



**TEXAS**  
Department of Family  
and Protective Services

# **Service Members, Veterans and Families Prevention Program**

## **Program Outcomes Report**

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December 1, 2021



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## **Introduction**

In 2015, the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature required the creation of a pilot program for child abuse prevention for military families and veterans (HB 19). This legislation directed the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to develop and implement a prevention program to serve military and veteran families who have committed, have experienced, or who are at a high risk of family violence or child abuse and neglect. Since the pilot project began in 2015, additional communities have been added to deliver prevention services with an early intervention component in targeted military and veteran communities across Texas. With the number of veterans and active service members living in Texas on the rise, there is a great need for prevention services in military communities and across the state to alleviate the challenges and stressors associated with frequent moves, deployments, separations, and other risk factors.

As part of the pilot program, DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) published an outcomes evaluation in October 2017 and reported annual outcomes through the DFPS PEI Outcomes Report as required by the 2018-2019 General Appropriations Act, Senate Bill 1, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, 2017 (Article II, Health and Human Services Commission, Rider 28), or through a stand-alone report for years that the PEI Outcomes Report is not required. This report serves as the outcomes report required by Human Resources Code 53.002(d).

## **Selection of Program Sites**

With 15 active military installations, Texas has the second highest active duty military population in the United States. Approximately 10 percent of all active duty forces in the U.S. reside in Texas. In addition, nearly 1.6 million Veterans live in Texas (second highest number of veterans of any state in the U.S.). Veterans are younger than in years prior and are less likely to be employed, with an unemployment rate that is three times higher than their civilian counterparts.

Originally, DFPS focused this prevention initiative in the three largest military communities in Texas. In 2021, PEI added additional sites to further serve military and veteran families with children 0-17 years of age who are at risk of family violence or abuse and neglect. With over 120,000 active duty members and more than 1.5 million veterans, the number of families with dependents continues to grow. Additionally, Texas National Guard members, Ready Reservists, discharged service members, and family members that are connected to a service member are eligible for prevention services provided under the program.

## **Purpose of Service Members, Veterans and Families (SMVF) Prevention Program**

PEI worked with military communities and stakeholders to craft the Service Members, Veterans and Families Prevention Program (SMVF) to fulfill the requirements of HB 19. Research shows that five protective factors are closely linked to a decreased likelihood of child abuse and neglect:

- Family functioning/resiliency;
- Social support;
- Knowledge of parenting/child development;
- Concrete support; and
- Nurturing and attachment.

Grantees had flexibility to concentrate their resources to best fit the specific needs in their area. Each grantee developed a comprehensive plan to build and support military families' protective factors, resulting in stronger, safer families and improved military communities.

Required services include:

- Evidence-based or promising practice programs to support military families;
- Performance measures that gauge program effectiveness;
- Programs with a focus on children ages 0-17; and
- An approach focused on the needs of military and veteran families, and the military culture and environment they live in.

Grantees were also required to develop an official working relationship with the local Family Advocacy Program (a Department of Defense sponsored program for child and domestic abuse prevention and intervention) and provide ancillary services targeted toward needs identified in their Community Needs Assessment, as required in the request for applications.

