

HIDDEN HELPERS



Elizabeth Dole Foundation
CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



Joining Forces and Hidden Helpers Coalition Pledge Support to Children in Military and Veteran Caregiving Families

In April 2021, Joining Forces partnered with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Wounded Warrior Project® to launch Hidden Helpers, a new initiative designed to create supportive programming for and bring awareness to the more than 2.3 million children of wounded, ill or injured service members or veterans.

On November 10, 2021, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Senator Elizabeth Dole, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough, and Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, alongside the Hidden Helpers Coalition of more than 60 public and private sector organizations, chaired by Steve Schwab and Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington, announced a series of commitments to support children in military and veteran caregiving families and enhance the support services available to them. More than 40 unique commitments for new and expanded resources, programs, and financial pledges mark a significant and unprecedented leap forward in how America supports its more than 2.3 million military-connected caregiver children and youth.

These commitments will narrow the gaps in support for these children identified by a new report, conducted by Mathematica Research and commissioned by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation: [Hidden Helpers at the Frontlines of Caregiving: Supporting the Healthy Development of Children from Military and Veteran Caregiving Homes](#). The Hidden Helpers Coalition's groundbreaking efforts to address the needs highlighted in the report serve as a call to action for all sectors to expand and build support for children in military caregiving homes.

Key Findings:

- There are approximately 2.3 million children under the age 18 living with a disabled veteran. (This is the first-ever statistical analysis of the likely number of Hidden Helpers in the U.S.)
- Attention to children's needs by their parents is often crowded out by caregiving needs.
- Military and veteran families experiencing high levels of disruption because of injury were more likely to report high levels of child distress; this distress can severely impact the emotional and psychological development of children.
- Hidden Helpers were more likely to:
 - experience isolation and have fewer opportunities to interact with peers;
 - have difficulties expressing emotion and learning in school;
 - and have more health problems such as high levels of stress, burnout, and fatigue.
- Children from military caregiving homes are more likely than children in non-caregiving homes to experience high levels of anxiety and depression.

BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION

- Through the **Joining Forces** Interagency Policy Committee, the White House has convened a Children in Caregiving Families cross-agency working group to explore existing data and programs. The working group will produce a report outlining plans for future research and identifying areas of collaboration between agencies to better support military and veteran children in caregiving homes.
- The **Department of Defense** (DoD) and the **Department of Veterans Affairs** (VA) will convene an exploratory meeting to focus on transition efforts, specifically focused on military and veteran families and children to identify ways the Departments can work together to better support families in transition.
- Working collaboratively, VA and the **Departments of Education and Health and Human Services**, along with stakeholders, will develop a toolkit for educators at all levels to help them better understand and support children who live in veteran households, and specifically, veteran caregiving households.
- DoD has committed to train all non-medical counselors within the Military OneSource and Military Family Life Counselor programs on the needs of children and caregivers in military caregiving families.
- In 2022, DoD's Office of Military Community and Family Policy will work with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to better understand where and how military children are accessing mental health care.
- VA will implement a Family Coordinator Program, with social workers linking veterans with support for their spouses and/or children. The Family Coordinator will be knowledgeable about resources in the local community as well as the federal government to support veterans and their families.
- VA's Elizabeth Dole Center of Excellence for Veteran and Caregiver Research is collecting qualitative data on the lived experiences of parents and youth who live in veteran caregiving households. This data will be used to inform the role of the new Family Coordinators.
- The **National Endowment for the Arts'** Creative Forces initiative seeks to advance health, well-being, and quality of life for military and veteran populations, including families and caregivers. The initiative includes creative arts therapies at clinical sites and through telehealth, as well as resilience-building efforts through the new Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant program launched in 2021.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT



Wounded Warrior Project® has pledged the largest investment in creating Hidden Helpers programming, with a transformational commitment of \$1.5 million that will directly align with the research findings and sustain a new culture of support for military children and youth nationwide.



The USAA Foundation, Inc., will commit more than \$1.4 million in 2022 to support military caregivers and military children through alliances with key nonprofit partners.



Bob & Dolores Hope Foundation will commit \$500,000 to the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's caregiver emergency financial relief fund to support military and veteran families in 2022.



The Bob Woodruff Foundation will commit to funding new opportunities in 2022 and work with the coalition to improve impact evaluation efforts.



Cerner will dedicate funding to transform clinical health care by supporting investments in health care professionals that increases their knowledge and understanding of the unique experiences of Hidden Helpers.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING MATERIALS



Sesame Workshop will work with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to create new messages around military caregiving to share through its featured characters. Additionally, they will provide new online workshops about military caregiver kids for educators, health care professionals, and other relevant practitioners. Sesame Workshop joins other Coalition members in creating educational materials and experiences for and about hidden helpers.



