard to provide pertinent and valuable information for our attendees. Below are some comments from our After Action Report (survey):

- "I felt that everything went very well!"
- "I think it was important to do this. From my perspective it went well. I wish I had more questions."
- "The Q&A process worked well and J6 was kind enough to support. Change in location [virtual] was nice."
- "Lots of pre-planning and early and frequent enough communications regarding updates to plans etc. and pivoting where and when needed."

Since the Resource Guide from fiscal year 2020 was so well received, with the help of the Child and Youth Program Coordinator, we decided to publish a Youth Deployment Resource Binder which received rave reviews from our military parents.

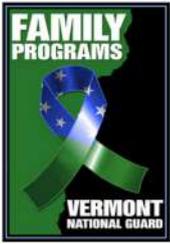
Ultimately, we look forward to putting the pandemic behind us as we hope to return to in-person support sometime in the next fiscal year. Remember, WE ARE DEPLOYMENT STRONG AND READY TO SERVE!

## Impact Bests:

2021 ushered in VT's largest deployments since 2010. Nearly 1,000 VTNG families are being impacted by deployment; gathering resources, along with creating trainings and activities was crucial to them **thriving and not just surviving** deployment. This was realized with the development of a 21 page **"Youth Deployment Resource Binder"** and a video briefing for families. The binder was made available digitalls and was downloaded **87 times**. Additionally, **139 hard copies** were sent out in the mail; impacting **226 VT households** with military children and youth.

A flyer for the Youth Deployment Resource Binder. The title is "Youth Deployment Resource Binder" in blue, with "Register for yours today!" in red below it. The text describes the binder as a "digital" full of resources for youth and families. It lists four categories of resources: Top Deployment Specific Resources, Emotional Health Resources, School Resources, and State Specific Resources. A QR code is on the right. At the bottom, it says "Register to receive your digital copy by following this link: https://www.usarrr.mil/programs/CYDRB/" and provides contact information for Brian Doudnik, Lead CSE &amp; Youth Program Coordinator, at 802-310-6246. There is also a logo for the Child &amp; Youth Program.

# How Are We Doing?



## VERMONT NATIONAL GUARD FAMILY PROGRAMS

2021  
ANNUAL REPORT



### 2021 Survey Monkey Results

- Family Programs achieved a **100%** "very professional" rating in FY2021 for our "How are we doing" surveys.
- Family Programs achieved a **100%** "**extremely knowledgeable**" rating for our "How are we doing" surveys.
- over **90%** of all surveys were "**extremely satisfied**" with the service.
- **91%** of respondents said they were "very likely" to contact Family Programs for issues in the future.
- **100%** of surveys completed came from the "referrals–military agency, community/nonprofit agency, etc."

"The whole program was great. I was in a pinch. Fuel was low and money was tight. They came through in a hurry. I also received a \$100 food card from the local Marine motorcycle chapter. It was very heart warming. I am a Marine veteran. Thank you all so much!"

VETERANS | SERVICE MEMBERS | FAMILY | COMMUNITY



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