

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM ASSESSMENT



FISCAL YEAR 2018



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP), in partnership with OPNAV, carried out a Spouse Engagement Study (SES) over a period of nine months, from January to September 2018. The SES solicited feedback from Navy family members, Navy leadership, CNIC headquarters staff and FFSP staff to review programs and services administered through Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs).

The SES was conducted in compliance with DoDI 1342.22, *Military Family Readiness*, which mandates a triennial assessment of military family needs and is also in alignment with guidance provided by the Chief of Naval Operations in the *Navy Family Framework* (November 2017). The SES was also conducted in response to a challenge delivered by CNIC leadership to “identify innovative solutions for the delivery and integration of Navy quality of life services and programs by ensuring timely and convenient access utilizing technology, partners and facilities to meet mission readiness, enable retention and meet customer expectations,” Jerry Hieb, CNIC Fleet and Family Readiness (N9).

A three-pronged approach to data collection included an online survey and virtual and face-to-face focus groups. This thorough and comprehensive review included nearly 5,000 participants from every Navy region. Four key issues were identified:

- **Awareness:** A significant number of Navy spouses are unaware of FFSC programs and services.
- **Perception:** Navy spouses and commands who are aware of FFSC programs and services view them as primarily reactive, rather than prevention-focused.
- **Accessibility:** Brick-and-mortar FFSCs are meeting a fraction of perceived family needs through current service delivery practices.
- **Training:** Existing personnel need to be retrained in new marketing and service delivery practices.

RESPONDENTS' KEY ISSUES



Awareness
Perception
Accessibility
Training

This report expands on these key issues and provides recommendations for addressing each, as well as relevant background information and rationale for the recommendations.

PURPOSE

ASSESSMENT OF FFSP SERVICE DELIVERY

Target Audience: spouses and family members in all Navy regions

COMPLIANCE WITH DoDI 1342.22

Triennial assessment of FFSP service delivery

ALIGNMENT WITH THE NAVY FAMILY FRAMEWORK GOAL ONE

To improve the Navy Family Support Programs

ACTION

THREE-PRONG APPROACH

(4,625 participants)

- Online survey (4,000)
- Face-to-face focus groups (530)
- Online Focus Groups (95)

AGE GROUPS

- 47%: 26–35
- 32%: 36–45
- 10%: 22–25

TIME IN THE MILITARY

- 21%: 7–10 years
- 20%: 1–3 years
- 18%: 4–6 years

FEEDBACK RESULTS

(Top three in each category)

PROGRAM FAMILIARITY

- 76%: Ombudsman Program
- 73%: Family Readiness Groups
- 58%: Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)

INFORMATION/SERVICE SOURCES

- 41%: Fleet and Family Support Center
- 37%: Facebook
- 29%: Ombudsman

DESIRED ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

- 41%: FFSP mobile app
- 36%: Increase face-to-face interactions
- 35%: Technology tools (live chat/videos/webinars)

KEY ISSUE 1: AWARENESS

A significant number of Navy spouses are unaware of programs and services provided by the Fleet and Family Support Program at FFSCs.

Programs that support individual, family and command readiness have “kept the watch” for Sailors and their family members since the inception of the Navy’s family support program over 39 years ago. Programs and services are guided by public law and DoD, SECNAV, OPNAV and CNIC instructions and are required to provide services to all military personnel and family members assigned or domiciled in the center’s geographic area. FFSCs are a mission-essential resource for service members, families and command leadership seeking resiliency programs and services that help keep Sailors mission-ready and prepared to meet the unique challenges of the Navy lifestyle.

Since the establishment of FFSCs in 1979, Navy leadership has continued to recognize that the provision of a reasonable quality of life for Navy personnel and their families is both ethical and pragmatic and directly affects job performance, retention and readiness. As a result, the scope and complexity of FFSCs have continually expanded to meet the evolving needs of today’s Sailors, families and commands. The core mission of information and referral, education and training, and counseling have remained the foundation of FFSC programs and services. However, programs such as Personal Financial Management (PFM), the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), New Parent Support (NPS), Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR), Deployed Resiliency Counselor (DRC) Program, Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL) and Navy Gold Star (NGS) have been added in response to the emergent needs of Sailors and their families and continue to evolve to meet the needs of an increasingly complex Navy mission.

FFSP PROGRAMS

Clinical Counseling
Deployed Resiliency Counselors (DRC)
Emergency Case Management (ECM)
Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)
Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
Family Member Employment
Family Readiness Groups (FRG)
Individual Deployment Support (IDS)
Life Skills Education
Navy Gold Star (NGS)
New Parent Support (NPS)
Ombudsman Program
Personal Financial Management (PFM)
Relocation Assistance
Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL)
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)
Transition Goals, Plans, Success (TGPS)
Volunteer Services

Even as programs and services have expanded and evolved, customer contacts within FFSP core programs at FFSCs on or near bases worldwide have been declining in recent years. From 2010-2017, contacts per active duty Sailor have declined by approximately 38% (34.86 contacts to 22.39 controlling for Navy end strength of 324,400 vs. 322,900). See **Figure 2** in **Section 1.2:** Background.

While there is no single explanation for this decrease in contacts, lack of awareness is a likely significant contributing factor. Of 4,625 respondents to the spouse engagement survey and participants in spouse engagement focus groups:

- Only 363 (about 8 percent) recognized all current FFSC programs.
- 141 (about 3 percent) knew none at all.

The most widely recognized programs registered with fewer than three-quarters of respondents, and many scored much lower than that (see **Table 1**). A number of survey respondents left comments that confirm this lack of awareness, such as, “I wish I had known about everything that was available” and “I did not know what they do at the FFSC until I became an ombudsman myself.”

1.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Raising awareness of FFSCs and their programs among Navy spouses should begin where spouses look when they need the types of services and resources FFSCs provide. As **Table 2** shows, spouses report that they mainly look for services on line. FFSCs are in first place and ombudsmen are in third as information sources, but *three out of five top spots in the table are web-based*.

