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Evaluation Design for Department of Air Force Military and Family Readiness Programs

Considerations for Air Force Families Forever, Relocation Assistance Program, and Employment Assistance

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Published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.

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About This Report

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) provides numerous programs and services to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with the challenges of military life. DAF Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Air Force Services (A1S), asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to examine three of these programs—Relocation Assistance, Employment Assistance, and Air Force Families Forever—and develop logic models to (1) identify desired outcomes for members participating in the programs; (2) define appropriate measures of effectiveness that could be applied to these programs; and (3) establish recommendations for ongoing internal evaluation of the programs. Based on interviews, feedback from DAF headquarters staff, and U.S. Department of Defense and DAF instructions, we developed logic models depicting the program inputs, activities and outputs, and the outcomes and impacts each program’s activities should produce if they are functioning as planned. In this report, we also suggest measures to assess program functioning and to evaluate whether the program is producing its desired outcomes.

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This report documents work originally shared with the DAF on September 22, 2022. The draft report, dated May 2023, was reviewed by formal peer reviewers and DAF subject-matter experts.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the support of our sponsors, Brig Gen Debra Lovette and H. L. Larry. We also thank our action officers, Chris Goode, Randi Ramcharan, and Maj Julie Moroz (AF/A1S) for their willingness to provide the policy background and contact information that

was important for the data-gathering effort related to this research. We also thank our reviewers Carra Sims and Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth.

Summary

Military service can be rewarding but also challenging for airmen, guardians, and their families. For example, frequent relocations require navigating housing and movement of household goods and can lead to difficulties for spouses wanting employment. Another aspect of military service that presents difficulties for family and friends is coping with a service member's loss of life. To help address these challenges, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) has several programs that are implemented via Military and Family Readiness Centers (M&FRCs), namely the Relocation Assistance Program (RAP), Employment Assistance (EA), and Air Force Families Forever (AFFF). RAP provides education and referrals to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with issues surrounding permanent change of station (PCS) moves. EA supports service members, U.S. Department of Defense civilian employees, and family members in achieving employment. AFFF provides long-term information and referrals to eligible next of kin of deceased airmen and guardians. DAF Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Air Force Services (A1S), asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to assist with the design of evaluations for these programs.

Approach

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the existing evidence on airman, guardian, and family readiness programs, related programs, and individuals' experiences navigating related challenges, we conducted a review of the literature on each of the programs and the underlying challenges the program seeks to address. We also interviewed M&FRC flight chiefs to get their perspectives on program implementation and development.

Key Findings

- The success of each of the programs is unclear because of limited feedback and evaluation.
- Factors believed to reduce effectiveness of each of the programs are limited personnel capacity, inadequate manning, and inadequate administrative oversight.
- A factor commonly believed to positively affect program effectiveness is active support and engagement from the unit commander.
- The logic models map the various assumptions regarding what resources the programs need to run, how they run, and what effects they have, and they provide a road map for the development of a program evaluation.
- Potential sources of data to measure elements of the logic models include administrative records, surveys, and qualitative assessments.

Recommendations

Our recommendations parallel those made for the companion report on the True North Program (Matthews et al., 2024):

- Adopt and communicate the program logic models in ways that ensure stakeholders know and understand them.
- Continue to engage stakeholders in the evaluation design process.
- Implement measures that align with the program logic model.
- Present the results of evaluations in ways that are clear and useful for stakeholders.
- Modify the program logic models as needed, drawing from the results of evaluations.
- If A1S considers creating or using additional databases to track measures, involve stakeholders in its development.

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Introduction

Military service creates many challenges for airmen, guardians, and their families. During service, frequent relocations, called permanent change of station (PCS) moves, create many challenges with moving household goods and adjusting to a new location and new mission. Spouse employment is another challenge, and PCS moves make it challenging for spouses to find consistent employment across locations. Also, serving one's country is inherently dangerous. Airmen and guardians are asked to risk their lives for their country, and many have sacrificed their lives as part of their military service. Such sacrifices have repercussions for their family and friends, and the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and the United States owes the loved ones of fallen airmen and guardians a tremendous debt. DAF and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) have developed programs to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with each of these facets of military service. The Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) assists airmen, guardians, and their families with the tasks surrounding PCS moves; Employment Assistance (EA) assists service members, DoD civilian employees, and family members (particularly, military spouses) with finding employment; and Air Force Families Forever (AFFF) provides support to the loved ones of fallen airmen and guardians. All three of these programs are implemented and managed by DAF's Military and Family Readiness Centers (M&FRCs). RAND Project AIR FORCE (PAF) was asked to (1) identify desired outcomes for members participating in the programs; (2) define appropriate measures of effectiveness that could be applied to these programs; and (3) establish recommendations for ongoing internal evaluation of the programs. This report summarizes the results of these efforts.

Using Logic Models to Inform Program Monitoring

Internal evaluation monitoring is an ongoing assessment of a program's design and functioning by program staff (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016). Internal monitoring provides continual feedback on the progress of a program, the problems it is facing, and the efficiency with which it is being implemented (Bamberger and Hewitt, 1986). This contrasts with program evaluations (which are done independently, typically by an external organization) to provide a more rigorous and objective assessment of the extent to which a program produced the intended outcomes and impacts and the distribution of the benefits among different groups (Bamberger and Hewitt, 1986; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016).

The first step in designing an internal evaluation monitoring system is to determine relevant program outcomes and measures of effectiveness by developing a program logic model. Logic models identify the theory or rationale behind a program and illustrate how program resources,

activities, services, and direct products of services (inputs and outputs) are designed to produce short-term (proximal) outcomes, medium-term (distal) outcomes, and long-term impacts (Greenfield, Williams, and Eiseman, 2006; Knowlton and Phillips, 2009). The next step is to specify structured indicators to measure the goals and objectives outlined in the logic model. An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative variable that objectively measures a component of the logic model, and each component of a logic model has a corresponding indicator (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2009). To develop the logic models and indicators for each program, we reviewed program literature, met with program headquarters staff and M&FRC flight chiefs, and reviewed the data already collected by the programs that could be used to measure program indicators. Draft logic models were reviewed by program headquarters staff, who provided feedback on the models.

Methods

Literature Review

To develop an understanding of the existing evidence on airman, guardian, and family readiness programs, related programs, and individuals' experiences navigating related challenges, we conducted a review of the literature on the three programs and the underlying challenges the program seeks to address. Our search and synthesis focused on challenges associated with PCS moves and the delivery and effects of relocation assistance; the challenges that military spouses face in gaining employment and the delivery and effects of military spouse employment support programs; and resiliency trajectories of individuals navigating grief and trauma. We used various search engines (e.g., Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, American Psychological Association Psycnet) to conduct online searches through April 2022. We used the names of the programs (e.g., "Relocation Assistance," "Employment Assistance," "Air Force Families Forever") and related constructs (e.g., "financial aid," "grief," "resiliency") as our primary search terms. We created an annotated bibliography detailing the methods and findings of all articles determined to be relevant to RAND's evaluation. We went on to examine articles that were cited by the initially returned articles and the publications that have cited the returned articles. We added their methods and findings to our annotated bibliography and used the bibliography entries to synthesize the findings and gaps across the literature bases.

Interviews

We also held interviews with M&FRC flight chiefs to get their perspectives on how the programs have been implemented and developed across installations. The interviews were designed to inform program logic models and potential measures of program effectiveness by gathering information on program implementation at the installation level. We developed a protocol with a set of questions designed to guide the semi-structured interviews. The protocol included a set of questions that were repeated for each of the three programs. We asked about the common needs of users and whether the program is resolving those needs, the main goals of

the program, and the specific activities being carried out to meet each of those goals. To collect feedback on the success and effectiveness of these programs, we asked additional questions about the success of promoting the goals, the data collected to track the performance of the program, and perceptions of the factors contributing (either positively or negatively) to the effectiveness of the program. Finally, the interviewers asked for input on the ways commanders can affect (positively or negatively) the effectiveness of the program and what types of information might be collected to best understand how the program is influencing the lives of airmen. We asked questions exploring participants' perceptions of program effectiveness to inform the identification of measures of effectiveness. Results should not be interpreted as an evaluation of program effectiveness. See Appendix A for the full set of questions included in the protocol.

Installations for interviews were selected to represent diverse locations (e.g., U.S. regions, overseas locations) and to encompass all active-component DAF major commands. We received the names and email addresses of M&FRC flight chiefs from the selected installations from the sponsor and sent out email requests for interviews (including information about the study and the interview itself), a letter of support from the DAF chiefs of Airman and Family Readiness Operations Division and Airman and Family Care, and contact information for RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee.

Interviews were scheduled for one hour and occurred between May and June 2022. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. Interviewees were invited to join the Teams meeting either through the Teams app or website or by calling into the audio line made available in the invitation. In some cases, interviewees brought a second or third person from their installation who could speak to the M&FRC programs. From the RAND team, an interviewer and notetaker were present. Notes were taken to help accurately capture participant responses for our analysis, not for attribution purposes.

In total, we conducted ten interviews with M&FRC flight chiefs from ten installations. Two of the participating flight chiefs brought along additional staff to their interviews who could speak more to the individual programs within M&FRCs. For example, one interviewee brought along the person who oversees and conducts the relocation program within M&FRCs. None of the interviewees had been active-duty military (though many had previously held active-duty positions and had since separated or retired), and others were military spouses. The time the interviewees had been in their positions within the M&FRCs ranged from two months to six years. However, many had lengthy careers working in M&FRCs or M&FRC-adjacent (i.e., other helping agencies) programs—some for up to 35 years.

Of note, interviewees referred only to airmen in their responses, though these programs apply to both airmen and guardians. Therefore, to maintain the accuracy of what was shared by interviewees, the report refers to *airmen* when detailing information from the flight chief interviews.

Once all interviews were completed, the notes were coded into themes by a team of two using Dedoose's qualitative analysis software. A set of parent codes was developed using the structure of the protocol, and, as coders sorted comments into these high-level codes, child codes were created to identify themes and key points that came up across interviews. These themes were used to develop the findings presented in subsequent chapters.

Review of Current Program Data Variables

To understand the current data collected by each program and how these data could inform program indicators, we reviewed data reports compiled by the programs.

Study Limitations

It is important to note that the information for this study did not come from participants but rather from program documentation and interviews with flight chiefs and program staff. Although those perspectives are relevant for program-related functions, they are limited because they do not reflect the firsthand experience of airmen, guardians, and their families. We recommend that, in the process of testing and revising the program logic models, DAF collect information on participants' perspectives of program services to inform additional outputs or outcomes that are important to program users.

The goal of this study was to identify program outcomes and define appropriate measures of effectiveness that could be applied to these programs. Because all these measures were not collected by programs at the time of this study, we were not able to systematically evaluate the relationship between such program factors as staffing and program outputs or outcomes.

Report Organization

The remaining chapters in this report provide results and recommendations. Chapter 2 describes our findings from RAP, Chapter 3 presents information on EA, and Chapter 4 shares our findings from AFFF. Chapter 5 reviews options for the measurement of elements listed in the program logic models, and Chapter 6 provides several recommendations for DAF to consider as it continues to evaluate these programs. Four appendixes complement our research. Appendix A provides our interview protocols, and Appendix B provides potential measures for an evaluation of RAP. Appendix C provides potential measures for an evaluation of EA, and Appendix D provides measures for an AFFF evaluation.

Relocation Assistance Program

Program Description

DAF operates RAP in correspondence with Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1342.22 and Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 36-3009. According to these instructions, RAP is to provide education and referrals to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with issues surrounding PCS moves. DoDI 1342.22 indicates that the relocation issues that should receive emphasis are

- moving costs
- housing options and home-finding assistance
- child care
- services for family members with special needs
- spouse employment opportunities
- schools
- cultural adaptation
- immigration information and referrals
- community orientation and resources (local, regional, military departments, and DoD).

