

# Use Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to Address Your Mental Health

If you have ever reached out to a therapist or the community for mental health support, you may relate to the frustration that many individuals feel. The healthcare system is experiencing more demands for access to care, and the mental health industry is no different.

Here are some of the common obstacles to getting mental healthcare:

1. **Stigma:** Fear of judgment can result in individuals choosing not to seek out help.
2. **Cost:** Even with insurance coverage, deductibles have risen, and paying out of pocket is challenging for many people.
3. **Provider shortage:** A shortage of mental health providers in many areas leads to longer wait times for appointments. As a result, individuals may give up on looking for a provider after one or more failed attempts.
4. **Time and transportation:** Getting to and from appointments is often time-consuming, and many cannot afford to take time away from other personal or work responsibilities. In addition to scheduling conflicts, transportation challenges are also often a barrier to seeking help.
5. **Mistrust:** Having or knowing someone who has had negative experiences with mental health providers (or healthcare in general) can lead to avoidant behavior.

## The EAP as a Mental Health Resource

If you are a federal government employee or are employed by

one of the millions of private employers who offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), you are in luck. Your EAP is here to help you overcome these common obstacles by offering free, convenient, and confidential mental health support.

Magellan Federal partners with 296 federal agencies to offer a comprehensive EAP that includes short-term solution-focused counseling services. We continuously work with our clients and providers to eliminate the barriers associated with accessing mental healthcare. We collaborate across various teams and contract agreements to provide resources and quick, reliable care. Here's how we break down the barriers to mental healthcare.

- Referrals are always voluntary and confidential, easing the stigma and fear of coming forward for help.
- EAP provides free counseling sessions with no co-pay or deductible.
- Many EAPs offer a variety of virtual counseling options, which reduce delays in appointment scheduling.
- Employees can often schedule directly with an EAP provider at their convenience, either via the website's online scheduling links or through a find-help function .
- The Magellan Federal EAP call center answers calls in less than 30 seconds, eliminating the frustration of being transferred or put on hold.
- The call center is staffed with clinical experts who remove any guesswork and connect the caller with appropriate referrals and resources.
- The employer EAP website provides current information and provides reliable resources.
- When requested by a manager, health and wellness presentations are readily available to promote self-awareness and self-care and introduce individuals to available services.
- Virtual counseling sessions reduce transportation and

scheduling conflicts. This modality can also decrease the stigma some people may feel if seen walking into a counselor's office.

- EAP services often promote coping skills, resiliency, and resource use. These skills may lessen or prevent a mental health crisis in the future.

The Magellan Federal EAP eliminates common challenges associated with accessing mental health support and continues to implement new operations that improve care. Consider using your EAP as an alternative to paying out of pocket for quality mental health services. Your well-being—and wallet—will thank you!

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## Resources

- [Exploring Barriers to Mental Health Care in the U.S. | Research and Action Institute \(aamcresearchinstitute.org\)](https://www.aamcresearchinstitute.org), by Hemangi Modi, former Analyst, AAMC Research and Action Institute; Kendal Orgera, MPH, MPP, Senior Research Analyst, AAMC Research and Action Institute; and [Atul Grover, MD, PhD](#), Executive Director, AAMC Research and Action Institute.
  - [Study Reveals Lack of Access as Root Cause for Mental Health Crisis in America – National Council for Mental Wellbeing \(thenationalcouncil.org\)](https://www.thenationalcouncil.org), National Council for Wellbeing
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# Spotlight Magellan Health: World Schizophrenia Awareness Day is May 24!

World Schizophrenia Awareness Day is a vital reminder of the profound impact this complex mental health condition has on individuals and families worldwide. This day offers a platform to challenge stigmas, dispel myths, and advocate for greater understanding and support for those affected by schizophrenia. By acknowledging World Schizophrenia Awareness Day, we're highlighting the need for improved access to mental health resources and service and taking a crucial step towards fostering inclusive communities and promoting mental well-being. Magellan Health's Lyle Forehand, MD, is board certified in psychiatry and forensic psychiatry. Dr. Forehand shares his thoughts on the importance of recognizing World Schizophrenia Day, and what available resources there are to support the mental health of individuals living with schizophrenia.