Respondents' suggestions for raising the profile of FFSC programs and services should be viewed against the backdrop of their interest in digital resources, as reflected in **Table 2**. Recommendations elsewhere in the spouse engagement online survey included 228 general marketing suggestions and 157 recommendations focused exclusively on media marketing. Trends in suggestions from spouses include:

1.1.1 Engage communications and marketing professionals. Customers and potential customers have high expectations about the quality and placement of official and professional communications. In particular, “digital native” Sailors and family members younger than 30 (more than two-third of enlisted members and about one-third of officers) move in a media-rich environment where glossy promotions compete for their attention. Mistakes and omissions are noticed and highlighted, and underwhelming messages are ignored. Search-engine optimization (SEO) — techniques to ensure that a website places high among search results on Google, Bing or Yahoo — is a unique body of knowledge but an important one for reaching the “right” customers.

1.1.2 Partner with Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR). Many spouses expressed a high opinion of the MWR online marketing, especially its mobile applications (“apps”). They expressed the wish that their local FFSCs had something similar with FFSC branding. When overseas spouses were asked what apps they used the most for military information, most cited their MWR app due to its relevance and customization to their particular location.

1.1.3 Develop and improve new spouse orientation.

In interviews, respondents reported having learned haphazardly about FFSC programs and services during their own initiations to Navy life. (See **Figure 1**.) Many suggested improvements to existing spouse orientation programs (such as the 12-hour COMPASS program for new spouses offered through Naval Services FamilyLine and other new spouse orientation courses, including live local initiatives and online offerings), which included more robust training on FFSC programs and services, providing a spouse check-in sheet for installations or even developing a mandatory spouse indoctrination program (for instance, as a condition for receiving an ID or a housing assignment).

A strong demand signal for adding “high tech” into the FFSP service model while also maintaining “high touch” is a key finding of the Spouse Engagement Study.

[web-based or web-mediated]

[in-person and onsite]

Figure 1: Respondents Call for Better New Spouse Orientation

“ Hand out a catalog of services when new spouses receive their IDs.

Better channels for new spouses to know about FFSC programs. Most of the time, the military member doesn't relay the information.

A more comprehensive new spouse program. Even though I attended a class, I still found myself scrambling to find the resources I needed.

Do more to promote the resources to new spouses. Sometimes it's hard to find what you're looking for because there are so many different websites and such.

Packet of prepared links and programs for new spouses. I and my Sailor did not know of these programs. ”

1.1.4 Create and implement a spouse sponsorship program.

This recommendation often followed conversations about new spouse orientation, especially at overseas installations. It was noted that many times, once a service member reports to the new duty station, mission readiness is the priority and families are essentially left to acclimate on their own.

1.1.5 Communicate via social media often and in a variety of

mediums. As **Figure 2** reveals, today's Navy spouses turn first and frequently return to social media for information and assistance.

- More than one-third of all respondents (36 percent, more than cited any other resource) report turning to Facebook for information.
- Other social media platforms, such as Pinterest and YouTube, are also cited.
- There was also a strong interest in Navy/military spouse blogs.
- Social media-related issues cited by SES respondents included:
 - FFSC's own use of social media appears inconsistent. Several spouse respondents complained that Facebook pages in their geographical areas contained outdated information and had not been updated recently. This creates the impression that neither the medium nor the information is a priority.
 - Some spouses who were ombudsmen or FFSC staff members stated that access to social media in their locations is restricted by IT staff, public affairs staff, FFSC managers and/or command policies.

Clarification and direction of leadership intent regarding social media marketing would seem to be an important first step to realizing its potential for increasing awareness of and access to programs and services. Responsibilities of stakeholders should be established by CNIC instruction and a corresponding training curriculum for FFSC personnel.

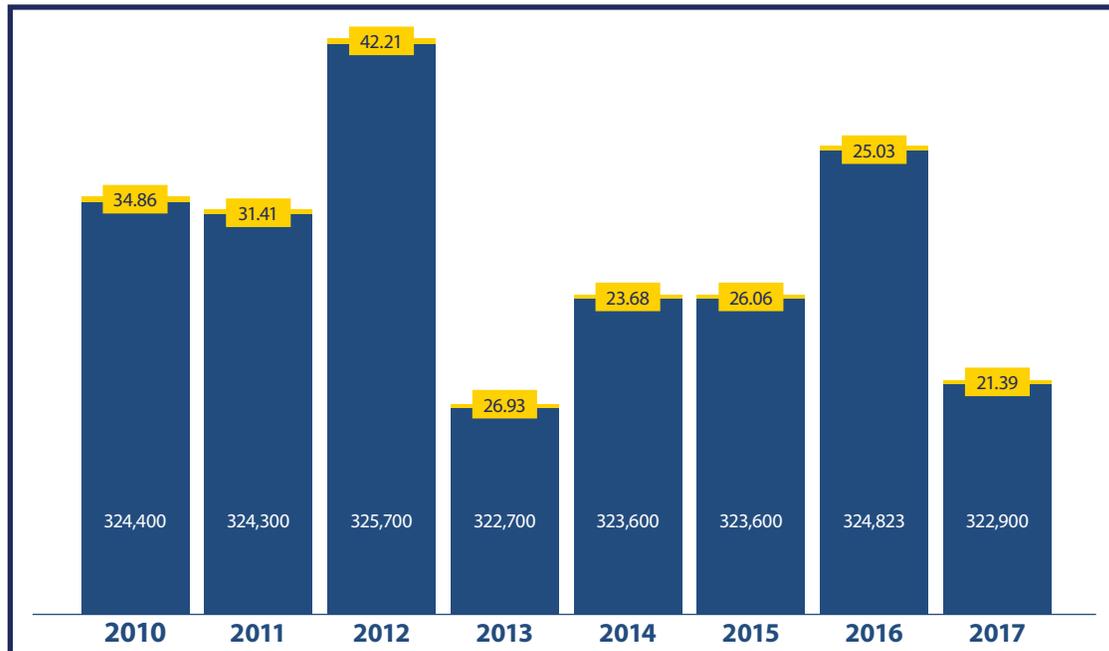
Official Navy volunteers can be especially important as consumers of (and contributors to) blogs popular with Navy spouses. The challenge facing CNIC is providing "official information" in the locations where spouses consume their information, which are in many cases "unofficial channels."