RAP is administered through M&FRCs, which also provide other services to promote military family readiness, including counseling and education. Each installation's M&FRC provides relocation assistance through consultations, workshops, and outreach activities. This programming generally covers how to plan a move, issues specific to foreign-born spouses, referrals to emergency financial assistance, additional assistance for first-time movers, and relocation sponsors. Prior to a family's move, these centers provide the family members with relocation resources to ease the transition. Services include financial education workshops and one-on-one financial counseling, providing relocation information through a secure DoD system, and training sponsors to assist airmen and guardians with relocation and adjustment to the new location. M&FRCs use several DoD-provided relocation assistance tools to aid members and families during the relocation process. Two primary virtual tools are the MilitaryInstallations and PlanMyMove web-based applications, both hosted by Military OneSource, to provide standardized information about installations, offer planning tools, and provide robust knowledge pools to cover the vast array of concerns or issues members and families might have during a PCS move (e.g., spouse employment, housing, helping functions). DAFI 36-3009 also specifies that relocation assistance includes a newcomers orientation. In accordance with DAFI 36-3009, installation commanders retain authority to determine the scope and requirements of the newcomer orientation and sponsorship, but the newcomer

orientation should “provide a venue to complete all necessary PCS-related actions while minimizing time away from the new unit of assignment and simultaneously enabling newly assigned members to integrate quicker” (DAFI 36-3009, §4.10.3). Many centers have a lending closet that provides household goods to families on a temporary basis. Families with Exceptional Family Member Program status receive additional support from M&FRCs during PCS moves, including access to on- and off-installation resources and state and federal resources.

Relocating airmen and guardians are to be assigned a sponsor by their unit command. The sponsor is another airman or guardian whose role is to help incoming members and their families complete a smooth relocation to the gaining installation (DAFI 36-3009, §4.10.4). The sponsor is also tasked with helping members acclimate to their new unit and understand the installation and unit mission. Although sponsors are selected and assigned by unit leadership, RAP, as part of the installation M&FRC, is responsible for training sponsors.

Review of the Literature on Relocation Assistance

We examined the literature on the challenges associated with PCS moves and the programs designed to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with these challenges.

Challenges of Relocation

There is a large body of evidence on service member and family experiences that documents the various challenges that affect service members, spouses, and children during relocation. Moves are a stressor for military families and are associated with a broad set of disruptions to family stability (Tong et al., 2018). Namely, PCS moves disrupt household management, spouse employment, and schooling and child care. Household management entails the time and cost considerations around securing housing, packing and vacating the current home, and selling an existing home where applicable. Spouse employment entails searching, interviewing for, and securing new employment; making transitions for industry licenses; and, for those pursuing education, finding a new educational institution and transferring credits (Tong et al., 2018). Analysis of the 2015 Active Duty Survey of Spouses suggests that PCS moves make it difficult for spouses to find employment (Tong et al., 2018).¹ Additional survey research suggests that PCS moves can contribute to spouse underemployment (Maury and Stone, 2014). Research using Social Security Administration tax records has shown that PCS moves increased the probability that military spouses would report zero income the following tax year (i.e., that they would not be employed for pay), and those spouses who found employment after a PCS move earned almost 15 percent less than the year prior to the move (Burke and Miller, 2018).

The last major challenge of PCS moves is schooling and child care, including transitions for children to new care and schooling arrangements and the ensuing difficulties regarding location,

¹ The Active Duty Survey of Spouses is administered by the Office of People Analytics within DoD’s Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). The survey uses a stratified random sampling procedure and weights survey results to be representative of active-component military spouses (Klein and Dorvil, 2016).

cost, and quality of schooling and care for children (Tong et al., 2018). Research on civilian children indicates that long-distance moves have a negative impact on such child outcomes as performance in school (e.g., Cordes, Schwartz, and Stiefel, 2019) and social connection to other students (e.g., Pribesh and Downey, 1999). In addition, according to the 2021 Active Duty Spouse Survey (Office of People Analytics, 2023), almost 50 percent of military families with children who experienced a PCS move in the past year reported problems accessing child care at the gaining location.

Mitigation Strategies

There are many programs, policies, and services to assist with PCS moves. Tong and colleagues' (2018) research on relocation stressors and assistance did not find evidence of a need for new programs. However, their research showed that these supports might not adequately alleviate PCS disruptions to families, and that there is room to improve the PCS move process itself to minimize family disruptions. In particular, the evidence supports increasing the lead time before a move is scheduled so that service members and their families have more time to plan their relocation. It could be helpful for families to be given additional lead time before PCS moves to have a longer runway to address household management, spouse employment, and schooling and child care issues (Tong et al., 2018). It is important to note that the lead time for assignments is beyond the purview or control of M&FRCs because this is an internalized DAF process handled by DAF assignment offices located at the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC).

In addition, military families report preferring to receive relocation and program information from civilian online sources (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and DoD online resources, as well as information on RAP through online sources regularly visited by military families (Tong et al., 2018).

Personnel Feedback on Relocation Assistance

Relocation Assistance Program Goals and Activities

M&FRC flight chiefs described RAP as a program intended to help both inbound and outbound airmen moving to a new installation or location. Whether the member is arriving or leaving for a new base, all interviewees identified the key role of RAP as providing all necessary information to help airmen and their families understand the available resources and help them navigate their new location. More than half of the interviewees noted that this effort to provide information has a larger goal of reducing stress and creating a transition that is as smooth as possible for members and their families, which is hoped to boost the resilience of airmen in the long term by increasing awareness of and access to resources to help airmen recover from stressful or traumatic events.

Interviewees described the following five types of information and resources typically requested or offered to the moving families:

- information about the new installation and the surrounding area

- help locating and securing housing
- help finding job opportunities for spouses
- help finding child care (in particular, for children who might have specific needs not addressed by standard child care services)
- help with finances, including completion of travel vouchers to cover travel costs.

To provide this information and assistance, personnel administering RAP hold one-on-one sessions with members and families to talk through specific needs and present briefings and classes to share information with groups. Several flight chiefs noted that their RAP also maintains online guides providing detailed information and lists of resources and contact information to make it as accessible as possible. Furthermore, although RAPs are not the sole entity responsible for the management and implementation of an installation's sponsorship program (typically done in conjunction with a unit or commander's support squadron), interviewees identified reviewing the inbound and outbound members' sponsorship as a key task: Personnel administering RAP are to provide confirmation that the member has a sponsor assigned and that the member was able to make contact with this sponsor prior to completing relocation to their new installation.

Installation RAP personnel also reach out to inbound airmen and their spouses prior to arrival. Interviewees noted that these efforts are not always successful, but that personnel make sure to at the very least connect with airmen soon after their arrival. Personnel administering RAP also sometimes work with a unit's Key Spouse program leaders to be sure information gets to spouses relocating with the military member.

Program Feedback

M&FRC flight chiefs had mixed responses regarding whether their RAP efforts were meeting the specific needs of relocating airmen and families. In general, flight chiefs agreed that it is difficult to know whether their RAPs are meeting these needs because of a lack of feedback on the services provided and a lack of clarity about what members' needs are. One interviewee noted that it was unclear whether airmen were sharing information (housing, base resources, etc.) with their spouses and family members, particularly in cases where the family members were unable (often because of child care) to attend classes, briefings, or one-on-one sessions where the information is shared.

Interviewees observed that it was difficult to determine their program's success because so many of the resources and information provided by RAP were available online, where airmen and their families can easily access it without the help of personnel administering RAP.

Despite the lack of feedback, half of the interviewees shared their beliefs that the RAP on their installation was successfully resolving the needs of members. However, several respondents caveated this by emphasizing that it takes a significant effort to use program services. When asked whether their RAP was successfully meeting the needs of airmen and their families, one interviewee said, "For those using it, absolutely. But that's key. A lot of people now don't want to take the time to, let's say, go into Military OneSource or attend the Smooth Move briefing. They may not be aware of the tools available to them because they don't want to spend the time."

A few flight chiefs indicated that they did not believe their RAP was meeting many needs raised by airmen and their families during the relocation process, though these interviewees did feel the needs were being met by other helping agencies on the installation, including billing or finance services, community support centers, or the Welcome Center.

Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of the Relocation Assistance Program

Interviewees listed several factors that can either decrease or increase the effectiveness of an installation's RAP.

Factors Detracting from Effectiveness

Staffing the program presented problems. Several interviewees noted their office was understaffed, particularly matched against all the activities and resources they would like to provide for inbound and outbound airmen and their families. Therefore, the programs must select certain components to cut back on, such as classes and one-on-one sessions. Similarly, staff turnover resulted in inconsistent delivery of the program's services. Some staff members were more persistent and took a more hands-on approach to meeting with airmen, and others were more passive, waiting for airmen to come to them with questions.

The lack of feedback received on RAP services was commonly noted as a hindrance to program effectiveness. All interviewees noted that they received minimal feedback from users of their services, and almost all shared that they track usage rates for their efforts, but do not uniformly elicit feedback. About half of the interviewees noted that they do make some effort to collect comments and feedback from users by sharing a survey after class, briefing, or session participation. Still, few comments made their way back to staff providing relocation assistance. Some interviewees also shared that they receive standard Interactive Customer Evaluation feedback when it is submitted but that this is still too rare for the comments to have much impact on the services.

Another limitation to the program's success as identified by interviewees was difficulty in getting information to inbound spouses. In many cases (most often when the airman and their spouse had a child), spouses were not available to attend in-person RAP sessions. Therefore, they relied on the member to bring back information that might be pertinent to the spouse and family, but the sense among interviewees was that it was unclear whether airmen were actually bringing that information back to their families.

Factors Enhancing Effectiveness

Three key factors that contributed positively to the effectiveness of RAP programs were noted by interviewees. The first was the personality of staff members who run the program and its components, which was noted as a key driver in creating connections with incoming airmen and their families. Staff that were persistent in their attempts to connect with the members and families, whether they received a response, and who took a proactive and hands-on approach to sharing information and resources with airmen and their families were considered to be the driving force behind the success of the program meeting its goals and fulfilling all of their intended activities. To highlight the contributions of their personnel, one interviewee said, "The

person we have doing it, they are personal..... They'll go to [a whole other] level, past what they need to do.”

Another factor commonly mentioned by interviewees was the effectiveness of the sponsorship program at a given base. As previously mentioned, sponsors and the sponsorship program are not directly managed by M&FRCs or RAP, but interviewees still emphasized the importance of a well-managed sponsorship program in a successful relocation. Some particular components that affect an airman’s relocation (and, thus, the efforts of the program) included the match of the sponsor to the inbound member, the efforts of the sponsor to connect with the member, and the sponsor’s awareness of all of the available resources and information about a base and the surrounding area. To emphasize this point, one M&FRC flight chief shared, “Sponsorship really, to me, is the key to a successful relocation. Sponsorship sets the tone, and you have one opportunity to make a difference in an airman or a airman’s life.”

The third factor was the impact of unit commanders. Interviewees noted that commanders played an important role in the relocation and in-processing of members and their families. Several interviewees shared that the biggest way commanders can affect relocation is by ensuring that incoming airmen are paired with sponsors who have experienced and can speak to issues that are important to the member and their family: “An appropriate sponsor, if you have someone coming in with three kids, then an airman with kids will be a better sponsor than a single one living in the dorms.”² Interviewees also noted that they feel relocation, onboarding, and in-processing are more effective when the RAP can collaborate and coordinate with unit leadership to communicate on the needs of the incoming airmen and their families, and to make sure those needs are being met between the M&FRC and the unit. Finally, some interviewees noted that commanders who make the effort to meet with all incoming members and make sure they have the appropriate information and in-processing checklist seem to make a difference in how smoothly the whole relocation process goes.