Military Child Education Coalition will lead an effort with educators nationwide to developing and curate evidence-informed content for military students in a caregiver role. MCEC® will also develop a new student-to-student track focused on hidden helpers, and a new focused track on the needs of caregiving children, at their MCEC Global Summit in July 2022.



PsychArmor will work with the Coalition to support educational development and training opportunities for educators and health care professionals on how to best care for caregiver kids.

HEALTH CARE COMMITMENTS



The **Elizabeth Dole Foundation** will build on its existing Campaign for Inclusive Care to launch a new clinical transformation effort aimed at making health care environments more responsive to the needs of caregiving families, including children and youth. With the leadership of one of the nation's largest pediatric health systems, **Nemours Children's Health**, and the generous financial contribution of **TriWest Healthcare Alliance**, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, together with **Humana Military**, **Magellan Federal**, and **Cohen Veterans Network**, will engage our nation's health care providers to create a new national model of support for caregiver children within medical institutions. Together these commitments will ensure that the physicians, nurses, and mental health and allied health professionals better understand and address the unique challenges military children face at every stage of their development.

CareLinx, a Sharecare company, commits to extending their contribution and support to the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and VA's Respite Relief Program in 2022. The program has already supported more than 1,600 families since its launch in 2020, which has enabled military and veteran caregivers to care for their children and better manage their households.



NEW PROGRAMMING

Coalition members have also committed to an unprecedented number of new programs that will be launched to support hidden helpers with peer-support opportunities, mental health resources, and financial support over the next year.



The American Red Cross will launch a new resiliency workshop for hidden helpers led by licensed mental health professionals. This workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss challenges and concerns, and to develop and learn the tools to build upon their natural resilience.



The American Association for Caregiving Youth will work with Coalition members to ensure that programs for hidden helpers are also shared with non-military youth caregiving leaders.



The Armed Services YMCA commits to expanding support for caregiver children across its programming and specifically through its Children's Waiting Room childcare service program at military treatment facilities.



Blue Star Families commits to increased programs for caregiver children and collaborating with other coalition members on their military family resilience metric.



Camp Corral commits to launching a new video resource in December 2021 that will educate parents on how to help their hidden helper at home. They also commit to supporting 1,100 caregiver kids through their summer camp programs in 2022, and to finding new opportunities of support for enrichment workshops and peer support workgroups.



Caregivers on the Homefront commits to launching a new peer mentorship program in 2022 that will pair older teen hidden helpers with younger hidden helpers for a six-week virtual program, which will facilitate support for younger children in caregiving homes.



Combined Arms commits to launching a Caregivers Community Group to provide peer support to caregivers and caregiver kids in Texas.



Kids Rank commits to expanding their art therapy programs to support more military-connected children as they explore their social and emotional health.



Military Family Advisory Network commits to supporting the coalition by developing a standardized approach to measuring impact, to ensure that all existing and new programs are adhering to rigorous program evaluation metrics.



National Military Family Association commits to serving hidden helpers of all ages across their Operation Purple Programs, including virtual at-home programs, retreats, and camps).



Our Military Kids commits to expanding their work with new grant opportunities to support more than 100 hidden helpers in 2022.

NEW PROGRAMMING CONT.

PHILIPS

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CARTER CAREGIVERS
INSTITUTE

Philips commits to working with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to create a new mental health journey map that will outline the behavioral needs and challenges that encounter caregiving families.

Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers commits to supporting caregiver kids through a mobile app to facilitate immediate access to resources needed during moments of mental health crisis.



Sugar Bear Foundation commits to offering support for veteran children who have lost a service member or veteran parent.



Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors commits to providing appropriate bereavement expertise and services for all those grieving the loss of their veteran and to offering hidden helpers safe spaces to experience their grief and embrace healing.



United Through Reading commits to providing 200 hidden helpers with free reading kits and resources to support education at home.



YMCA of the USA commits to expanding efforts to engage youth from veteran and military families in its camp programs, particularly those that are part of the YMCA-National Park Service Youth Outdoors Summer Camp program.

RESOURCE NAVIGATION



The **Elizabeth Dole Foundation** and **Wounded Warrior Project** will establish a Family Resource Hub that will be a go-to destination for caregiver families in search of resources.



New programs will also be promoted and integrated into existing online networks with the help of **Amazon Military Affairs** and **RallyPoint**, the **Code of Support Foundation's** PATRIOTLink®, **Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families** AmericaServes Platform, and **Unite Us**.



The **National Association of Counties** commits to providing resources and tools to county government leaders and integrating veteran and hidden helper data onto their County Data Explorer tool, to make data about the military and veteran families more accessible to county officials and local leaders.



Esposas Militares Hispanas USA has stepped up to provide Spanish translation services to the Coalition, so that resources and materials are available and accessible to diverse communities. They will also continue outreach and support to hidden helpers inside their community group.