*"Additional programs? A spouse/family sponsorship type program. Ombudsman and FRG groups are great... but it would be nice if you could have a special volunteer show you around the area and give the ins and outs of the area that you learn only by living there."
– Navy spouse survey respondent*

1.2 BACKGROUND

Data referenced in **Section 1.1** are reported below. The key issues and recommendations are based in part on this information.

Figure 2: Total FFSC Contacts/U.S. Navy End Strength



Sources: CNIC Annual Reports 2010-2017; Navy Cyberspace.com Active-duty Personnel Projections 2010-2017

Table 1: Respondents Reporting Awareness of FFSC Programs and Services

Fleet and Family Support Programs	Number of Respondents Aware	Percent of Respondents Aware
Ombudsman	3,431	74.2%
Family Readiness Groups (FRG)	3,313	71.6%
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)	2,633	56.9%
Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)	2,621	56.7%
Life Skills Education	2,413	52.2%
Personal Financial Management (PFM)	2,366	51.2%
Family Advocacy Program (FAP)	2,214	47.9%
Deployment Support	2,121	45.9%
Emergency Case Management (ECM)	2,094	45.3%
Relocation Assistance	1,909	41.3%
Clinical Counseling	1,882	40.7%
Family Member Employment	1,815	39.2%
Transition Goals, Plans, Success (TGPS)	1,768	38.2%
New Parent Support (NPS)	1,727	37.3%
Navy Gold Star (NGS)	1,553	33.6%
Volunteer Services	1,410	30.5%
Deployed Resiliency Counselors (DRC)	1,119	24.2%
Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL)	644	13.9%

Source: Spouse Engagement Study. Total respondents = 4,625.

Table 2: Sources for Information, Referral Services or Personal/Family Support Services

Source	Number of Respondents Aware	Percent of Respondents Aware
FFSC	1,873	40.5%
Facebook	1,674	36.2%
Ombudsman	1,316	28.5%
Military OneSource	1,283	27.7%
Internet (Google, Yahoo)	1,208	26.1%
Military Spouse Blogs	1,189	25.7%
Medical Treatment Facility	856	18.5%
Civilian Professionals	672	14.5%
Official U.S. Navy websites	672	14.5%
Child Development Center	465	10.1%
Literature Tables/Racks	455	9.8%
Chaplain	451	9.8%
Other	360	7.8%
Community-based Organizations	291	6.3%
Pinterest	91	2.0%
Spouse	87	1.9%
Instagram	58	1.3%
YouTube	58	1.3%
Friends	24	0.5%
COMPASS	5	0.1%

Source: Spouse Engagement Study. Total respondents = 4,625.

KEY ISSUE 2: PERCEPTION

Many Navy spouses, as well as corresponding commands, who are aware of FFSC programs and services view them as primarily reactive, rather than prevention focused.

Because Sailors are sometimes directed to specific FFSP services, some of the FFSC's most beneficial programs (such as Family Advocacy, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, Exceptional Family Member and Personal Financial Management programs) may reinforce the impression that FFSC programs are reactive and corrective rather than designed to provide opportunities for developing resilience, enrichment and personal growth. Survey responses also indicated widespread concern that using FFSC services negatively impacts Sailors' career prospects and security clearances.

These misperceptions discourage Sailors and spouses from accessing services. In interviews and survey responses, 323 respondents expressed concerns that others might learn of their visiting the FFSC as the reason they did not use services of which they were aware (see **Table 3**). In fact, for all programs (see **Table 4**, compared to **Table 1**), more respondents know about services than use them.

2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for addressing issues related to perception of the FFSP include:

2.1.1 Change enterprisewide language to reflect that FFSC is part of the military compensation package, like a civilian employee assistance program (EAP).

A number of survey respondents objected to the word "support" in "Fleet and Family Support." Spouse feedback indicated that this suggests a family structure in danger of collapse rather than a resilient family that is doing well and that might, with some guidance and resources, do even better. Several respondents suggested replacing "support" with "readiness" or "service" or some other term with connotations more positive than "support."

Leadership engagement and strategic growth

Goal: Demonstrate transparent, responsive, data-informed leadership and advance our mission through strategic communications.

– Theme 3, CNIC Family Readiness Program 2018 Strategic Plan

Such a change would align the name of the Navy's support program with that of other services. Family support centers on Army posts are called "Army Community Service Centers," and the Army describes them on its Go Army website as part of the benefits package for soldier families. The Air Force calls its centers "Airman and Family Readiness Centers," stressing readiness rather than support, while Marine bases host "Marine Corps Community Services" programs.

2.1.2 Promote proactive preventive programs on all marketing channels, in addition to counseling and advocacy programs.

On a weeklong overseas spouse engagement group trip, it was noted that Armed Forces Network (AFN) showed commercials for FFSCs that highlighted only their SAPR, FAP and SAIL programs. There were no public-service announcements (PSAs) for readiness, resilience or prevention programs. Casual observers might conclude that counseling and advocacy programs are the only services available at the FFSC.

To provide a balanced view of FFSCs, PSAs for all programs should be developed and placed into rotation on AFN and through other media accessed by Sailors and family members. The importance of a strong, positive, centralized marketing effort cannot be underestimated. A spouse in the Southwest region stated: "What changed my perception of FFSC was seeing the quality of life enhancement and preventive classes and programs marketed." A balanced marketing effort might also resolve prevalent confusion about the identity of new programs (e.g., DRC, SAIL) and programs with newer acronyms, such as Transition GPS.

2.1.3 Educate aggressively to emphasize that using FFSC programs and services rarely affects a Sailor's career or security clearance.

Misconceptions about the flow of information from FFSC providers to commands abound. For example, Sailors and family members fearing career fallout from association with the Exceptional Family Member Program routinely overestimate their ability to meet the needs of exceptional family members while stationed overseas and suffer the consequences of early return. On surveys and in spouse engagement interviews, many spouses expressed reluctance even to park their cars near an FFSC, to avoid judgment of passing neighbors. Ombudsmen and leaders of Family Readiness Groups who participated in spouse engagement groups for purposes of this study reported resistance to FFSC referrals they make to command family members.