Relocation Assistance Program Logic Model

To develop the logic model for RAP, we reviewed program guidance, consulted with program headquarters staff, and interviewed installation M&FRC flight chiefs on the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the program. Using this information, we developed measures to indicate how well the program is performing, known as outputs, and whether the program is effective in producing the intended outcomes. Below, we review the logic model, displayed in Figure 2.1 and summarize the measures we developed to monitor program functioning and evaluate program effectiveness. Note that some measures require data that DAF Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Air Force Services (A1S) does not currently collect. Chapter 5 reviews categories of data needed for the indicators and suggested methods to obtain those data. The proposed measures are included in Appendix B.

² Pursuant to DAFI 36-3009, unit commanders retain the authority in determining appointment of sponsors in that the default is usage of the unit command support staff unless the commander elects to appoint a specific member.

Inputs

The inputs for RAP and associated measures are discussed below. For each measure, the base-level data could be recorded in the Air Force Family Integrated Results and Statistical Tracking (AFFIRST) system by M&FRC staff, and the headquarters-level measures could be tracked by headquarters staff in a program-specific database.

Guidance

DAF-specific guidance for RAP is from the instructions directing M&FRCs: DAFI 36-3009. This guidance should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is complete and up to date.³

Staff

Although all M&FRC staff are expected to contribute to RAP activities, it is important to review whether the number of staff is adequate to serve the number of airmen and guardians assigned to a base and their families (see Appendix B). Specific attention should be paid to locations where there are a greater number of PCS moves to and from the location. There needs to be enough staff available to provide relocation assistance to all airmen and guardians who need it.

Briefings and Support Materials

M&FRC staff are to provide briefings to newcomers, commanders, and others and to distribute support-relevant materials to airmen, guardians, and their family members. The materials for these activities should be reviewed by M&FRC staff annually to ensure they are up to date and accurate.

Military and Family Readiness Center Facilities

M&FRC staff use M&FRC facilities and other sites to conduct briefings and to carry out other RAP activities. To ensure that airmen, guardians, and their families have exposure to the resources at an installation's M&FRC and are comfortable accessing it for other services, M&FRCs should have adequate space to conduct newcomer briefings.

Funding

Funding is needed for program staff and materials. We recommend that headquarters staff track overall funding for RAP and that base-level M&FRC staff track annual funding levels relative to the number of airmen and guardians assigned to the base and the number of PCS moves to the base.

³ As the majority of program areas provided by M&FRCs stem from an amalgamation of public law and DoD policy issuances, DAFI 36-3009 is normally updated on an annual basis because any changes of the above-DAF-level authorities require modification to this directive issuance.

Activities and Outputs

RAP activities include providing orientation briefings to airmen, guardians, and their family members who recently completed a PCS move to a new base (newcomer orientation). The newcomer orientation briefing consolidates PCS-related actions into one briefing. This briefing is required of airmen and guardians, and attendance is encouraged for their family members. RAP also coordinates sponsor training with commanders and provides referrals for youth sponsorship support. A youth sponsorship program is also available for children, and RAP can provide referrals to connect youth to that program (Military OneSource, 2023).

Outputs for RAP activities include counts of the number of airmen and guardians served by the program and percentage of eligible airmen and guardians who were served. AIS should collaborate with DMDC to document the total number of airmen and guardians who completed a PCS move to each base each quarter and use this number as the denominator for these calculations. Similarly, DMDC should provide the number of spouses who completed a PCS move with their airmen or guardian to each base, and this number can be used to calculate the percentage of eligible spouses served by RAP.

Outcomes and Impacts

Short-Term Outcomes

The short-term outcomes of RAP are that airmen and guardians complete all applicable PCS processing transactions in a timely manner. Measuring this outcome requires a more holistic approach to assessing PCS transactions—a summary of all the individual tasks required for PCS moves. In addition, airmen and guardians should gain an understanding of command, installation, and unit missions; the required in-processing transactions for themselves and their family members; the installation's resources for safety, health, substance abuse, equal employment opportunity (EEO), sexual harassment prevention, suicide prevention, sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) programs, and issues covered in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) Article 137 training.

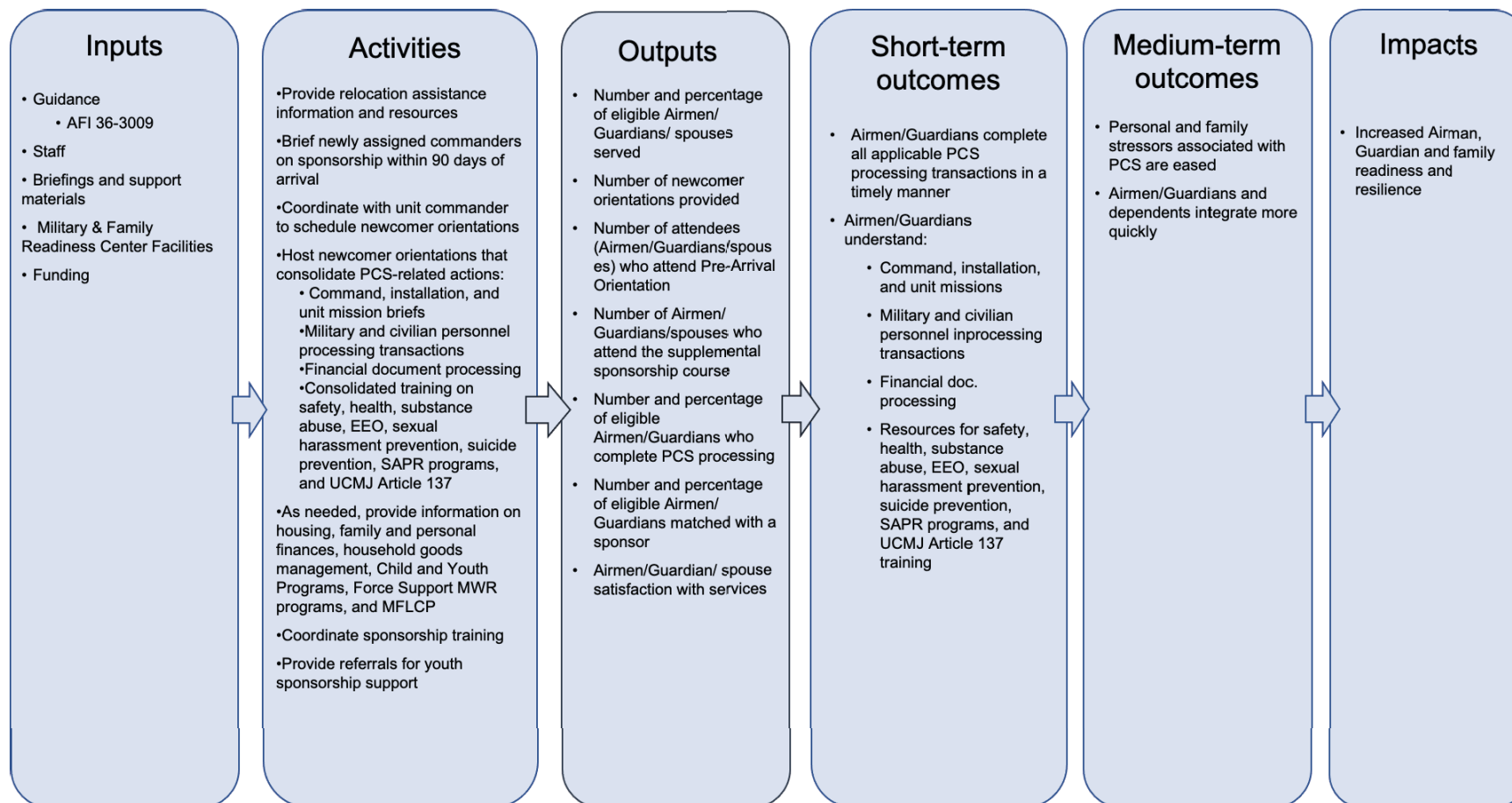
Medium-Term Outcomes

If RAP activities are successful and result in the desired short-term outcomes, this should lead to reduced PCS-related personal and family stressors for airmen, guardians, and their families. Airmen, guardians, and their family members should also integrate more quickly into the gaining installation.

Impacts

Finally, to the extent that RAP activities reduce PCS-related stress and allow for quicker integration into the gaining command, installation, unit, and surrounding community, airmen, guardians, and their families should experience greater readiness and resilience to stressful or traumatic events.

Figure 2.1. Relocation Assistance Program Logic Model



NOTE: Logic model is based on program policy, regulations, and RAND interviews and feedback from DAF staff.

Summary

Previous research suggests that PCS moves are highly challenging for service members and their families because they require extensive planning and logistical considerations. In addition, military families report preferring more lead time before scheduling a move and wanting more information to be provided online (Tong et al., 2018). Interviewees who oversee or administer RAPs often did not know whether their programs were successfully meeting the needs of airmen and their families, and some indicated their RAPs were not meeting airman needs. Negative factors affecting RAP effectiveness mentioned by interviewees included limited staffing, lack of feedback, and challenges conveying information to spouses. Positive factors included high-quality staff, supportive sponsorship program, and engaged unit commanders. To support evaluation of RAP, we provide a logic model and example measures.⁴

⁴ The AFPC Airman and Family Division (AFPC/DPFF), in collaboration with the Headquarters Air Force Airman and Family Care Division (AF/A1SA), initiated an extensive review of RAP in February 2021, to address concerns raised from field units and general feedback received through various forums. AFPC/DPFF created a working group consisting of multiple stakeholders, including Exceptional Family Member Program, school liaisons, and representatives from 12 varied installations. This comprehensive review and assessment led to several improvement actions that should be concluded by the end of calendar year 2022. Major efforts include (1) incorporated relocation assistance as a focus area in DAF major command-level briefs (e.g., school houses) and senior spouse Key Spouse Engagement Series, (2) updated standardized Office of the Secretary of Defense sponsorship training that incorporates local area information in supplemental guidance to M&FRCs (follow-on field training was conducted throughout September 2022), (3) pre-arrival virtual orientation (from losing to gaining base) to address such major stressors as housing, schools, and employment (the initial rollout of this effort has been completed—7 percent of bases are complete, 21 percent were rolled out in the fall of 2022, and the remainder were rolled out after the 2022 PCS season), and (4) synchronized with VCSAF Holodeck and Headquarters Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Directorate of Plans and Integration (AF/A1X) automation projects, myPCS/PCS Express applications in development for a tailored PCS experience.

Employment Assistance

Program Description

DAF operates EA under the instructions of DoDI 1342.22. The DoDI details are scant, but they direct that M&FRCs “must provide services that strengthen the education and career opportunities of relocating and transitioning military spouses, and other family members” (DoDI 1342.22, §4.2). This includes referrals to DoD employment support programs. In addition to referrals, support is provided through career counseling and distribution of employment information, including employment in the local labor market, self-employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities. There is no specific DAFI for EA. DAF headquarters staff indicated that the employment needs of airmen and guardians who are transitioning out of the service are mainly handled by the Transition Assistance Program, so most of the efforts of EA are for spouse employment.

Review of the Literature on Spouse Employment

Several studies have examined the challenges military spouses face in gaining employment and whether military spouse employment programs help spouses find work. Because EA focuses on helping spouses find employment through DoD employment support programs, we focused our literature review on these programs.