## **What is some information about schizophrenia that people may not know?**

Schizophrenia is a very serious, lifelong condition that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. It shows up differently in different people, but it is almost always associated with decreased insight into what is, or is not, real. Usually starting between ages 16 and 30-years-old, individuals tend to respond better to earlier treatment. However, people who suffer with these symptoms are often very unwilling to share their scary, and often bizarre, experiences with others. That slows down, or even prevents, getting treatment. Many also have a neurological condition called anosognosia, that blocks their ability to know they are ill or

need treatment.

## **Why is it important to recognize World Schizophrenia Day?**

World Schizophrenia Awareness Day is celebrated every May 24th, in honor of the day in 1792 that Dr. Phillipe Pinel started releasing psychiatric patients from the chains that bound them at the Bicêtre Hospital outside Paris. Many of his patients had been chained for 30 – 40 years! Our hope, in recognizing this day, is that the stigma of schizophrenia (and of mental disorders in general) will lessen. More people will be able to live with dignity and with access to the same level of care as individuals without schizophrenia.

## **What are some available resources for individuals with schizophrenia?**

Information is helpful in managing most difficulties. For schizophrenia, which is often quite scary to those who suffer from the condition and to those who love them, this is even more important. NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, has been a source of information and support since 1979. The Treatment Advocacy Center, founded in 1998, has been controversial because of its advocacy for forced treatment of some people with schizophrenia, but it remains a great information resource as well as a vigorous advocate of legal changes that could enhance treatment.

Schizophrenia requires lifelong treatment. That treatment should include some amount of medication. Not all psychiatrists are comfortable prescribing these medicines, but many are willing to work with schizophrenic patients until a regimen can be found that works well for them. These regimens often change over time, or in response to fluctuations in stress, or symptoms, or both. A good relationship with a consistent provider is very important. A relationship with a full-service team is even better. This team can provide some

combination of psychotherapy, social skills training, vocational rehabilitation, supported housing, and supported employment.

## **What are some ways that individuals with schizophrenia can take care of their mental health while navigating this condition?**

Just as everyone else does, people with schizophrenia have some amount of stress (not just from their disorder!) and some amount of resilience (the ability to “bounce back” from difficulties). Resilience is a skill that all of us can improve. The four steps are: making positive lifestyle choices, forming positive social relationships, having a sense of meaning and/or purpose, and the practice of mindfulness/meditation (even just three minutes a day).

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## **Operation Warfighter: Career Transition Assistance for Wounded Warriors**

For many Service members, dealing with an injury or illness can change the entire trajectory of their career paths, leaving them unsure of their future. According to the Government Accountability Office, over 200,000 military personnel leave the military annually. While most of these Service members leave on their own terms, many leave for medical reasons caused by their active-duty service. What happens when a military career ends unexpectedly and how do we take care of our recovering Service members?

# Military Transition Challenges

In addition to experiencing anxiety and uncertainty around a new civilian career, some additional challenges veterans may experience with transitioning from military life to civilian life include:

**Health Concerns:** Health is a top concern for veterans after separating from military service. A Veterans Affairs study found that 53% of participants reported having chronic physical health conditions within three months of leaving the military. Additionally, mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may worsen during this period.

- **Identity Reevaluation:** The abrupt end of a military career can lead to a profound identity crisis. Veterans may struggle with defining their sense of purpose and self-worth outside the military.
- **Navigating Services:** Veterans transitioning out of the military may need to learn how to access civilian services such as healthcare, life insurance, and other benefits. These services were previously provided by the military, so adjusting to the new system can be challenging.
- **Social Network Changes:** Leaving the military means losing the built-in social network that comes with military life. Veterans may find it difficult to establish new connections and maintain a sense of camaraderie.
- **Employment:** While most veterans successfully transition into civilian jobs, others face difficulties in finding suitable employment. Adjusting to a different work environment and culture can be a significant challenge.
- **Paperwork and Benefits:** Navigating the paperwork and processes involved in obtaining benefits and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs can be

overwhelming. Veterans may need assistance in understanding their entitlements and how to access them.

## **Navigating the Transition to Civilian Employment**

Magellan Federal helps solve the problems of Service members transitioning from the military to the civilian sector. Operation Warfighter (OWF) is a Department of Defense (DoD) internship program that provides opportunities for recovering Service members to participate in internships with Federal agencies during their medical board and rehabilitation process.