On surveys and in interviews, statements like, "We want our marriage counseling not to intersect with his career" and "I worry about backlash to my Sailor's career" for using FFSC services are not uncommon. One typical respondent stated that she preferred to use civilian resources because "I feel like I can speak more freely ... outside of my husband's command." Another wrote, "Because we aren't in the 'military system,' there is less possibility that my information will be shared with other spouses or personnel." A mother stated her belief that information shared by her son during a counseling session will almost certainly be used against him when he tries to enlist in the future.

Such misconceptions need to be confronted head-on and routinely in the same ways that messages about bystander intervention are pushed out to the fleet.

2.2 BACKGROUND

Data referenced in **Section 2.1** are reported below.

Table 3: Reported Reasons for Not Using FFSC Programs and Services of Which Respondents are Aware

Reason Cited	Number of Respondents Reporting that They Do Not Use FFSC Services of Which They Are Aware	Percent of Respondents Reporting that They Do Not Use FFSC Services of Which They Are Aware*
FFSC location too far from home	1,482	49.9%
Inconvenient hours at the FFSC	1,382	46.5%
Civilian resources are better	764	25.7%
Did not know how to access program	425	14.3%
Poor or confusing technology	422	14.2%
Privacy/confidentiality concerns	323	10.9%
FFSC staff unfriendly or unhelpful	195	6.6%
Other	122	4.1%
Child care issues	67	2.3%

*The divisor used to calculate percentages is 2,972. This is derived as follows: 4,625 total respondents – 1,653 respondents indicating awareness of available services but stating that they do not need them as the reason they do not use them.

Table 4: Respondents Reporting Having Used FFSC Programs and Services

Fleet and Family Support Programs	Number of Respondents Using	Percent of Respondents Using (of 4,625)
Family Readiness Groups (FRG)	1,782	38.53%
Ombudsman	1,638	35.42%
Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)	625	13.51%
Clinical Counseling	540	11.68%
Life Skills Education	529	11.44%
New Parent Support (NPS)	481	10.40%
Personal Financial Management (PFM)	473	10.23%
Relocation	466	10.08%
Family Employment Readiness	442	9.56%
Deployment Support	349	7.55%
Transition Goals, Plan, Success (TGPS)	283	6.12%
Emergency Case Management (ECM)	279	6.03%
Volunteer Services	235	5.08%
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)	88	1.90%
Deployed Resiliency Counselors (DRC)	76	1.64%
Navy Gold Star (NGS)	26	0.56%
Sailor Assist and Intercept for Life (SAIL)	11	0.24%
Family Advocacy Program (FAP)	7	0.15%

Source: Spouse Engagement Study. Total respondents = 4,625.

KEY ISSUE 3: ACCESSIBILITY

On-base, brick-and-mortar FFSCs are meeting a fraction of perceived family service needs through current delivery practices.

In a variety of ways, spouses reported limited opportunity to access FFSC programs and services. Many spouses report that they work outside the home and need to maximize their time. They seek services outside the hours of a typical workday. Others report being limited by child care demands or the requirement that an unavailable sponsor be present in order for them to receive services. Still others report long waits for appointments, especially with clinical counselors and child counselors.

The availability – or the lack of – child care for FFSC classes and appointments was mentioned frequently by respondents in the Spouse Engagement Study (67 times in open-ended survey responses, 15 times in the top five topics of live forums). Respondents expressed appreciation for overseas FFSCs offering “child-friendly” classes. Child-friendly classes and services were consistent concerns articulated by attendees at face-to-face spouse focus groups.

An especially common theme was the inconvenience of driving from home to an on-base FFSC. As **Table 3** reflects, 1,482 spouses cited *distance from the FFSC is the most common reason for avoiding needed services that the respondent knows are available.*

“Take advantage of community locations to hold classes or seminars for families who may only have one car in the family, or those who do not want to deal with base parking/traffic. For example, elementary schools located within military housing communities, or the rec buildings/club houses that some communities have. Utilize those to bring people in and educate or inform them on whatever topic. These days people like convenience!”

– Navy spouse survey respondent

Military families are more geographically dispersed than they were at the inception of the FFSP back in 1979. This results in adding travel and expense to seeking location-specific services. Only one-third of military families lives in base housing, and in some locations, even government housing areas are located far from the bases themselves.

3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.1 Embed FFSC staff where spouses live, shop and congregate. A number of spouses interviewed suggested FFSCs be located near exchanges and commissaries. Others suggested that “circuit-riding” FFSC staff facilitate classes and hold consultations near off-base housing, doing so regularly and predictably, if not full-time.

3.1.2 Create a mobile app designed specifically for the FFSP. The increasing preference for today’s Sailors and families to access ready and relevant information through social media, virtual services and other supportive technologies challenges the use of legacy brick-and-mortar service models. Every spouse engagement encounter, live or online, prompted conversation about the force-multiplying capability of mobile technology for obtaining resources, making appointments and other purposes (see **Table 5**).

As noted above, MWR’s localized app was often cited as a model that the FFSP should emulate. Spouse respondents envision a smartphone application that supplements resources like Military OneSource by providing downloads, contact information and possibly a contact medium specific to “their” Navy FFSC.

3.1.3 Use technology to introduce the FFSP (high-tech) and once a relationship is established, provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction (high-touch).

Table 5 and Figure 3 capture the divide between desires for “high-tech” and “high-touch” service options. Both “Make FFSC resources (including video resources) available through an app” and “Present more face-to-face opportunities” were at or near the top of the polling, with a strong preference for *interactive, localized and personalized* technology (e.g., apps, webinars, live text) where technological solutions are suggested. This system of care would ensure appropriate use of high-tech and high-touch solutions depending on need.

3.1.4 Create a technology-based strategic plan for delivering educational programs and forming online communities incorporating the new role of Customer Relationship Managers.

Overcoming accessibility barriers and seizing opportunities to provide high tech/high-touch FFSP services and programs to Sailors, families and commands requires strategic support and guidance as well as a commitment of resources and personnel.

Deliver performance at the speed of relevance.