Spouse Employment Challenges and Employment Assistance

Spouses of U.S. military service members face challenges in obtaining and keeping jobs that match their career aspirations. Frequent military moves, service member absences for training or deployments, and difficulty securing affordable child care are some of the challenges spouses face in finding stable, well-paying, and gratifying employment (Burke and Miller, 2016). Prior RAND research has built an evidence base on the challenges to military spouse employment and how employment and education programs can help spouses. RAND researchers have undertaken evaluations of the effectiveness of DoD military spouse employment programs, examined the factors contributing to military spouse unemployment and underemployment, and explored how military spouse employment fits within the context of other spouse needs (Heaton and Krull, 2012; Meadows et al., 2016; Lim and Schulker, 2010). For the purposes of this report, our review of the existing evidence focused on scholarship support, the job portal, and career counseling.

In 2007, DoD’s Military Community and Family Policy office established several initiatives under the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program (Gonzalez, Miller, and Trail, 2016). RAND researchers have examined or evaluated several of these initiatives; we summarize the existing evidence on these initiatives in the subsequent sections.

My Career Advancement Account

My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) scholarship is an initiative under SECO that provides tuition assistance (\$4,000) to military spouses for associate’s degrees, occupational certificates, and licenses in portable career fields. Because frequent moves can have lasting negative impacts on military spouses’ careers (Burke and Miller, 2018), MyCAA was developed to support spouse career development and a host of other retention, financial stability, and wellness-related goals (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 2008).

RAND research has examined MyCAA scholarship support for military spouses and its impact on service member retention. Eligible spouses who apply for MyCAA are more likely to have experienced a military move or deployment, have two or more children, be married to enlisted noncommissioned officers, or live in states with higher unemployment rates than the overall spouse population (Miller et al., 2018). During the study period, all eligible applicants whose study plans met the MyCAA criteria were approved for scholarships,⁵ and at least 34 percent of the users in the 2010–2011 cohort were known to have completed their plans by the end of the three-year scholarship window. These findings are consistent with the broad evidence that grant funding to facilitate access to and success in postsecondary training is impactful (Dynarski, Page, and Scott-Clayton, 2022; Nguyen, Kramer, and Evans, 2019). Across nonmilitary grant and scholarship studies, estimates suggest that an additional \$1,000 of grant aid improves receiving student training persistence and attainment by 1.5 to 2 percentage points (Nguyen, Kramer, and Evans, 2019). Scholarship recipients’ earnings also appear to grow more rapidly than those of non-MyCAA spouses (Miller et al., 2018). Further, MyCAA boosts service member retention for at least six years following the spouse’s receipt of the scholarship (Knapp et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2018).

Efforts to boost awareness about and application for MyCAA might contribute to better outcomes for spouses and better retention of service members. Lack of awareness about the program and perceptions of ineligibility are major barriers to MyCAA participation (Friedman, Miller, and Evans, 2015). Both MyCAA and non-MyCAA recipients cite cost, competing family responsibilities, and child care as barriers to education and employment (Friedman, Miller, and Evans, 2015); the value of MyCAA might be strengthened by connecting MyCAA applicants with career counselors who have a knowledge of the military and military spouses needs as well as with partner schools’ child care centers and career centers.

⁵ 19 percent of those individuals approved did not end up using any funds.

Military Spouse Employment Partnership Job Portal

RAND researchers conducted a two-phase study to evaluate data on the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) program for the Military Community and Family Policy office (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Posard et al., 2021). In the second phase (2016–2019), they queried job postings from the MSEP career portal, compared the geographic distribution of posted jobs with the locations of spouses, interviewed employers, and surveyed and interviewed spouses.⁶ Results showed that the MSEP career portal listed a range of jobs and that the postings matched spouses' experience. However, the job type, quality, and regionality often did not meet spouse needs and interests. Only a limited percentage of these jobs were telecommuting positions, which is often desirable for military spouses. More jobs on this portal were in the Northeast region of the United States than in other regions, despite the high percentage of spouses who live in other regions. Survey and phone interviews of military spouses suggested some dissatisfaction with the quality of job postings. Additionally, employers expressed a desire for more and better communication among MSEP stakeholders. Posard et al. (2021) concluded that there were opportunities to increase the relevance and quality of jobs on the portal through outreach to and ongoing engagement with employer partners who offer telecommuting positions of interest and are based in the Midwest and West.

Employment Assistance

There is strong evidence that strengths-based career counseling has a positive impact on employment and self-esteem for unemployed civilians (Littman-Ovadia, Lazar-Butbul, and Benjamin, 2014). However, there has not been an evaluation of SECO. Decades-old research showed low levels of awareness of and participation in the various employment assistant programs DoD-wide; the highest levels of participation occur among spouses living outside the continental United States and spouses with greater educational attainment (Bureika et al., 1999). More recent RAND research recommends the development of key indicators, benchmarks, and data collection plans and finds that infrastructure will be important for laying the groundwork for future estimates of program impact (Gonzalez, Miller, and Trail, 2016).

Personnel Feedback on Employment Assistance

Employment Assistance Goals and Activities

M&FRC flight chiefs described EA as a program intended to help spouses of airmen (and airmen transitioning out of the military) to identify job opportunities and develop skills needed to secure employment. EA also offers this support to civilian government employees working on the installation, local retirees, and National Guard or Reserve members, though interviewees noted that these populations less frequently seek the support through M&FRCs. Beyond

⁶ For a more detailed description of the research and findings, please see Posard et al.'s (2021) report *Evaluation of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership Program: Report on the Second Stage of Analysis*.

identifying job opportunities and helping with skill development, EA personnel help spouses and members by providing advice regarding different possible career paths.

The majority of the M&FRC program representatives identified providing information and resources as one of the main goals of the program. The information provided to EA users includes job opportunities in the local area and the types of careers one might be able to pursue given their background. This information is largely disseminated in one-on-one sessions with EA representatives and through online guides maintained by M&FRCs. The resources cover similar topics—job postings and career advice—as well as guidance on interviews, résumés, and required certifications and trainings.

Perhaps apparent with the name and intent of the program, and closely linked to the goal of providing all necessary information and resources to users, are the other three goals that were identified by interviewees: introducing users to job opportunities, helping users prepare for interviews and networking, and helping users think through employment and career development.

M&FRC flight chiefs noted a variety of activities coordinated by their EA personnel to help those using the program connect to and prepare for job opportunities. The most frequently mentioned activities were holding classes and workshops to help promote networking and job skills, helping with writing and reviewing résumés, creating opportunities to connect local employers with users, posting and sharing job opportunities on base and in the local area, hosting networking events with employers who might be looking to hire, running mock interviews with M&FRC staff and employers in the area, and meeting with users one-on-one to provide career advice.

Interviewees noted that their personnel received very minimal feedback on their services, but because of the nature of the events and activities hosted by EA, they were able to collect usage and attendance rates to understand whether attendees were consistently participating. Like RAPs, EA activities include a brief feedback survey that attendees are asked to fill out, but it is rare the program receives substantive feedback that way or through the standard Interactive Customer Evaluation comments collected for all services.

Program Feedback

While interviewees generally did not view EA as unsuccessful at their locations, they were unable to point to clear success. Some noted that, when users take advantage of the activities and information and resources made available by EA and give feedback to EA, they are often successfully employed. Others made note of users who attend classes and seek advice and information but do not act on that advice and information and, thus, are not able to find employment. Generally, interviewees noted that, though sessions might be well-attended, program staff do not receive feedback from attendees and often do not receive confirmation about whether they found employment. Still, even with the lack of feedback, nearly half of the interviewees felt the program was meeting the needs of spouses and members.

Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Employment Assistance

Interviewees listed several factors that can either decrease or increase the effectiveness of an installation's EA.

Factors Detracting from Effectiveness

One of the key factors negatively affecting the effectiveness of the program was the lack of capacity among EA personnel to provide the services to all users seeking help. Interviewees identified two likely causes: low staffing in M&FRCs and too many users to be able to meaningfully help all of them (i.e., identify employment opportunities and provide guidance). As previously mentioned, EA faces a similar issue faced by RAPs; they do not receive helpful feedback from program users that can be used to identify areas for improvement or areas where the program is successful and effective from the perspective of users. For example, aside from the small number of users who return to share their employment updates, the program personnel often do not know whether those who sought their help were successfully employed after working with EA. This was the other factor identified by M&FRC flight chiefs as having a negative impact on the program's effectiveness.

Factors Enhancing Effectiveness

One of the main positive impacts on effectiveness identified by interviewees was the availability of jobs in the areas surrounding the base, though this varied by location. On the other hand, some interviewees noted that the jobs in the area did not match up with the types of jobs EA users were looking for. For example, a spouse who has an engineering degree might live in an area where the majority of available jobs are in hospitality or food service.

As was the case for RAPs, one of the key factors making EA effective was the type of staff running the program and its activities and services. Proactive staff who developed connections with local employers and various on-base services were identified as a key component of effective EA. One interviewee described the attributes of their own EA personnel:

It's very subjective. The two guys I have doing my employment skills, one used to work for the state employment office and the other worked in the [district attorney's office]. They have a true passion for it. They stepped up and got these job fairs started. They stepped up and got the suits. I can't tell you that there is a checkmark for it, but it's the right folks for the job. There are basics like résumé and interview classes, but how good those are is on the people that do the job and I have two great ones.

Beyond the personalities and work styles of the staff running an installation's EA, the program benefits greatly when employers in the area surrounding the base support the efforts by participating in networking events, job fairs, and presentations to EA users. One interviewee attributed the ability of their EA to do mock interviews, résumé reviews, and networking events with "over 100 local employers" to the "tremendous support from [their] community." Some of the M&FRC flight chiefs also noted that local employers tend to recognize the benefits of hiring former military members and their spouses more than other employers. An interviewee summarized this phenomenon by saying, "Our military—our community partners want to hire

military because military is going to show up. You won't have issue with drug tests or professional behavior in the workplace. They're going to come and be ready to work, willing to learn. They're going to be reliable."

While the impact of commanders on the effectiveness of EA was not frequently mentioned by interviewees, some did note that it is important for commanders to ensure their airmen are aware of the services available to both them and their spouse and to give the members the time they need to seek out employment assistance services.

Employment Assistance Logic Model

We developed the logic model for EA by reviewing program guidance, consulting with program headquarters staff, and interviewing installation M&FRC staff on the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the program. Based on this information, we developed measures to indicate how well the program is performing, known as outputs, and whether the program is effective in producing the intended outcomes. Below, we review the logic model, displayed in Figure 3.1, and summarize the measures we developed to monitor program functioning and evaluate program effectiveness. Note that some measures require data that AIS does not currently collect. Chapter 5 reviews categories of data needed for the indicators and suggested methods to obtain those data. The proposed measures are included in Appendix C.

Inputs

Staff

M&FRC staff administer the program at the base level. It is important to review whether the number of staff is adequate to serve the number of married airmen and guardians assigned to a base so that they can assist military spouses with their employment needs. This is especially the case where married members frequently move to the base because PCS moves typically require spouses to find new employment.

Facilities

Many EA activities are carried out in the base M&FRC, which is expected to have employment resource center facilities to help spouses find employment (e.g., computers and printers). In addition, Military OneSource is also a DoD-wide resource for employment assistance.

Local Job Market Information and Resources

M&FRCs are to have up-to-date information on the local job market and resources to help spouses find a job in the area.

Funding

Funding for headquarters EA staff and activities and for base staff, employment resource center facilities, and training activities should be adequate.

