

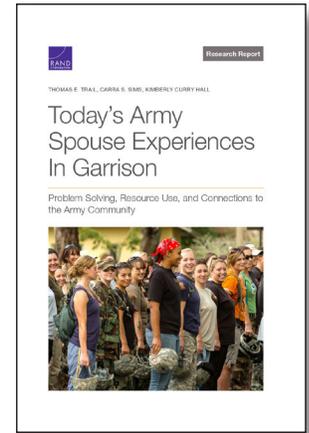


# Today's Army Spouse Experiences In Garrison

## Problem Solving, Resource Use, and Connections to the Army Community

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[www.rand.org/t/RRA429-1](http://www.rand.org/t/RRA429-1)



The U.S. Army provides many resources to help soldiers and their families cope with major life events associated with Army service. Through survey data and qualitative interviews, the authors explore Army spouses' experiences in navigating available resources, finding that the Army could do more to get the word out about available assistance and highlight the “one-stop shopping” features of existing but underutilized resources.



### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What resources exist to help Army spouses and their families, and what are spouses' experiences in navigating these resources?
- Do spouses' experiences vary across garrisons and according to the connections that Army spouses make with each other and the Army community as a whole?
- How can spouses' connections with each other and the community foster better resource navigation and more effective resource use?
- What can be done to improve spouses' experiences with resource navigation?



### KEY FINDINGS

- Army spouses' experiences across garrisons are similar when it comes to navigating available resources.
- Spouses experience challenges when navigating resources, and some experience getting “bounced around.”
- Spouses desire a “one-stop shop” that serves the function of providing an entryway to resources.
- Army spouses learn about the resources available to them most frequently from other Army spouses, whether through social media or in person.
- Spouses identify Army Community Service (ACS) and Army Family and Morale, Welfare, and

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Recreation (MWR) as programs with positive reputations.

- Connections with other spouses are helpful for a range of reasons: as social connections, guides to military life and culture, sources of information about available resources or services, and useful entry points when arriving at a new location.
- Connection offers an opportunity to alleviate the challenges of military life, but not all Army spouses want greater connection: Some report being too busy with other commitments to want or need a higher level of engagement with the Army community.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Leverage Soldier and Family Readiness Groups as a means of informing spouses of available resources; these groups should continue to provide a venue for connection with the Army community when such connection is desired.
- Provide welcome sessions, ideally conducted in person, specifically for spouses who have recently moved to a garrison.
- Develop a website where spouses can follow up on resources described during an initial welcome session.
- Consider incorporating formal, interactive online activities providing connection and social support to Army spouses, such as moderated online forums specifically for those seeking help.
- Use such resources as ACS and MWR as avenues to provide spouses with information on the range of problem-solving programs available to them.
- Increase the prominence of Military OneSource as a guide to finding local resources, and make it easier to use for that purpose.
- Develop more consistency across garrison homepages with regard to information about services.
- Optimize Army or other military web-based resources so that spouses using a general search engine (e.g., Google) to search for resources are likely to be connected with appropriate Army resources.
- Ensure that warm handoffs between programs are standard rather than the exception.



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