–Summary of The National Defense Strategy 2018: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge

A unique feature would be the assignment and engagement of a FFSP Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) who will assist the customer throughout their FFSP and Navy experience/career. This role is intended to be fulfilled by existing staff (such as a Work and Family Life staff member) who would be trained in a delivery approach that focuses on supporting the FFSC customer throughout their military and family lifecycle. The FFSP CRM will assist with directing the customer to services, tools and content targeted to meet their identified needs with a focus on increasing Sailor and family resiliency. The CRM will be charged with ensuring a FFSP customer experience that is engaging, responsive and uniquely tailored to meet the specific needs of each customer. It would not be limited by geography but would utilize technology tools for those who prefer to connect on line or telephonically.

CRMs would be supported by a robust contact center with FFSP-specific digital content and customer engagement available worldwide, 24/7/365. CRMs on duty in one location will handle calls during off hours at another location, referring cases back to the FFSC nearest the Sailor or family member in need.

Features of such a contact system might include:

- **Live web chat:** This system would allow customers to communicate securely in real time.
- **Self-service appointment scheduler:** This online tool would allow customers to schedule appointments and register for FFSPs at their convenience. The customer would access a calendar of events, such as, virtual workshops on resiliency or transition. The calendar would show open one-on-one counseling appointments for assistance in marriage and family issues or financial management planning.
- **Localized information-and-referral resource center:** An online portal would not only provide videos, recorded webinars, static articles, web links to social media and other resources, and downloadable forms but also have interactive *localized* resources, such as a pre-deployment planning tool. In preparation for deployment, individuals can choose the items relevant to them from a deployment checklist and save the result to their mobile device
- **Live, instructor-led webinars:** Building upon the success of CNIC’s initiative to deliver the Live Well resiliency and prevention webinars, customers would be able to schedule and participate in live webinar trainings hosted locally, nationally and internationally on topics ranging from life skills prevention and education, personal financial management, deployment support, transition assistance and relocation planning and assistance.

- **Communities of common interest:** CRMs can help build hybrid virtual/local communities that increase resilience and support across the fleet, enabling the sharing of common experiences, concerns and best practices.

CRMs will ensure customer connection to the unique brick-and-mortar resources that will best meet the customer’s stated needs, such as face-to-face clinical counseling, FAP or SAPR services.

3.2 BACKGROUND

Data referenced in **Section 3.1** are reported below. The key issues and recommendations are based in part on this information.

Table 5: Top Five Recommendations for Improving FFSP Accessibility

Recommendations	Respondents
Make FFSC resources (including video resources) available through an app.	3,297
Offer more webinars and/or web groups.	2,906
Present more face-to-face opportunities.	2,839
Provide text chat capability with FFSC staff.	2,649
Expand or alter FFSC hours.	2,446

Source: Spouse Engagement Study. Total respondents = 4,625.

Figure 3: Survey Excerpts Suggesting Accessibility Improvements

“ I like the idea of Skyping for those of us who live out in town with small children. It’s not convenient for me to drive to the support site.

I would appreciate live chat support. The locations are not convenient for me, so I have depended more on search engines to find answers.

I’d rather go in to the office or use the internet/an app to make contact with FFSC than call. So any additional accessibility options would be helpful.

I have wanted to attend some of the webinars, but they are live and don’t seem to be recorded. I work, so I usually can’t make it to things during the day at FFSC locations in person, so having access to recorded things (not time specific) would help.

For me, the services offered are the people behind them. Ensuring individuals responsible for the services have published contact info and are available to call/email is most important to me. Even if they point me to a website or training, it’s so nice to consult a human.

Offer classes at least once a month outside of normal working hours. Many families are dual work and cannot take time off to make classes during the work day. I had to burn an entire day off to take the Smooth Move class for three hours, which was very difficult. ”

KEY ISSUE 4: TRAINING

Increasing awareness, altering perceptions and expanding accessibility of the FFSC programs and services requires retraining existing staff, onboarding staff and integrating a supplemental workforce of spouse volunteers from whose ranks future staff can be recruited.

A crucial component of future success for FFSCs will be to ascertain that the right staff members are selected and are highly trained to meet the needs of FFSP customers in a technology-rich environment. Training should include using technology to engage customers, assess needs, augment professional services, and equip FFSP staff to provide the highest caliber of services and programs. Future staff members will competently navigate and manage every aspect of the customer experience, expanding the accessibility and reach of FFSC services and programs into the future.

Recruit, retain and sustain a highly talented and diverse workforce.

–Theme 1, CNIC Family Readiness Program 2018 Strategic Plan

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1 Create pathways for skill development, including technology-based functions such as digital marketing and webinar training service delivery.

Present training for professionals in FFSP areas includes a wave-top view of program promotion strategies. This training needs to be enhanced significantly for the digital age and opportunities for specialization in digital marketing and allied fields opened up at FFSCs.

4.1.2 Develop a succession-plan that includes spouses as a foundational component.

Recurring themes in the Spouse Engagement Study indicated interest in both career development (beyond job-searching) and meaningful, career-enhancing volunteerism at FFSCs. Potentially, digital technology could be a portal for developing a new generation of FFSC personnel, starting with volunteering and leading to paid and portable spouse employment.

Spouses located outside the continental United States chafed under limited or non-existent employment during their Sailor's overseas duty. This career-minded group could be an especially good labor source for a career track in which volunteering would make them marketable for a position and/or help them get a position based on participation in an FFSC spouse training program.

4.1.3 Cross-train all Family Readiness personnel in prevention programs.

FFSC staff members trained specifically for advocacy programs like SAPR and FAP may experience lulls in demand for their services at a time when the demand for prevention programs like life skills education is high. To ensure that customer needs are met in a timely and effective fashion, basic skills in delivering prevention programs should be part of every staff member's toolkit, regardless of labor category.

Innovation, especially through cross-disciplinary collaboration.

–Theme 2, CNIC Family Readiness Program 2018 Strategic Plan

CONCLUSION

The mission of CNIC's Family Readiness Program is to "support readiness through a full array of programs and resources which help Navy families to be resilient, well-informed and adaptable to the Navy environment" through realizing a vision of "achieving and sustaining world-class programs and services that enhance the quality of life, foster a sense of community, and contribute to the Fleet, Fighter and the Family Readiness." (CNIC 2018) The SES was conducted in response to a challenge delivered by CNIC leadership to identify innovative solutions for the delivery and integration of Navy quality of life services and programs.