Activities and Outputs

EA activities include conducting employment skills training for spouses on such issues as résumé writing and job search strategies. M&FRC staff also conduct career counseling and planning sessions with individuals, and staff conduct career assessment tests and interpret the results for participants to help them decide on a career path. In addition, M&FRC employment resource centers provide guided access to employment-related resources (e.g., computers, laser printers, internet information on careers, job listings, and the development of job search skills). Staff also distribute resources to support self-employment, small business, and entrepreneurial efforts by spouses; provide referrals for additional education or employment skills training; and host job fairs to connect spouses with employers. Importantly, EA is to connect spouses with the suite of SECO programs, such as MSEP and MyCAA scholarships, which help spouses gain the education, skills, credentials, and connections they need to pursue their career path.

Outcomes and Impacts

Short-Term Outcomes

In the short term, EA activities should equip spouses with the knowledge and assistance needed to aid their job search, to establish career goals and a plan to reach those goals, to improve their employment search skills, and to connect them with employment opportunities.

Medium-Term Outcomes

In the medium term, if EA's short-term outcomes are achieved, it is expected that spouses who use EA resources would obtain a job within their desired career field and that this job would allow them to pursue their long-term career goals.

Impacts

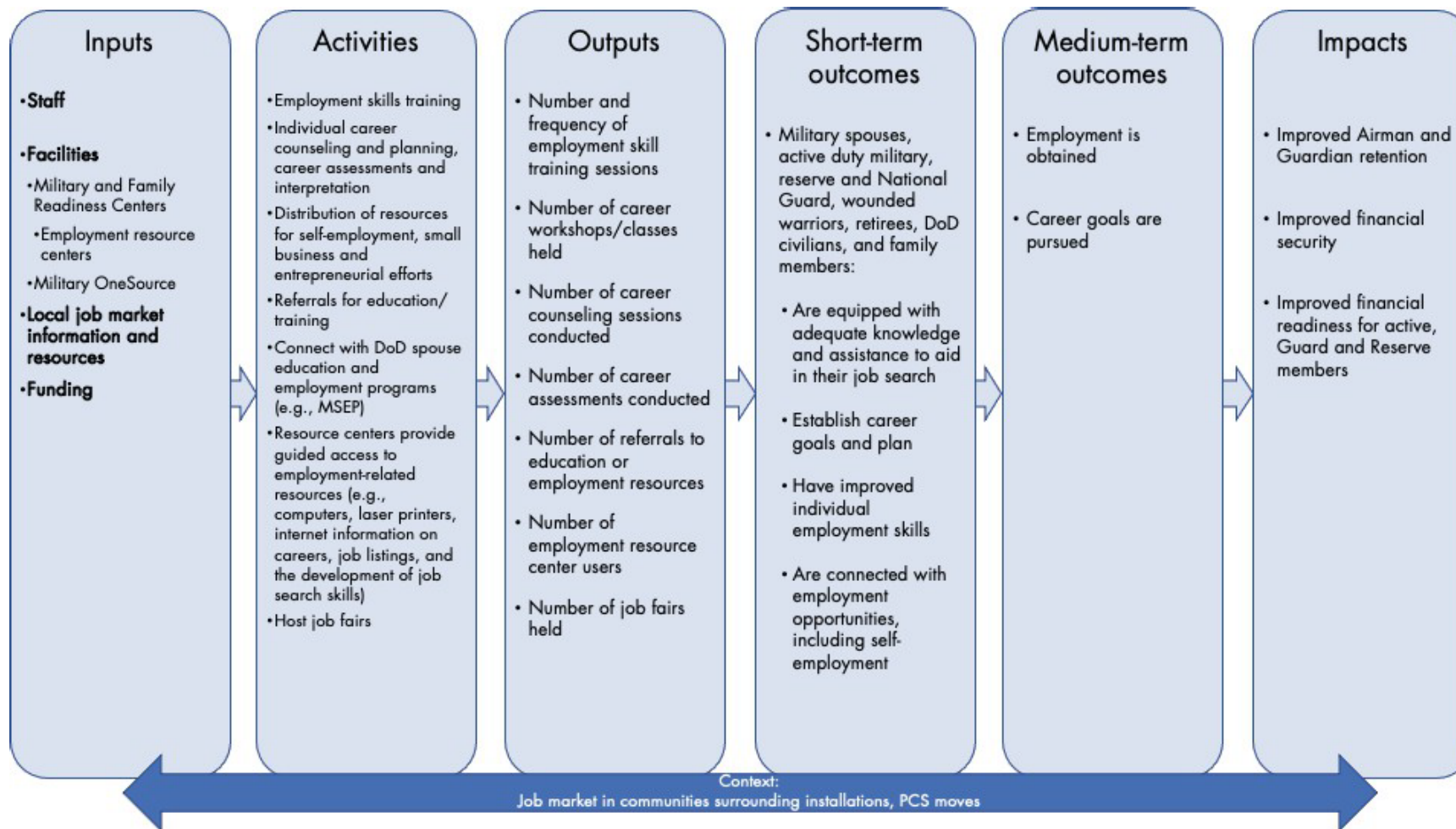
If the program is effectively accomplishing its short- and medium-term goals, then the long-term impacts of EA use would be improved airmen and guardian retention, improved family financial security, and improved financial readiness for active, Guard, and Reserve members.

Context

Finally, for EA to function as listed, the job market in communities surrounding installations must be considered. For example, the ability of spouses to find employment that allows them to pursue their career goals will depend on whether there are relevant jobs available in their

communities (or virtually, for remote work). As noted earlier, even when spouses can find local employment, they might have to cease employment to move to another duty location. Thus, PCS moves can affect how well EA functions in helping spouses find meaningful long-term employment.

Figure 3.1. Employment Assistance Logic Model



NOTE: Logic model is based on program policy, regulations, and RAND interviews and feedback from DAF staff.

Summary

DAF's EA program appears to be of primary use to military spouses who might have difficulties finding employment because of frequent PCS moves, as also suggested in Chapter 2. Previous RAND research has examined related programs, but limited assessment has been conducted on EA. Speaking with personnel who administer EA, we found that the program is intended to identify job opportunities, facilitate networking, and assist with the job interview process. The success of the program, however, is unclear because of limited feedback and evaluation. One of the key factors believed to reduce the effectiveness of EA was limited personnel capacity to administer the program. One potentially positive factor, depending on location, was a large amount of employment opportunities in and around an installation. We also include a logic model and potential measures for evaluating EA.

Air Force Families Forever Program

AFFF is a DAF program that receives oversight from A1S and provides long-term support to continue the connection of eligible next of kin to the Air Force through the M&FRC closest to where each survivor lives (DAF, 2022). Established by the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2014 (Pub. L. 113-66, 2013), guidance for the program is provided by the Survivor Benefit Plans outlined in DoDI 1332.42, DAF 36-3006, and DAF's (2021) commander's guide on survivors. As with the RAP and EA logic models, we received feedback on a draft version of the AFFF model from A1S personnel from February to March of 2022. In this chapter, we describe the final AFFF program logic model and potential measures that might be considered for evaluating AFFF, drawing from the attributes listed in the model.

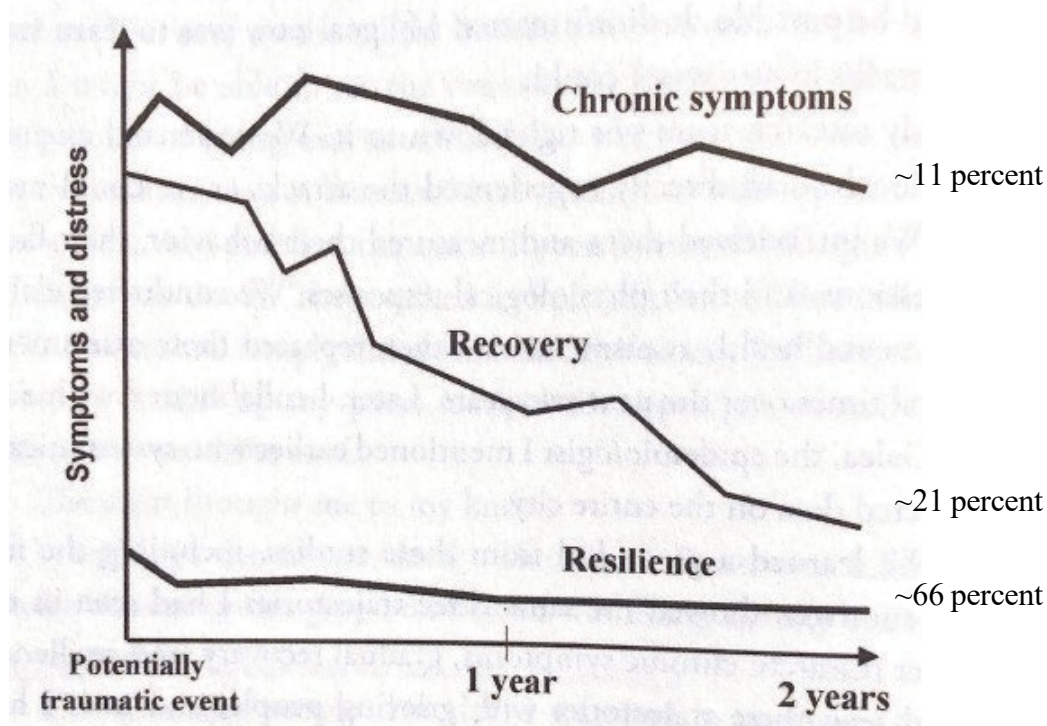
Program Description and Feedback

AFFF provides long-term support to the next of kin of airmen or guardians who died while serving in a duty status. AFFF is facilitated through M&FRC personnel on active-duty DAF installations. Through the AFFF program, next of kin are connected with information and resources, other survivors, and the military community, thereby promoting survivor resiliency through connectedness. Commanders are also encouraged to include surviving Air and Space Force family members in installation activities (DAF, 2022). There has not been an evaluation or implementation study that has focused on AFFF, so in-depth details regarding the efficacy and operation of the program are not known.

Given the relatively limited evidence on AFFF, we examined literature related to the time line for navigating grief to surface insights that might be valuable to program design and implementation. The research evidence suggests that, following a loss or other potentially devastating event, most individuals are resilient—that is, in the face of a stressful or potentially traumatic event, their patterns of psychological symptoms and indicators of distress are stable, and they do not experience a marked or prolonged disruption to their functioning (Bonanno, Westphal, and Mancini, 2011; Mancini, Bonanno, and Clark, 2011; Mancini, Sinan, and Bonanno, 2015). The most common reaction among adults exposed to loss and potentially traumatic events is a relatively stable pattern of healthy functioning with a sustained capacity for positive emotion (Bonanno, Westphal, and Mancini, 2011). Among those individuals who are not initially resilient, the majority recover to a place of lower symptoms and distress over the course of two years after loss (Bonanno, Westphal, and Mancini, 2011; Bonanno, 2005; Bonanno, Boerner, and Wortman, 2008; Bonanno and Mancini, 2010).

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, resilience is the most common response to loss or trauma, and most individuals have recovered within two years. By two years after the traumatic experience, nearly 90 percent of individuals have recovered from the trauma (21 percent) or were largely resilient to the trauma from the outset (66 percent). A small proportion of individuals (roughly 11 percent) might experience substantial and persistent distress related to their grief that could persist for years (Shear et al., 2011). Two years after experiencing trauma, these individuals might continue to experience chronic symptoms, including trouble sleeping or concentrating, anger or irritability, guilt or shame, depression, and a tendency to be startled or on guard. These trajectories suggest that the initial two years after potential trauma are the most relevant time for AFFF to connect with survivors but that continued connection would be helpful for survivors who are experiencing chronic distress.