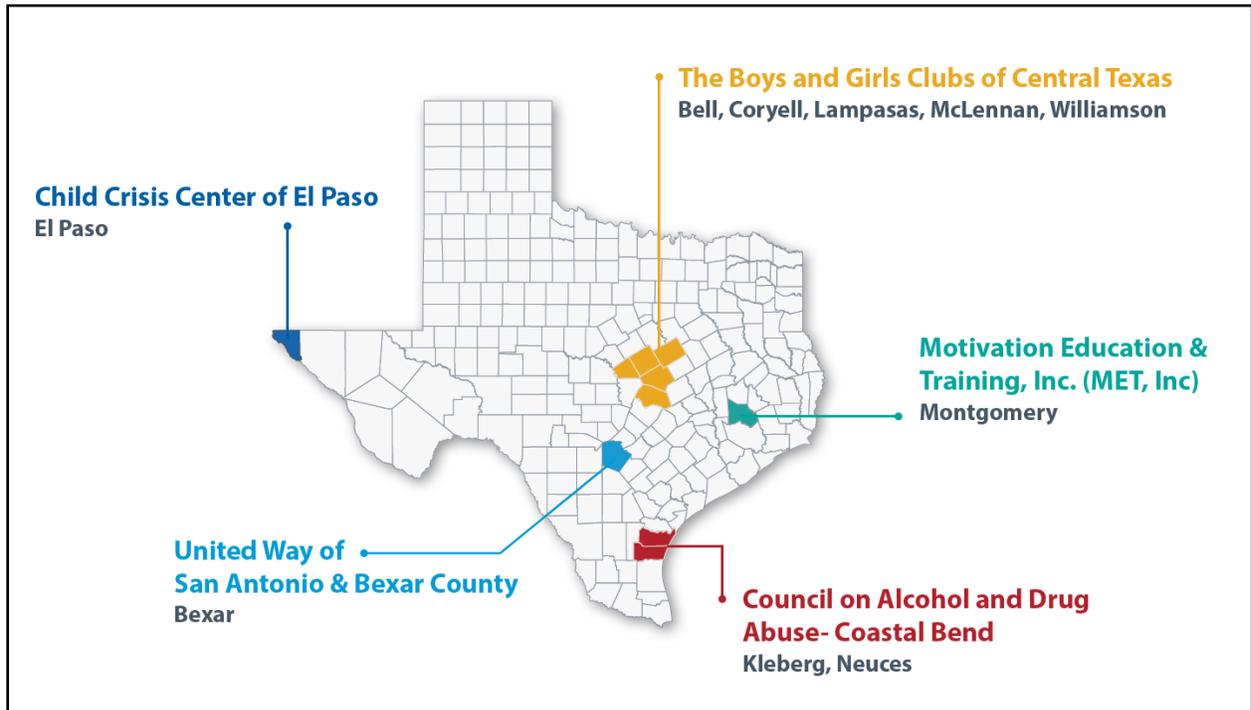
The overarching goals of the program are:

1. To improve the well-being of Texas Service Member and Veteran Families by promoting positive parenting and positive youth development;
2. To educate, facilitate and otherwise support Service Members, Veterans, and their Families through resources and programming that bolsters existing strengths and addresses emotional, physical and financial barriers;
3. To foster development and sustainment of community coalitions of local stakeholders with the goal of preventing child abuse and neglect and supporting positive youth development; and
4. To prevent child abuse and neglect occurrences and juvenile delinquency in military communities.

### Grantees by County

County	Associated Military Installation	Primary Grantee	Subcontractor (if applicable)
Bell, Coryell, Lampasas, Williamson, and McLennan	Fort Hood	Boys & Girls Club of Central Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas A&amp;M University–Central Texas</li> <li>• AWARE</li> <li>• STRONG Families Support Program</li> </ul>
El Paso	Fort Bliss	Child Crisis Center of El Paso	
Kleberg and Nueces	Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi Army Depot	The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse Coastal Bend	
Montgomery, Harris and Waller	Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base	Motivation Education & Training, Inc.	
Bexar	Joint Base San Antonio	United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Service Association,</li> <li>• Any Baby Can,</li> <li>• Big Brothers Big Sisters</li> </ul>

### Map of Grantees and Communities



## **Services Offered by Community**

### [Bell, Coryell, Lampasas, McLennan, and Williamson Counties – Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Texas](#)

Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Texas services support the whole family, including youth mentoring, child and parent education, and individual and group counseling. Services also include evidence-based parent education and home visiting services through programs such as SafeCare, Nurturing Parenting, and Systemic Training for Effective Parenting. Understanding the unique situations that military-connected family experience, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Texas also provides the Strong Families, Strong Forces home visitation and therapy service through a 16-week, dedicated program model.

### [El Paso County - Child Crisis Center of El Paso \(CCCEP\)](#)

CCCEP provides the Systemic Training for Effective Parenting curriculum in a group setting for military and veteran families, along with case management and support using the WRAP model.

### [Nueces and Kleberg Counties - The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse Coastal Bend](#)

The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse Coastal Bend provides evidence-based parent education through Systemic Training for Effective Parenting.