Streamline rapid, iterative approaches from development to fielding.

—Summary of The National Defense Strategy: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge

Since the inception of the Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP) in 1979, services and programs to support individual, family and command readiness have remained the mission of the FFSP. The FFSP continues to be the Navy's recognized resource for service members, families and command leadership who seek programs and services designed to meet the unique challenges of Navy life. Since the launch of the program over 39 years ago, Navy leadership has continued to recognize that caring for Sailors and their families has a direct impact upon command readiness. As a result, the scope and complexity of the FFSP has expanded to meet the significantly evolving needs of today's Sailors, families and commands. The future of FFSP service delivery must build upon the solid foundation of FFSP core services which have a proven track record as an effective service delivery model. Any changes to the FFSP system of care must utilize the best of a 'high touch-high tech' solution for today and tomorrow's FFSP clientele. Results of the Spouse Engagement Study now provide a clear picture of what areas for improvement should be addressed in order to design an FFSP 2.0 system of care that will meet the ever increasing demands and needs of Sailors, families and command leadership for today and the future.

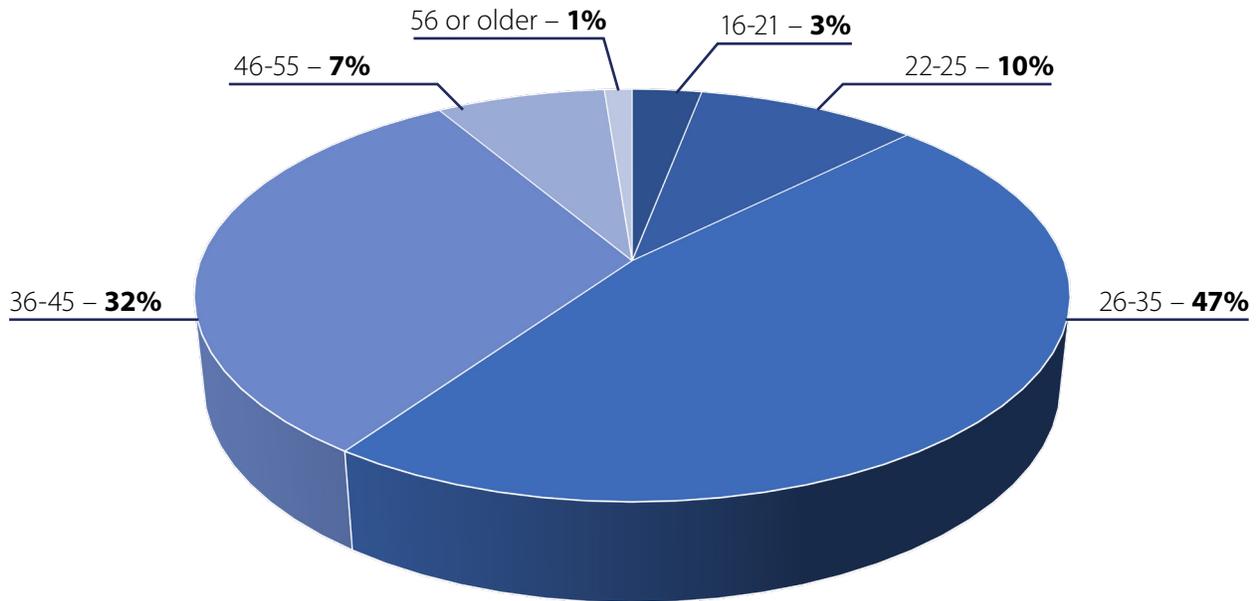
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APPENDIX A: Online Survey Questions and Responses

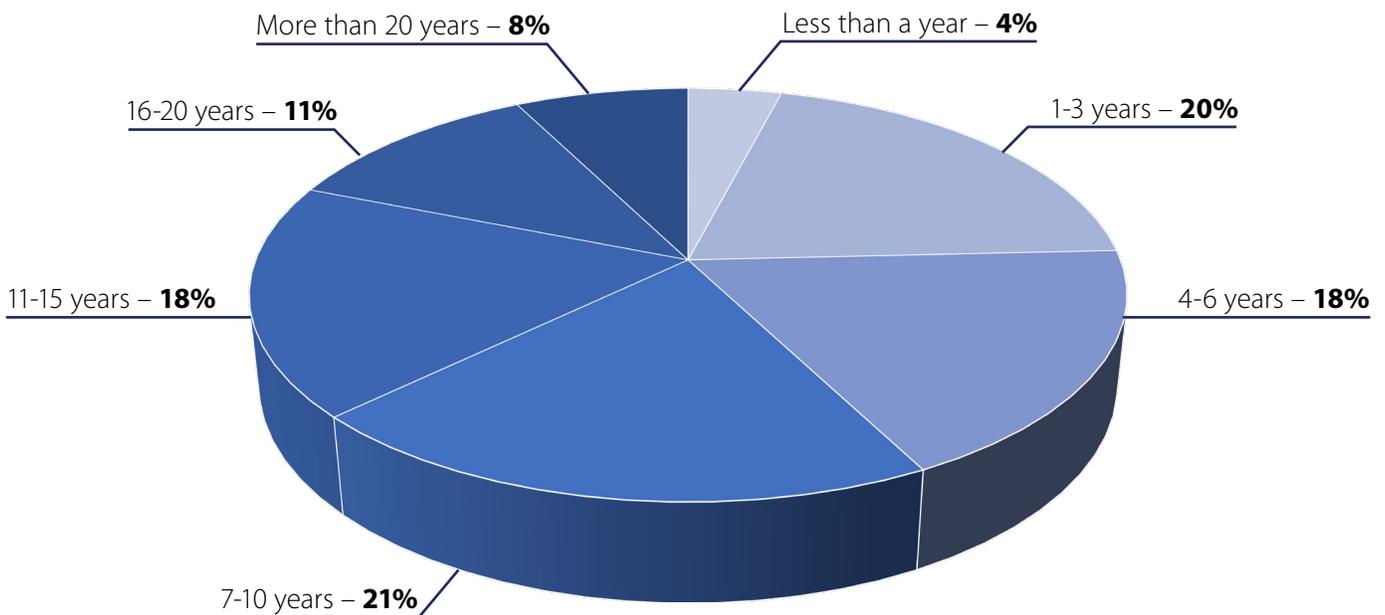
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age group?