Figure 4.1. Bonanno Trajectories of Disruption in Normal Functioning During the Two-Year Period Following a Loss or Potential Trauma



SOURCE: Reproduced from Bonanno, 2021.

NOTE: Figure depicts the trajectories and proportion of individuals who are resilient (roughly 66 percent), recover over two years (roughly 21 percent), and experience chronic symptoms in response to loss or trauma (roughly 11 percent). A small additional proportion of individuals show delayed onset of symptoms.

Air Force Families Forever Program Goals and Activities

M&FRC flight chiefs described AFFF as a way to provide information and support to surviving spouses and family members of airmen who died of any cause during their time as a member. Any next of kin of the fallen airmen are eligible for the program, including a spouse,

child, parent, and siblings. Interviewees identified two common needs raised by AFFF users: information about the resources available to them and installation access for appointments or events. However, interviewees noted that it was more common for surviving spouses and family members to not make much use of AFFF or even make requests beyond the initial outreach of casualty services. Beyond efforts to provide information and support as needed to AFFF users, other goals of the program include maintaining a connection between DAF and the surviving family and making sure the surviving family knows they have not been forgotten by DAF. Most frequently, though, the support provided by AFFF involves answering questions about processes and policies and making family aware of resources—including scholarships for children—that are available to surviving families.

To achieve these goals and meet the needs of AFFF users, AFFF personnel participate in general outreach to the families in the months following the member's passing. After the other agencies have reached out and offered support services (usually more on the logistics side, such as a casualty representative explaining the process and sharing the death gratuity payment), AFFF program personnel reach out to introduce their services and determine whether there is anything they can help with in terms of connecting survivors to other program support in the near term. AFFF personnel answer questions received via email, phone, or, though far less frequently, in person from surviving family members. In some cases, AFFF program personnel pay an in-person visit to the surviving family members, though this is uncommon because of the large catchment areas many of the installations service. AFFF personnel also notify families of any memorial services that might be taking place on the installation and offer the opportunity for families to connect with other surviving families facing similar loss.

Program Feedback

In general, interviewees shared that it was difficult to determine whether their services were meeting the needs of AFFF users. For some programs, there are very few families local to their installation, and, thus, connections are limited. Other programs are responsible for such a large catchment area that it is difficult, and often unrealistic, for the personnel to make connections with the families beyond written correspondence. Another reason interviewees were unable to identify their AFFF program's success in resolving users' needs was the lack of feedback received by all M&FRC programs. While interviewees generally did not consider their AFFF program to be either successful or unsuccessful, they noted they typically are able to respond to and address any needs that are brought their way from surviving families, even when these requests are few and far between.

Factors Detracting from Program Effectiveness

Far and away, the biggest factor believed to be affecting the effectiveness of AFFF is whether surviving families actually want to participate in the services and be contacted regularly by someone in AFFF. Most interviewees indicated that there are many families who do not want to be involved and would rather not receive continued communications after their loved one has passed away. When there are families who want to participate and maintain that connection, one

of the big roadblocks to creating and maintaining the connection is the size of their catchment area, making it difficult or impossible for AFFF personnel to ever get to the family members and meet them in person. Compounding this challenge is the fact that families are not necessarily assigned to AFFF at the installation where their deceased loved one was stationed but instead the installation closest to the current location of the family. Therefore, it is often the case that the installation reaching out had no actual connection to the airmen, making a true connection with the surviving family even more difficult.

Factors Enhancing Program Effectiveness

Interviewees mentioned the importance of the personality and approach of the person holding this position, as their personal effort, persistence, and proactiveness are what drive the program to successfully connect with families and provide needed information and resources. Beyond that, interviewees noted that AFFF is often more successful when the AFFF personnel can coordinate with the casualty representative to coordinate their outreach efforts and when they have background information on the deceased member and their family to make their efforts more personalized. Additionally, interviewees noted that unit commanders who send out remembrance or sympathy cards to families on the anniversaries of the passing of the member are considered key to families feeling remembered and supported by DAF.

Air Force Families Forever Logic Model

Figure 4.2 depicts the planned and expected inputs, activities, outputs, short-term outcomes, medium-term outcomes, and impacts (i.e., long-term outcomes) of AFFF. We briefly discuss each element of the logic model and potential measures for each element. Appendix D contains recommended measures for each element of the AFFF logic model.

Inputs

The left-most column of Figure 4.2 lists the inputs associated with AFFF. These are the various resources that are provided, or that DAF expects to be provided, to permit AFFF to function. These resources include various personnel, including (1) such staff members as the surviving family member representative and a point of contact at the M&FRC, (2) a DAF survivor advocacy council, which includes senior Air and Space Force leaders and survivor advocates, (3) installation commanders, and (4) partners, which include various DAF-internal and external organizations. AFFF resources also include policies and procedures that outline the purpose and function of AFFF, training materials on AFFF, tracking systems used by personnel who implement AFFF, and facilities used by AFFF personnel and survivors, such as the local installation's M&FRC. If the AFFF has the appropriate number and type of resources, then personnel should be able to engage in program activities.

Knowing how many and which staff members are engaged in specific interactions can provide valuable information on whether one person is overtasked and whether enough

individuals are available to support such tasks as workshops, outreach, or contacts. In addition, identifying which staff members are entering data or who is charged with maintaining up-to-date information in the tracking systems also reduces the potential for diffusion of responsibility in data entry and makes it clear who A1S or others should interact with regarding questions about an entered record. Relatedly, knowing whether and which installation commanders are actively engaged with AFFF provides valuable information on where programs are and are not receiving needed commander support.

Several inputs might be better maintained at A1S rather than at the individual M&FRCs. For example, A1S might better track whether the DAF survivor advocacy council has met in the past year and what the do-outs from this meeting were. It might also better maintain information regarding interactions with senior Air and Space Force leaders and updated policies and procedures relevant to AFFF. Regarding information on facilities, individual M&FRC personnel can provide information on the locations of interactions or events. However, A1S is best positioned to determine quality of M&FRC facilities through use of feedback on a staff survey.

Activities and Outputs

DAF personnel use the listed program inputs to implement multiple processes, events, and actions that are the components of AFFF implementation. Categories of AFFF activities include implementing staff training, providing information and referral services to survivors, tracking survivors, coordinating with various entities and individuals, remembering service members during events and activities, connecting with survivors, and supporting installation access for survivors. If these activities are implemented as designed, then a series of observable and measurable products, or outputs, should be observed. For example, the activity of implementing staff training should produce outputs involving staff perceptions of training, staff knowledge of AFFF, and a certain number of training sessions each year. Thus, one activity can, and often does, lead to more than one output. Numerous outputs are associated with AFFF activities. Rather than describing every activity and its associated outputs in this chapter, we provide the complete list of AFFF program activities and their proposed outputs in Appendix D. If these outputs occur, then several near-term effects should subsequently be observed.

Outputs tend to be the direct measures of activities. For example, implementation of staff training is program activity. Outputs of this activity that might be measured include staff knowledge of AFFF, staff perceptions of the training (e.g., trainer knowledge, knowledge gained), and the number of staff sessions attended by each individual each year. These outputs might be best assessed in a staff survey for personnel who implement AFFF. Another activity is initial and quarterly contact with survivors. This might be best addressed through a tracking system, such as AFFIRST, in which personnel enter the date of each contact with each survivor.

Short- and Medium-Term Outcomes

Short-term outcomes are the effects that AFFF activities are expected to have immediately or within weeks. Based on feedback from AIS and program personnel who implement AFFF, we identified four short-term outcomes that are expected to occur within weeks of an activity. As seen in Figure 4.2, these each focus on the effects on survivors, specifically the survivors' receipt of benefits, the extent to which they remain in contact with DAF, the extent to which they visit installations and use approved services at the installations, and the extent to which they attend unit and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) events and activities (e.g., recreational clubs, outdoor adventures).

Medium-term outcomes are those program effects that are expected to take months to years to occur and, therefore, are observed following AFFF program activities. These include the extent to which survivors recommend AFFF to others who might be able to use the program's services and the extent to which survivors feel a sense of connection to DAF. If individuals receive benefits and services, remain in contact with DAF, and attend events and activities, then these medium-term outcomes might be observed.

Because each of the short-term and medium-term outcomes established for AFFF involve effects on survivors, data collection involving survivors will be needed. This might involve including appropriate questions in a survey administered to survivors. For example, to assess whether survivors receive benefits from referred resources, a short-term outcome, AIS might administer a survey that asks survivors whether they feel knowledgeable about selected resources, whether they feel they have received the resources they need, and whether they are satisfied with the accuracy and timeliness of questions they have posed regarding resources. If survey responses suggest negative, or possibly neutral, perceptions, then AIS might engage in more in-depth efforts to determine what issues or challenges exist. These efforts might include interviews or focus groups with survivors who volunteer to participate in such additional efforts. Importantly, survey participants should not be contacted regarding their specific responses, as this might dissuade individuals from participating in the survey in the future.

Impacts

Impacts are the long-term goals of AFFF. Program impacts can, and often do, take years before they might be observed. If the listed medium-term outcomes occur, then the listed aspirational goals of AFFF might then be expected to occur. Specifically, if survivors are recommending AFFF to others and feeling a sense of connection to DAF, then AFFF program personnel should expect to be able to observe improvements in survivor well-being and resilience.

If AFFF functions as expected and the premises of the logic model regarding the program's effect on survivors is correct, then the program efforts are expected to lead to increases in survivor well-being and increases in survivor resilience. It will likely take years before these effects are observed. Observation of changes will likely require an initial measurement of well-being and resilience among recent survivors, and later, based on the amount of time AFFF program personnel expect to need to pass before these impacts are observed, a subsequent measurement of well-being and resilience using the same measures as used initially. Both those who are actively