The main objective of OWF is to place recovering Service members in supportive work settings that positively impact their recovery. The program presents opportunities to facilitate the recovering Service members' development and employment readiness by assisting in providing comprehensive resources that assist them with their transition and support their needs. This is done through resume building, exploring employment interests, and developing job skills through internship opportunities. Currently, there are over 533 participating Federal agencies that accept OWF interns.

## **Building Skills for a Civilian Career**

Magellan's Regional Coordinators (RCs) work with the recovering Service members to help identify areas of interest and hone in on transferable skills along with soft skills they have gained through their military service. Our Regional Coordinators coach them on how to build resumes, LinkedIn profiles, and make suggestions to assist them in learning how to navigate a civilian workforce setting. Our Regional Coordinators partner with all branches of service and work closely with Transition Coordinators, Recovery Care Coordinators, Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers,



Command Teams, Medical Providers, and Individual Disability Evaluation System staff to ensure participation is in the best interest of the recovering Service member.

The average Medical Board process lasts between 180 days (about 6 months) to 1 year. The OWF program is a valuable experience that lasts between 90 and 120 days (about 4 months). Participation in OWF can positively impact recovery time, provide valuable work experience in a non-military environment, and assist with developing new skills while providing benefits of career preparedness upon transition to civilian life.

All OWF Regional Coordinators have personal experience as military spouses or have served in the military themselves. They understand the military lifestyle and culture, and the stress surrounding transitioning out of the service.

## **Getting Started**

Operation Warfighter Regional Coordinators are in 10 different regions throughout the United States. These individuals work with wounded, ill, and injured Service members at all military installations. A Service member can participate in OWF if they are on active duty and meet the basic criteria of being enrolled in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) and/or assigned to a service Wounded Warrior program. The first step in the OWF process is to obtain “medical and command approval” from the Service member’s recovery team and chain of command. Once they are determined to be ready to participate, a Regional Coordinator assists the individual in identifying an internship opportunity based on their interests and capabilities.

The Operation Warfighter program is a wonderful opportunity for Service members to get real-world work experience to ease the transition to civilian life. Magellan Federal is proud to deliver OWF services that make a difference in the lives of

recovering Service members around the nation.

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# Enhancing Soldier Wellness and Performance

As our understanding of soldier wellness evolves, it's clear that a comprehensive approach is essential. In today's military landscape, physical fitness alone isn't enough – mental toughness is equally crucial. The [U.S. Army Combatives Program](#) serves as a prime platform to nurture this mental resilience, offering Soldiers a pathway to peak performance both on and off the battlefield.

The U.S. Army Combatives Program, which includes hand-to-hand combat training, offers a valuable avenue to promote mental well-being and overall performance among soldiers. Beyond its traditional role in honing physical combat skills, this program has evolved to encompass a broader mission – one that emphasizes the cultivation of mental resilience as a cornerstone of soldier effectiveness.

## Building Mental Resilience

The benefit of combat sports is that they cultivate mental toughness like no other. Soldiers are pushed to their limits, not just physically but mentally, fostering adaptability, perseverance, and a steadfast attitude in the face of adversity. Studies, such as those published in the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, underscore combat sports' profound impact on enhancing mental toughness – a cornerstone of soldier effectiveness in high-stress environments.

## Fostering Unity within Units

Engaging in combat sports brings Soldiers together uniquely and intensely. It strengthens team members' bonds, trust, and camaraderie, enhancing unit cohesion and morale. A 2020 study in the Journal of Military, Veteran, and Family Health found that Soldiers who participated in combatives training reported higher levels of cohesion and teamwork – vital components for mission success.

### **Providing an Outlet for Frustration and Stress**

The rigors of military life often lead to pent-up frustration and stress. The Combatives Program provides Soldiers with a constructive outlet to channel these emotions. By engaging in controlled physical exertion, soldiers can mitigate stress and avoid detrimental coping mechanisms. Studies, such as those in the Journal of Military Psychology, affirm the therapeutic benefits of combat sports in stress management among military personnel.

### **Integration of Mental Performance Consultants**

To unlock the full potential of combative training, the integration of mental performance consultants is paramount. These specialists offer soldiers cognitive tools and strategies to optimize their performance in combat and everyday life. From stress management to enhancing focus and resilience, mental performance consultants provide a holistic approach to soldier wellness.

### **Improving Decision-Making Under Stress**

In high-stakes scenarios, split-second decisions can mean the difference between success and failure. Research in Military Psychology underscores how combat sports improve decision-making under stress. Mental performance consultants further refine this skill, equipping soldiers with the mental fortitude to think critically and act decisively in the heat of battle.