No response: 1,805

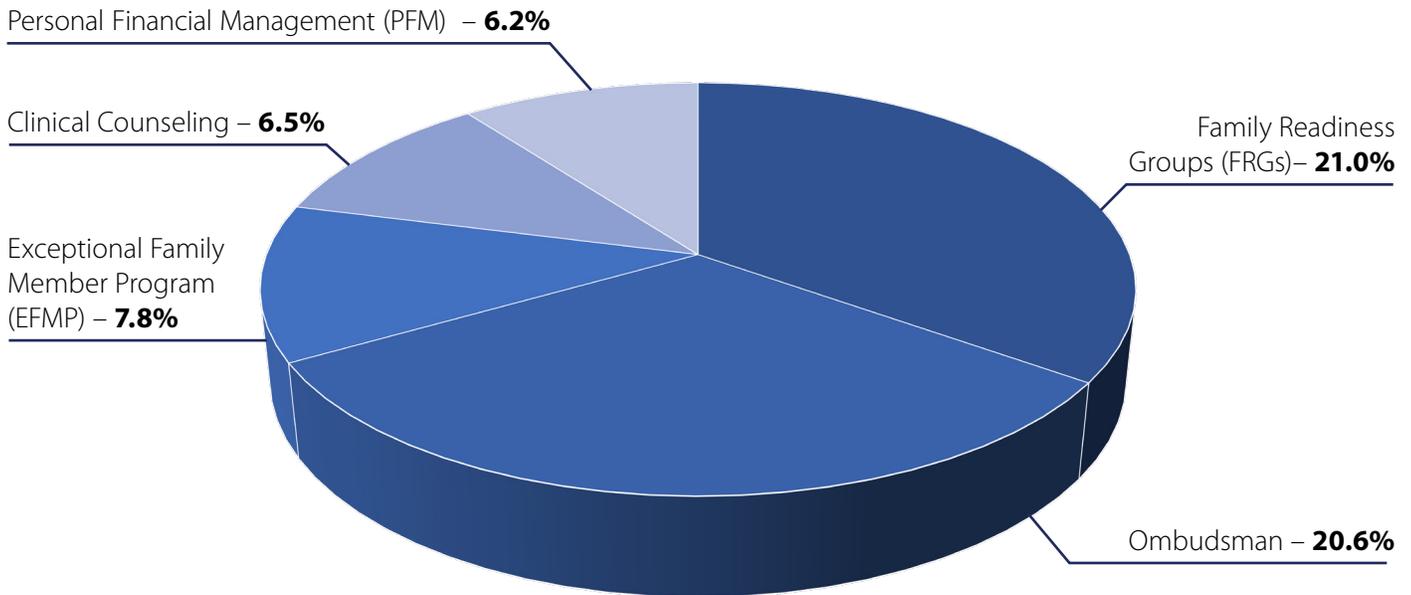
How many years have you been a Navy spouse?



Total responses = 4,541 | No response = 574

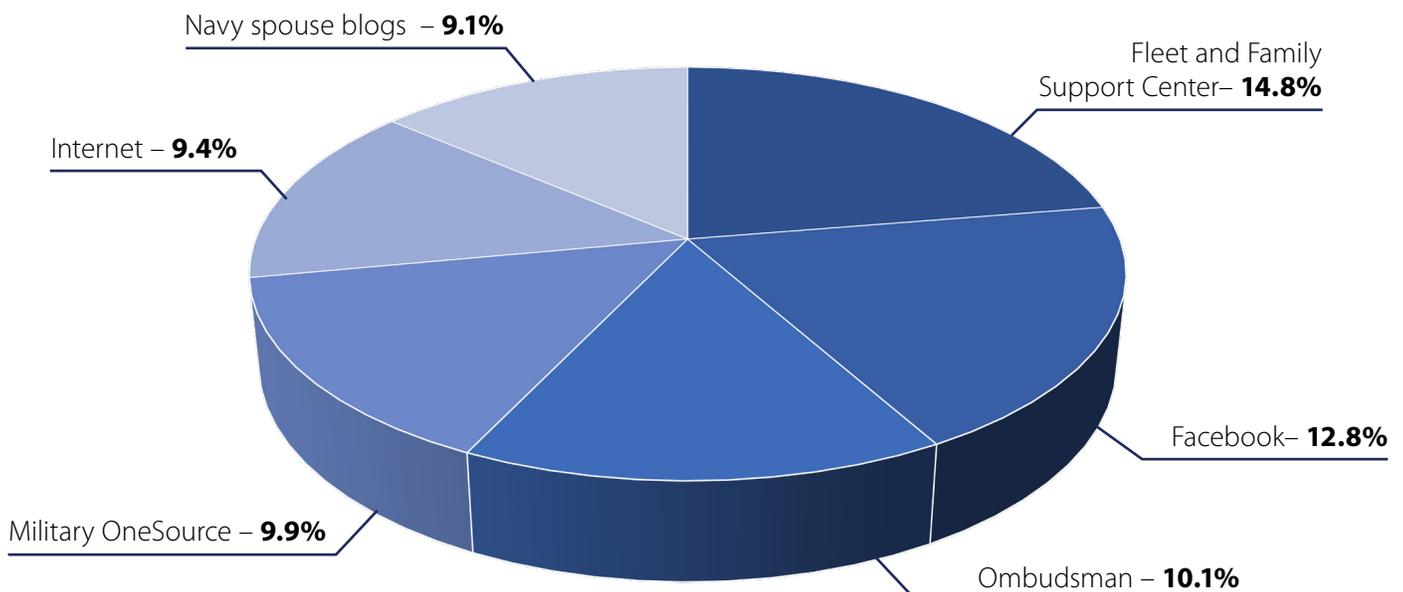
TOP FIVE RESPONSES

Which of the Fleet and Family Support Programs have you or a family member used?