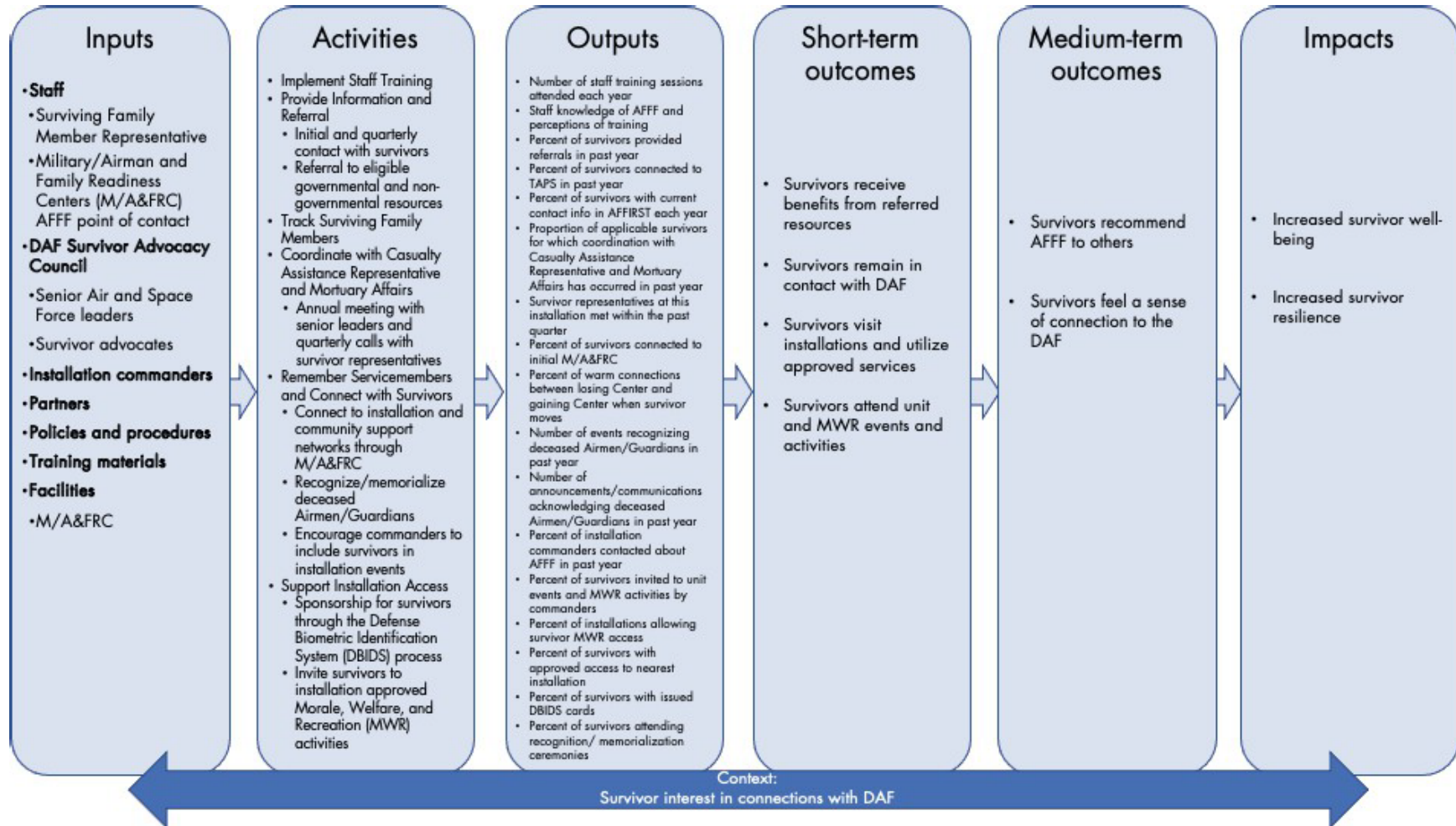
engaged in AFFF and those who are not actively engaged in the program would need to receive these measures at approximately the same interval from the time they became survivors.

There are many potential options to consider for measuring survivor well-being and resilience. Appendix D contains citations to a few options, such as tracking scores over time on the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988) as a measure of general well-being and tracking scores on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Steer, and Brown, 1996) as a measure of resilience from psychological distress. However, a substantial amount of previous research contains alternatives. The measures that are administered to survivors should be those that AIS believes to be most closely aligned with their conceptualization of these concepts.

Context

Finally, for AFFF to function as listed, the general context of survivor interest in receiving information and support from the program must be considered. For example, some survivors might not be inclined to engage with the program and might prefer not to receive communication from DAF, broadly, or program personnel who implement AFFF, more specifically. Among those individuals, the program would not be expected to function as listed.

Figure 4.2. Air Force Families Forever Logic Model



NOTE: Logic model is based on program policy, regulations, and RAND interviews and feedback from DAF staff. DBIDS = Defense Biometric Identification System; TAPS = Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors.

Summary

This chapter gives an overview of the literature relevant to and feedback on AFFF. It also provides a logic model that demonstrates how AFFF is expected to function. Previous research suggests that two years post-death is likely the most relevant time for AFFF to connect with survivors but that continued connection might be necessary for survivors who are experiencing chronic distress. M&FRC flight chiefs shared that limited feedback evaluation hindered determination of how successful their program was. However, they proposed that factors that influenced effectiveness were family member desire to participate in the program and unit commander support.

The provided logic model explicitly maps the various assumptions regarding what the program needs to run, how it runs, and what effects it has, and it also provides a road map for the development of a program evaluation. This will permit determination of whether the program is receiving the resources it needs, whether the activities that fall under the program are being conducted as designed, and whether the intended effects of the program are occurring. Over time, adjustments might need to be made to the logic model and corresponding measures collected for program evaluation, based on information obtained from the initial measures. For example, new items might need to be added to the model or current items might need to be removed.

Categories of Measures for Evaluating Selected Programs

Each of the program logic models provides a picture of how the program is expected to work and a guide by which to evaluate the program, facilitating assessment of whether the program is being implemented as expected and whether it is achieving the desired outcomes. If an expected outcome or impact is not observed, then program personnel can review the results of measures for elements that are listed earlier in the model to determine where there are issues or where there is a broken link. If no issues are found, then this suggests one or more flaws in the premises of the program logic model. Note that, although each element of a model contributes to the program's final impact, an evaluation does not necessarily have to include measures of all elements. An evaluation focused on specific program elements could only include relevant measures for that element.

Various options exist for the measurement of elements listed in the logic models. Below, we review several potential sources for data.

Administrative Data

Several elements of the programs are currently tracked through different systems. Data included in these systems might be used to measure various elements listed in the logic model. These include the AFFIRST system, in which M&FRC personnel are to enter information about support service use and provision. This information includes details about individuals who visit (either in-person or via email) an M&FRC, characteristics of workshops offered (e.g., name, location, time, number of attendees), details about outreach (e.g., name, type, and date), and characteristics of contacts with members and their families made by program personnel (e.g., name of personnel, date, category of contact). Notably, any system used to track program information should be easy to access among all M&FRC program personnel who assist with the program, be easy to learn and use (e.g., intuitive variable names and values), be flexible to the changing needs of the program, and provide for ways that program personnel can quickly and easily obtain descriptive data (i.e., without requirements that someone else pull the requisite data, which delays use).

Administrative Data for Evaluating Relocation Assistance

AFFIRST contains many of the data elements needed to evaluate program activities and outputs described in the RAP logic model. For example, the number of newcomer orientations provided by an M&FRC and the number of airmen, guardians, and spouses who attend newcomer orientations are currently tracked in AFFIRST. However, to gain a complete understanding of program performance, knowing the percentage of eligible airmen, guardians, and spouses who attend newcomer orientations would be useful. The denominator for these percentages would be the number of single or married airmen and guardians who completed a PCS move to a base served by the M&FRC during the specified period (e.g., in the most recent quarter). This information is not currently stored in AFFIRST and would likely require a request for personnel data for each base. Acquiring these data would be useful because the resulting percentage would demonstrate the reach of the program (e.g., are 10 percent or 90 percent of eligible members attending newcomer orientations) and provide benchmarks against which program reach could be maintained or improved.

Administrative Data for Evaluating Employment Assistance

Much of the data needed to track performance of EA are stored in AFFIRST, but some additional administrative data would be useful to fully gauge program performance. For example, the number of referrals made to DoD resources is tracked in AFFIRST, but the number and percentage of DAF spouses who obtain MyCAA scholarships is not tracked. AIS could coordinate with the DoD office of Military Community and Family Policy to obtain this information, which would be useful to understand the percentage of spouses referred to MyCAA who obtain the scholarship and whether this percentage differs across bases.

Administrative Data for Evaluating Air Force Families Forever

Although AFFIRST currently contains most of the information that should be relevant for AFFF program evaluation, the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS) and the Defense Biometric Identification System (DBIDS) are additional systems that might support an AFFF program evaluation.

Surveys

In addition to administrative data, various surveys could assist with the collection of measures addressing knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors. Notably, DAF and DoD administer numerous surveys, so to avoid survey fatigue among participants, any survey should be short, simple, and administered only as often as completely necessary (e.g., annually).

User Surveys

User surveys are often needed to assess short- and medium-term program outcomes, and they can be used to measure some program outputs (e.g., satisfaction with program activities). User surveys can be expensive to collect, although simple pen-and-paper surveys at the end of such activities as training sessions can provide useful program feedback. Longer-term or more involved user surveys will likely require assistance from DAF headquarters and AFPC. As with all surveys, consideration of who might be most likely to complete the survey (e.g., those with strong positive or negative opinions) should be considered when interpreting results of the survey. Additional considerations include whether recent contact information is available on all or most users, the number of reminders to send, whether the survey will be confidential or anonymous, whether an incentive will be provided for survey completion, how the results will be analyzed, who will analyze the results, and who the results will be communicated to.

For RAP, a user survey would be used to assess outputs such as airmen, guardian, and spouse satisfaction with services; and such short-term outcomes as airmen and guardian understanding of the gaining command, installation, and unit missions. A user survey that assesses outcomes at strategic timepoints—such as one, three, and six months following a PCS move—could be used to assess the medium-term outcomes of reduced personal and family stress associated with PCS moves and faster integration into the gaining command, installation, and unit and into the surrounding community.

A user survey could assess such EA short-term outcomes as whether users are equipped with adequate knowledge and assistance to aid in their job search and whether they have established career goals and a plan to reach those goals. A survey conducted six months to a year after program use could assess the medium-term outcomes of whether users obtained short- or long-term employment and whether the program has helped them pursue their career goals through education or employment.

For AFFF, a user survey, such as one administered by A1S to survivors, can collect such information on outputs as whether survivors use services and resources that are provided for them. The survey could also assess such short-term outcomes as user perceptions of AFFF and participation in relevant activities or events.

Staff Survey

A staff survey can provide information about the knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of those who are administering the program. This could include questions about their knowledge of program components, their perceptions of the quality and frequency of staff training, and their recommendations for program improvements. Similar considerations to those listed above for the user survey also apply to the administration of a staff survey.

Qualitative Assessments

Beyond surveys, structured interviews or focus groups provide an opportunity for individuals to provide more rich and detailed information than would be feasible within a survey. Notably, individuals might feel uncomfortable sharing negative opinions with M&FRC personnel. Therefore, these types of qualitative assessments would likely need to be administered by individuals external to A1S and M&FRCs.

Measuring Program Impacts

Measuring the impacts of a specific program is challenging. Program use might not produce measurable changes in impacts for many months or years, and the characteristics affected by a program are often determined by multiple factors that are difficult to account for in a program evaluation (Bamberger and Hewitt, 1986; Townsend, Hunt, and Rhodes, 2005). For example, both RAP and AFFF are designed to increase resilience as a long-term impact. However, resilience is a process of recovering from a difficult experience or a traumatic event, and most people recover from these experiences and return to their previous level of functioning (Bonanno, 2021). This means that any impact of RAP or AFFF on resilience would be difficult to distinguish from users' typical recovery from difficult experiences or traumatic events. Furthermore, a person's resiliency in the face of trauma is affected by their level of mental health, coping abilities, social and emotional competencies, and level of social support (Meadows et al., 2019), as well as their use of programs to improve those factors. Impacts such as readiness and well-being are also multiply determined. Measuring the impact of programs requires careful measurement and evaluation design to ensure that the specific signal of the program's services can be distinguished from the noise of other factors that affect the impact (Townsend, Hunt, and Rhodes, 2005). This requires selecting the appropriate methodology to assess program impacts (e.g., comparing program users with an equivalent comparison group of nonusers) and careful measurement of constructs that comprise the program's impact. These types of evaluations require considerable resources and are typically conducted periodically by entities outside the program, as compared with the monitoring of inputs, outputs, and outcomes, which is done by program staff at more frequent intervals (Bamberger and Hewitt, 1986).

That said, program staff can get a sense of how a program is producing longer-term impacts using different methods to assess impacts informally. Staff can use qualitative methods to assess whether airmen, guardians, family members, and commanders think that the program is working as it should and producing the desired impacts. Staff can also examine data from DoD- or DAF-wide surveys to determine whether personnel who used their program have higher levels of well-being compared with those who did not use their program. These methods are not as rigorous as those mentioned above and results should be interpreted with caution, but if these methods produce less than ideal results, they can serve as indicators that the program needs to undergo a more rigorous evaluation.