## **Enhancing Recovery and Resilience**

Injuries and setbacks are a part of military life, and mental resilience is crucial for recovery. Mental performance consultants can guide soldiers in maintaining a positive mindset during rehabilitation, reducing the psychological impact of injuries, and facilitating a quicker return to peak performance. The U.S. Army Combatives Program offers a wealth of mental benefits essential for Soldier wellness and performance. By fostering mental toughness, unit cohesion, and stress management, this program contributes significantly to Soldier readiness.

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# **Youth Mental Health: Five Tips to Support Young Minds**

Mental health plays an important role in the overall wellbeing of youth. Child behaviors and emotions can change frequently and rapidly, making it difficult for parents and teachers to detect mental, behavioral or emotional concerns right away. Studies find an estimated 70-80% of children with mental health disorders go without care.

### **How can you nurture the mental health of your child?**

Consider the following strategies to support your child's mental wellbeing:

1. **Be intentional and attuned.** Beyond just paying attention to verbal and nonverbal cues, actively engage in open communication with your child. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions. Additionally, educate yourself about typical

developmental stages and common mental health concerns in youth, so you can better identify when your child might need support.

2. **Foster closeness.** Building a strong emotional bond with your child involves not only empathy but also active listening and validation of their experiences. Spend quality time together engaging in activities they enjoy and show genuine interest in their hobbies and concerns. By demonstrating unconditional love and acceptance, you're fostering an environment where they feel valued and understood.
3. **Encourage connections.** In addition to nurturing relationships within the family, encourage your child to form connections with peers and mentors. Support their participation in extracurricular activities or community events where they can develop social skills and a sense of belonging. Positive social interactions provide a buffer against stress and can enhance resilience in the face of challenges.
4. **Model good behavior.** As a parent or caregiver, your actions speak louder than words. Model healthy coping mechanisms for managing stress and emotions, such as practicing mindfulness, seeking support from loved ones, and engaging in hobbies or relaxation techniques. By demonstrating how to navigate difficult situations effectively, you're equipping your child with valuable tools for their own emotional wellbeing.
5. **Make healthy choices.** Emphasize the importance of self-care and overall wellness by prioritizing healthy habits as a family. Maintain a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and limit sugary or processed foods. Encourage regular physical activity and outdoor play, as exercise is linked to improved mood and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Establish consistent bedtime routines to ensure adequate sleep, as insufficient rest can exacerbate mental health concerns.

Youth mental health concerns are real, common and treatable. By implementing these strategies, you're not only fostering a supportive environment for your child's mental health but also empowering them with the skills and resources needed to navigate life's challenges effectively.

While some problems are short-lived and don't need treatment, others are ongoing and may be very serious. If you are concerned about changes in behavior or other symptoms, consult your child's doctor. Remember, seeking professional help when needed is a sign of strength, and early intervention can make a significant difference in managing mental health concerns.

Visit [MagellanHealthcare.com/about/bh-resources](https://www.MagellanHealthcare.com/about/bh-resources) for more mental health information and resources.

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#### Source

- [CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH – 2022 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report – NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#)
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## **DocTalk: Discussing Workplace Violence Awareness Month & Mental Health with Dr. Yasmeeen Benjamin**

April is recognized as Workplace Violence Awareness Month. Forbes recently published an article entitled, "[Workplace Safety And Well-Being On The Decline In 2024, Study Shows.](#)"

The article highlighted findings from a new report from the company, Traliant, [Fear Factors: A 2024 Employee Survey Report on Workplace Violence, Harassment and Mental Health](#). According to the report:

- 1 in 4 people interviewed stated they have witnessed workplace violence happening to another employee in the last five years,
- 12% said they had been the target of workplace violence themselves.
- 86% said they either strongly or somewhat agree that employers need to do more to address the mental health needs of employees in the workplace.

In this Q&A, Magellan Healthcare's Psychologist Advisor Dr. Yasmeen Benjamin provides insights on the connection between workplace violence and mental health awareness and suggestions on how employers can build a culture of safety.

**Q: How does workplace violence awareness intersect with mental health awareness in the workplace?**

**Dr. Yasmeen Benjamin:** A sense of safety is considered a basic human need in order for us to thrive in our daily lives. Given that we spend the majority of our time in the work environment, work environments must value safety, establish a set of expectations and policies around safety, and consistently reinforce these policies in order to provide a sense of safety for its workers.