2,595 respondents reported 8,627 program contacts. Nearly half (48%) reported engaging FFSP providers three or more times, so at least 16,909 provider contacts are represented in utilization data. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of all program contacts are in the top five program areas.

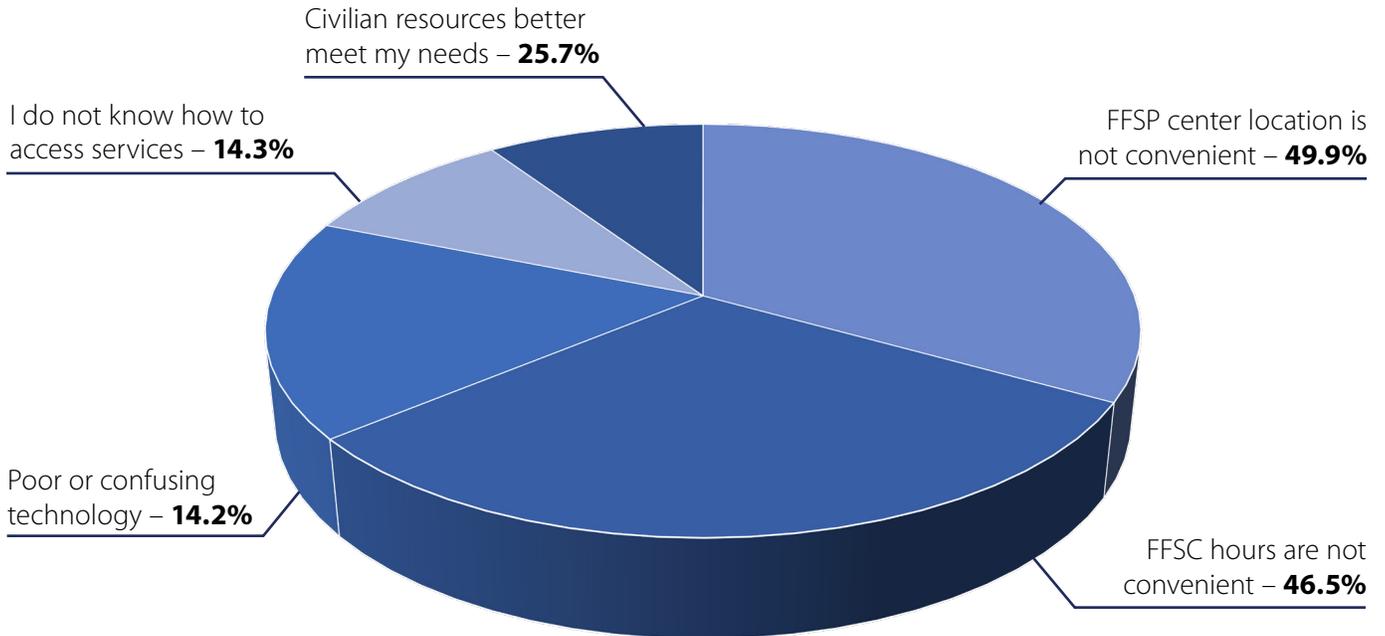
Where do you/did you find the information, referral services, personal or family support services, either for yourself or other family members?



Multiple answers were permitted. There were six sources in the top five to capture the robust showing of Navy spouse blogs.

TOP FIVE RESPONSES

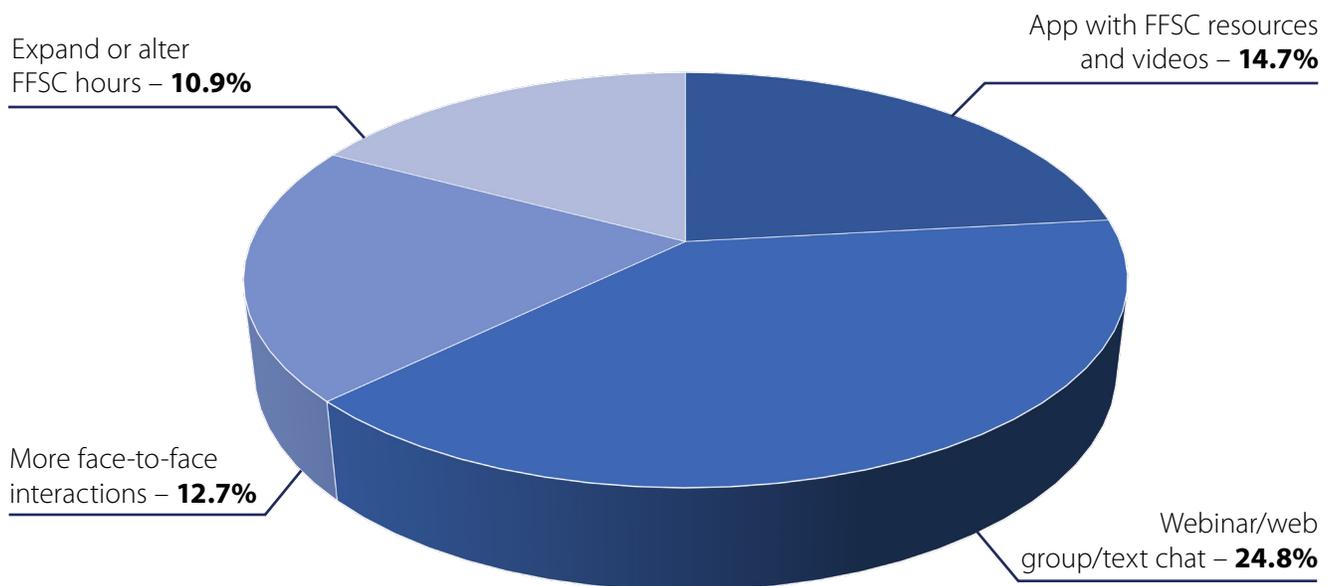
If you are aware of FFSP quality-of-life programs and have not used them, why not?



Subsequent questions reveal overlap between responses (e.g., civilian resources are often perceived as "better" because they're available after normal business hours).

TOP FOUR RESPONSES

Which of the following do you think would make FFSP programs and services more accessible to Navy families?



Total responses = 22,394
MWR's app was often cited as an example for FFSP to emulate.