### [Harris, Montgomery, and Waller Counties - Motivation Education & Training, Inc. \(MET\)](#)

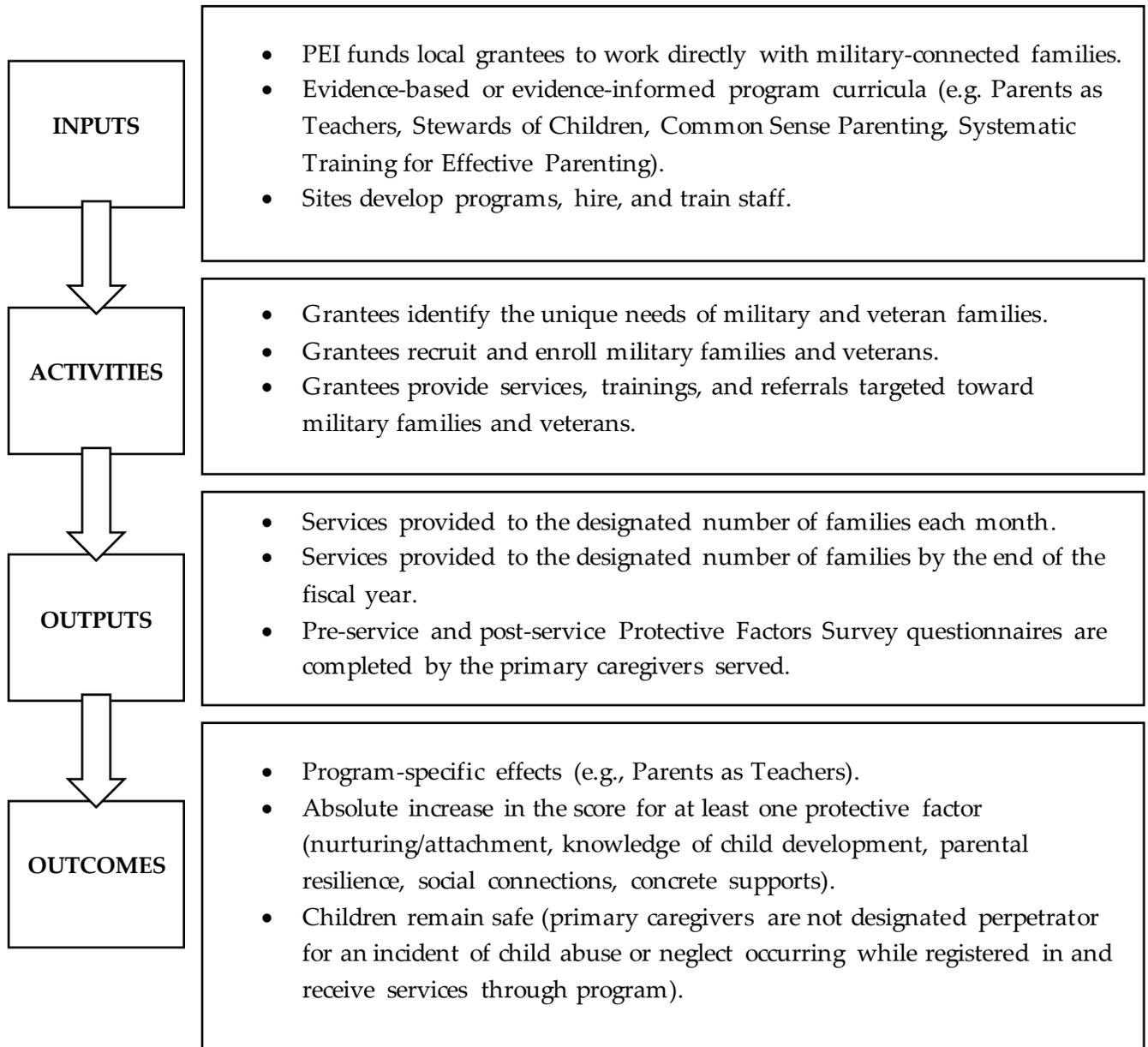
MET utilizes several evidence-based parent education and youth engagement models such as: Parents as Teachers, Systemic Training for Effective Parenting, and Youth Empowerment Solutions. Additionally, MET is collaborating with the community through coalition meetings.

### [Bexar County - United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County \(UWSA\)](#)

UWSA provides the Strong Families, Strong Forces home visitation and therapy service through a 16-week, dedicated program model. Additionally, several evidence-based parent education and youth engagement models are offered directly and through subcontractors such as: Positive Parenting Program (Triple P), Big Brothers Big Sisters, counseling and long-term case management.