**Q: How can workplaces create a culture of safety and prevention to mitigate the risk of violence in the workplace?**

**Dr. Benjamin:** The culture of safety should be imbedded within the values of the organization, as our actions tend to follow our value system.

Examples of safety-specific actions that would follow this value system are:

- Trainings
- Having ongoing discussions about the importance of building a culture of safety
- Directly and publicly addressing issues of workplace violence when they occur

Additionally, I'm a huge believer that prevention starts with an ability to assess. What is the propensity for violence given individual, social, and environmental factors? Are trends changing and how does one adjust and become more informed as a result of the trends?

**Q: What are some common mental health challenges that employees may face as a result of workplace violence or other workplace stressors?**

**Dr. Benjamin:** When safety is lacking, we can see an increase in stress, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, and job dissatisfaction (in the form of absenteeism, tardiness, and high turnover rates). In the instance of workplace violence, people can go on to develop conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder as well as other conditions. It is important to note that all of these symptoms and conditions are treatable with the right supports, resources, and interventions. It is also important to keep in mind, that generally speaking, the longer one is exposed to stressors, the longer symptoms can persist once the stressor is removed.

**Q: What resources and support services should employers provide to promote mental well-being among employees?**

**Dr. Benjamin:** It is important that we continue to take steps to make discussions surrounding mental health less taboo while respecting individual privacy. I highly suggest employees utilize insurance resources to access the mental healthcare that is available to them. Also, consider accessing wellness resources such as gym membership discounts and meditation/mindfulness app discounts. As best as we can (with



a recognition that life can be extremely busy) it's important to build and maintain healthy self-care habits. These types of habits can be instrumental when combating work-related and life-related stressors.

**Q: Are there specific strategies or initiatives that employers can implement during Workplace Violence Awareness Month to promote mental health awareness and support?**

**Dr. Benjamin:** Bringing attention to the topic is an important start. Hopefully, articles like this spark the type of assessment that I mentioned earlier and lead readers to include a personal assessment of their own mental health status and wellness practices.

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## **Spotlight Magellan Health: National Volunteer Month**

National Volunteer Month serves as a pivotal reminder of the invaluable contributions volunteers make to communities nationwide. Throughout April, we're celebrating the selflessness, dedication, and impact of those who generously give their time, skills, and resources to support the causes and organizations they believe in. National Volunteer Month not only honors those individuals who devote themselves to volunteerism, but also inspire others to join in and find a cause they're passionate about. Talia Hammer, manager, network development, OCONUS MFLC/PFC, is an active volunteer with [Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support](#). Talia was also the first-place recipient of the Barry Smith Caring Award and was awarded a \$5,000 donation for Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss, an organization that has significant meaning to Talia.

Continue reading to learn more about the volunteer work Talia does with Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss:



## **What volunteer work do you participate in and for what organizations?**

I am currently very active in volunteering with Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support to help parents who have experienced the heartache of a pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or infant death. I became a trained Parent Companion and co-facilitate grief support groups offering peer support to other bereaved families. I served on the Parent Panel and was filmed telling my story at a Sharing and Caring Training to trained professionals in the community to learn how to serve families at their time of loss. I became Share's first Social Media Ambassador to increase awareness about Share and baby loss through personal advocacy on Facebook and Instagram. I volunteer with an open heart and generosity of my time serving on event planning committees, help with the annual walk, plan, and volunteer at fundraisers. I am the Secretary of the Social Board and attend every Share event and I organize a donation drive yearly on my daughter's birthday to give items to the Share office in honor of her.

## **How did you get involved with this organization and volunteering in general? How long have you been volunteering?**

In November 2016, our daughter was born at 32 weeks gestation and lived for 35 minutes as she was born with no kidneys. After the loss of my daughter, I turned to Share for help with my grief. Two years later, I decided I wanted to give back to other grieving parents. I have been volunteering with Share for the past 5 years. Volunteering with Share is how I keep my daughter's memory alive.

## **Why is it important for others to volunteer in their communities?**

It is important for others to volunteer in their community as there are many non-profit organizations that depend on volunteers to help the organization operate daily and to give back to the community in need. With the wide range of organizations that need volunteers, I believe there is something out there for everyone to volunteer and to give their time. Find the organization or organizations that is closest to your heart and donate your time to them as they will forever be thankful for all the help they receive. When you find commonality with others who have experienced what you have, volunteering will come so easily.

## **Is there anything else about what National Volunteer Week you'd like to highlight (could also highlight specific organization)?**

In 2023, I received the Heart and Hands volunteer of the year award from Share. Statistics show that 1 in 4 families experience pregnancy/infant loss and I'm honored to partner with Share to help bereaved parents find hope and healing, all while honoring my daughter's life. I feel very lucky to work for Magellan who also gives us Volunteer Time Off (VTO) hours to be able to help our community. I appreciate the opportunities Magellan offers to us to help make the world a better place.

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## **Tips for Counseling Success**

# **with Military Children: Q&A with Paul Taraborelli LICSW, IMH-E®**

With approximately 1.7 million dependent military children across all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, experts who support military children must understand the unique experiences and diverse needs that require a specialized counseling approach.

This topic will be the focus of the upcoming Magellan Federal webinar on Thursday, May 16, "[Connecting with Military Children: Counseling Techniques for Success.](#)" Expert panelists for this webinar will include:

- **Keionna Baker, LPC, LMHC, LCMHC**, clinical project manager, Military & Family Life Counseling Program
- **Paul Taraborelli LICSW, IMH-E®**, child youth behavioral director, Military & Family Life Counseling Program
- **Susan Trotman, LCSW**, regional supervisor, Military & Family Life Counseling Program

The webinar will focus on trends, concerns, and intervention techniques that create a sense of connectedness and belonging for military-connected children and youth. To attend, [register here](#).

In this Q&A, expert panelist Paul Taraborelli LICSW, IMH-E® shares a preview of information that will be shared in the webinar and why it is critical for counselors and other professionals who work with military children to invest time into enhancing their skills by attending.

**Q: What are some key challenges that military children commonly face?**

**Paul Taraborelli:** There are more than 1.7 million military children who face many challenges and unique experiences because of their parents' service. Military families move on average every two to three years, impacting military children through changing schools and support networks. Military families often experience changes in parents' access in terms of regular face-to-face contact, changes in caregivers, and changes in family routines due to a military parent being called away from their family to serve and support their mission. To manage these changes during their overall growth and development as a child, military children often rely on resilience skills they develop over time. By acknowledging and celebrating the many unique aspects of military culture and being a military-connected child, we can help these children be equipped to emotionally adjust to challenges throughout their lives.

**Q: How do these challenges impact their emotional well-being?**

**Taraborelli:** Due to changes in locations, fluctuations in daily schedules and routines, and the temporary absence of a primary caregiver/parent can lead to short-term and possibly long-term effects on a child's overall wellbeing and the development of age appropriate social emotional skills.

**Q: What are ways that counselors can help military children navigate these transitions and build resilience?**

**Taraborelli:**

Focus topics when working with military children to support and enhance social emotion skill development and reduce stress, including:

- Resiliency skill-building
- Development and use of age-appropriate problem-solving skills
- Development of healthy relationships skill building, including ways to express and manage their emotions

**Q: What are some common misconceptions or stereotypes about military children, and how can counselors work to challenge and overcome these misconceptions?**

**Taraborelli:** A common misconception is that military children are used to moving a lot, changing schools, making new friends, and can adjust easily to changes in their lives. Counselors can engage military children in conversations about how they are coping with and adjusting to these changes both in the past and presently. Counselors can explore, identify, and develop age-appropriate coping skills while working with military-connected children. If possible, provide opportunities for peer support through group meetings and activities with other military-connected peers.

Another misconception is that due to attending different schools in different locations, military children are not as academically prepared as their nonmilitary peers. Counselors can explore with military children their learning journey and what they have learned both academically and outside of school during their life as a military child. Counselors can focus on, celebrate, and acknowledge the experiences they have had compared to their nonmilitary peers and how those experiences contribute to their overall sense of self and the skills they have developed academically, socially, and emotionally.

**Q: Lastly, what advice would you give to counselors who are looking to enhance their skills and effectiveness in working with military children and their families?**

**Taraborelli:** Make a conscious effort to better understand the unique aspects of military culture and what military children experience in their lives as military children. Use this knowledge to provide additional information and insight when assessing presenting issues or concerns a military child may be facing and develop tailored goals for counseling and support for the child.