All grantees also provide more supportive services such as resource navigation, referrals, basic needs support, and community-level activities.

## Program Logic Model



## Programmatic Findings

PEI published a [program evaluation](#) for the Military Families and Veterans Prevention Program (MFVPP) in 2017 and continues to monitor the progress made in serving current service members, veterans, and military families. In 2020, the name of the program was formally changed to *Service Members, Veterans, and Families Prevention Program* (SMVF) to reflect more inclusive terminology utilized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in their work with military-connected service members and their families. Each PEI grantee tailored services to the specific and diverse needs of the military population in their area, several overarching themes appeared across the communities:

- Families perceive seeking help as having potential negative consequences should their command structure become aware of the family engaging in services. Military connections were essential to recruitment. Buy-in from military and base staff eased challenges to recruitment and reduced perceived stigma from engaging in services.
- Families needed more assistance in meeting basic needs (such as housing and food) than anticipated, especially those that are active-duty members.
- Families often struggled with transportation, child care, and for enlisted members, not having the flexibility to take off a few hours every week for several weeks to complete an evidence-based program or engage in counseling. While providers made modifications to the program to meet family needs, it became difficult to maintain program fidelity.
- Military spouses demonstrated different needs from military-connected youth, and different from that of the active-duty member or veteran. Many services were more accessible for military-connected family members, including spouses or children, rather than the enlisted member, because family members were often the most available for services. This includes challenges related to work and training schedules of active-duty service members, deployments, and frequent moves within the community to maintain affordable housing.

## Programmatic Outcomes



### *936 Families Served*

During FY2021, 936 families were served through direct services such as parent education, counseling, and service navigation. To date, more than 4,410 families have benefited from direct services and connections to other supports in the community. Providers have also engaged more than 60,000 individuals through community events, referral links, and trainings.



### *23% of caregivers were prior perpetrators of child abuse or neglect*

Meeting High Risk Needs: 23 percent of caregivers had prior involvement in the child welfare system as a perpetrator of child abuse or neglect. Of those, 7 percent were in the six months prior to engaging in services through the Service Members, Veterans, and Families Prevention Program. Studies have identified other risk factors prevalent families with military connection such as marital conflict, domestic violence, depression, anxiety, and “secondary traumatization” that interferes with effective parenting as well as increased risk for emotional and behavioral problems among children.<sup>1</sup>



### *98.5% of primary caregivers served do not come to the attention of child welfare*

The vast majority of primary caregivers served in this program were not identified as a designated perpetrator during or after their participation in the program (98.5%).



### *95% Increase in Protective Factors*

More than 95% of families served in the program increased at least one protective factor as measured by the Protective Factors Survey.

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<sup>1</sup> Saltzman WR, Lester P, Beardslee WR, Layne CM, Woodward K, Nash WP. Mechanisms of risk and resilience in military families: theoretical and empirical basis of a family-focused resilience enhancement program. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev.* 2011;14(3):213–230. doi:10.1007/s10567-011-0096-1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3162635/>

## **Program Spotlight: Strong Families Strong Forces in collaboration with Boys and Girls Club of Central Texas – (Bell County)**

Strong Families Strong Forces is a program that serves military families experiencing separation due to deployment or various other military transitions. One family entered the program after the father, who is a service member, reported that after several combat deployments he struggled to connect with his spouse and engage with his two children.

His spouse reported to the case managers that she noticed differences in his behavior such as irritability, being easily startled and withdrawing from social interaction. The father expressed an inability to connect with his children after being routinely exposed to children injured in combat. Additionally, he expressed feeling ashamed of the events that occurred during deployment and did not feel comfortable discussing any aspect of his experiences with his family. This emotional distance and lack of family engagement led to frequent arguments in the household.

During their time in the program, the family learned how military separations and PTSD impacts the entire family system. Gradually, with the assistance of their case manager, they worked on understanding what it means to be a military family and what military separation was like for each member. The couple worked on communication and connection and made significant improvements in their co-parenting skills. Over time, the family reported significantly less arguments and more family engagement in the home. The couple stated that the program helped them maintain and strengthen their family connection.