Summary

In this chapter, we reviewed categories of measures that can be used to assess whether the RAP, EA, and AFFF programs are performing as expected based on their respective logic models. Administrative data can assess program inputs and outputs for each program, and many of these data are already recorded in the AFFIRST system. More complete and useful indicators of program reach can be obtained by compiling additional administrative data from DoD or DAF personnel records. Surveys of program users can be deployed to assess users' experiences with a program, the immediate outputs, and short- and medium-term outcomes. Staff surveys are useful for assessing staff perceptions of program functioning, level of training, and suggestions for program improvement. In addition, qualitative assessments can be used to gain more rich and detailed information than surveys. Finally, although measuring the long-term impacts of program use is challenging and typically requires considerable resources and expertise from outside the program, some indicators of program impact can be collected and analyzed more informally as indicators of whether a program needs a more exhaustive and rigorous evaluation.

Summary and Recommendations

DAF provides numerous programs and services to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with the challenges of military life. DAF A1S asked RAND to examine three of these programs and develop logic models to (1) identify desired outcomes for members participating in the programs, (2) define appropriate measures of effectiveness that could be applied to these programs, and (3) establish recommendations for ongoing internal evaluation of the programs. Using the interviews, feedback from DAF headquarters staff, and DoD and DAF instructions, we developed logic models depicting the program inputs, activities and outputs, and the outcomes and impacts each program's activities should produce if it is functioning as planned. We also suggest measures to assess program functioning and to evaluate whether the program is producing its desired outcomes.

RAP is designed to help airmen, guardians, and their families with the challenges of relocating to a new duty station and adjusting to a new command, installation, and unit, as well as a new community environment. Interviews with program staff revealed that a key barrier to program operations was limited program staffing. Interviewees reported that the lack of staffing prevented them from delivering all the activities they would like or caused them to deliver the activities less frequently than planned. Interviewees also noted that the lack of feedback from users on the program's effectiveness was a hindrance for understanding how well the program is working and what changes would increase program effectiveness. Factors that were seen as positively affecting the program included having staff who were proactive and had a hands-on approach to sharing information and resources with airmen and their families; effectiveness of the sponsorship program at a given base; and commanders who took an active role in onboarding new airmen, guardians, and their families, including promoting the sponsorship program and working with RAP staff to complete in-processing activities.

M&FRC staff provide support for spouse employment through EA, which helps spouses through employment counseling, workshops, and referrals to resources to help them gain employment and pursue their career goals. The literature on military spouse employment assistance programs suggests that the programs help military spouses gain employment and also increase service member retention. However, many spouses are not aware of the programs, so additional outreach is needed. Interviews with base M&FRC staff suggested that, like RAP, staffing shortages were a main barrier to successful implementation of EA activities. In addition, the lack of feedback on whether the program helps spouses gain employment also hinders program success because staff do not know whether they need to adjust their activities to better meet the needs of spouses. The job market in communities surrounding the base was seen as an important factor in program success, although interviewees noted that the jobs available locally did not always match the interests or skills of job seekers.

AFFF provides information and connection to resources to surviving spouses and family members of airmen who died during their time as a member. The program is also intended to continue the connection between survivors and DAF. AFFF is administered by M&FRC staff at the base closest to the surviving family member, and, when allowed by base command, M&FRC staff at the base encourage survivors to visit the base and participate in events and activities. Limited research is available on the program, but research on grief suggests that two-years post-event might be the most appropriate time frame for an AFFF intervention. Interviewees noted that one of the biggest barriers to program use is whether a survivor wants to maintain a connection with DAF, participate in the services, and be contacted regularly by AFFF.

Recommendations

Establishing measures of program functioning and program outcomes is an important step in monitoring program functioning and evaluating program effectiveness. We have several recommendations to help A1S establish an ongoing internal evaluation of the programs. These recommendations largely parallel those made for the companion report on the True North Program (Matthews et al., 2024), and much of this section is reproduced from that report.

Adopt and Communicate the Program Logic Models in Ways That Ensure Stakeholders Know and Understand Them

A1S should adopt the proposed logic models described in this report to guide implementation priorities and evaluation designs. The inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts that are outlined in this model will help to illustrate and communicate the design, current weaknesses, and goals of the programs to DAF senior leadership and other stakeholders. For example, the logic model could be used to show that challenges obtaining necessary inputs (e.g., adequate staff) can limit necessary program activities (e.g., frequency of workshops or briefings), which will lead to program outcomes not being achieved. This should help leaders give priority to processes to secure the necessary inputs and ensure all activities are implemented with fidelity to the program's goals. Only after these components of a program logic model have been accomplished is it reasonable to expect that program outcomes can be achieved and measured in an outcome evaluation.

Continue to Engage Stakeholders in the Evaluation Design Process

As part of this project, we conducted interviews with program personnel and M&FRC staff to learn how the program was being implemented and what, if any, measures they believed would be most informative as part of evaluating the program. A1S should continue to engage stakeholders in the evaluation design process. To ensure that the results and recommendations from the program evaluation are well-understood and useful, A1S should regularly solicit feedback from program personnel, M&FRC staff, and potentially others who influence or are affected by the program. In particular, airmen, guardians, and their families should be consulted

to ensure that the program outputs and outcomes that are most important to program users are included in the logic models and measured as indicators of program success. In seeking this feedback, A1S will need to provide a clear description of what information they need to inform the design, why they need this information, what they will do with it, and when they need to obtain it. Occasionally, this might include requesting anonymous feedback (such as through an online survey), as this might increase individuals' comfort with providing concerns or critiques.

Implement Measures That Align with the Program Logic Model

In this report, we describe measures that are aligned with each component of the developed logic models. A1S might use or draw from these measures as part of its continued program evaluation development. However, when developing or adopting new, additional, or different measures beyond those provided in this report, A1S personnel should clearly connect these measures to a particular element of the logic model. This will help to ensure that the most critical aspects of the program are being assessed and avoid the inclusion of minimally informative measures.

Present Evaluation Results in Ways That Are Clear and Useful for Stakeholders

When A1S communicates the results of program measures to others, it should include information about why the data were collected and how they were analyzed. A1S should also provide distinct recommendations regarding how certain categories of stakeholders (e.g., M&FRC staff, commanders) can use the provided results. Rather than giving a recitation of the results, A1S should provide audiences with actionable information, organized by how the information might be used. Presenting information in this way will help to reduce confusion and frustration, thereby increasing the utility of the evaluation.

Modify the Program Logic Models as Needed, Drawing from the Results of Evaluations.

When changes are made to program components and underlying premises regarding how the program operates, A1S will need to modify the program logic model. In addition, it will also likely need to change, remove, or add evaluation measures that align with the current characteristics and expected outcomes of the program. In other words, the program logic model and evaluation design should not be considered unchangeable. However, they also should not be modified with such frequency that they cause confusion and delay the ability of program personnel to make requisite changes based on evaluation results.

If A1S Considers Creating or Using Additional Databases to Track Measures, Involve Stakeholders in Their Development

Although A1S uses the AFFIRST database to track most program indicators, program staff suggested that AFFIRST was not adequate for tracking more detailed and useful information on program functioning, as suggested in this report. An alternative database might allow A1S to obtain, analyze, and report program information more rapidly than a series of surveys, independently maintained spreadsheets, or separate databases. However, if program personnel do not know how to access or enter information into such a database, then the data obtained will likely contain errors or omissions that reduce the utility of the database and results. Therefore, development of a database, spreadsheet, or other tracking system should incorporate stakeholder feedback, ensuring that variables and values are intuitive and will be entered correctly.

Interview Protocol

A. Background

- A1. What is your profession or career field?
 - A1a. Are you a member of the military? If so, what is your rank?
- A2. How would you describe your position within Airman, Guardian, and Family Readiness programs?
 - A2a. Do you work specifically with Relocation Assistance, Employment Assistance, and/or Air Force Families Forever? [*If so, which of these three do you work with?*]
- A3. How long have you been in your current position or assignment?
- A4. Could you provide a brief overview of what the Relocation Assistance, Employment Assistance, and Air Force Families Forever programs do?
 - A4a. Who do they target? About how many Airmen, Guardians, or family members [at your installation] use them annually?

Ba. Relocation Assistance Program Elements

- Ba1. In general, what are the most common needs of those who make use of Relocation Assistance?
 - Ba1a. Do you think the Relocation Assistance program is resolving these needs or not? Please explain.
- Ba2. In your own words, what would you say are the main goals of Relocation Assistance?
 - Ba2a. *If goals are more short-term/immediate outcomes:* Those sound like more immediate goals of the program, what do you think the program aims to accomplish in the long-term?
 - Ba2b. *If goals are more long-term or abstract outcomes (e.g., improved readiness):* Those sound like the long-term or ultimate goals of the program, but what do you think the program aims to accomplish in the short-term?
- Ba3. What would you say are the top two goals of Relocation Assistance? These may be short or long-term.

For each goal provided for Ba3, ask Ba4 through Ba7:

- Ba4. What specific activities does Relocation Assistance carry out that promotes [stated goal]?
Ba4a. How does [specific activity] lead to [stated goal]?
- Ba5. How successful has Relocation Assistance been at promoting [stated goal]?
- Ba6. What data are collected to track the performance of Relocation Assistance in promoting [stated goal]?
- Ba7. What specific factors contribute to the effectiveness of Relocation Assistance to promote [stated goal]?
- Ba8. How can commanders impact the overall effectiveness of Relocation Assistance?
Ba8a. What actions can commanders take to improve the success of Relocation Assistance? What can they do to hinder success?
- Ba9. If you were designing a study of Relocation Assistance, what information would you want to know about how the program is influencing the lives of Airmen and Guardians?
Ba9a. In other words, what measures or metrics on Relocation Assistance would be helpful to you in your role?

Bb. Employment Assistance Elements

- Bb1. In general, what are the most common needs of those who make use of Employment Assistance?
Bb1a. Do you think the Employment Assistance program is resolving these needs or not? Please explain.
- Bb2. In your own words, what would you say are the main goals of Employment Assistance?

Bb2a. *If goals are more short-term/immediate outcomes:* Those sound like more immediate goals of the program, what do you think the program aims to accomplish in the long-term?

Bb2b. *If goals are more long-term or abstract outcomes (e.g., improved readiness):* Those sound like the long-term or ultimate goals of the program, but what do you think the program aims to accomplish in the short-term?

Bb2c. Which populations are served? *If more than one population mentioned:* Are the goals different for these populations?

- Bb3. What would you say are the top two goals of Employment Assistance? These may be short or long-term.

For each goal provide for Bb3, ask Bb4 through Bb7:

- Bb4. What specific activities does Employment Assistance carry out that promotes [stated goal]?

Bb4a. How does [specific activity] lead to [stated goal]?

- Bb5. How successful has Employment Assistance been at promoting [stated goal]?

- Bb6. What data are collected to track the performance of Employment Assistance in promoting [stated goal]?

- Bb7. What specific factors contribute to the effectiveness of Employment Assistance to promote [stated goal]?

- Bb8. How can commanders impact the overall effectiveness of Employment Assistance?

Bb8a. What actions can commanders take to improve the success of Employment Assistance? What can they do to hinder success?

- Bb9. If you were designing a study of Employment Assistance, what information would you want to know about how the programs are influencing the lives of Airmen and Guardians?

Bb9a. In other words, what measures or metrics on Employment Assistance would be helpful to you in your role?

Bc. Air Force Families Forever Program Elements

- Bc1. In general, what are the most common needs of those who make use of Air Force Families Forever?

Bc1a. Do you think the Air Force Families Forever program is resolving these needs or not? Please explain.

- Bc2. In your own words, what would you say are the main goals of Air Force Families Forever?

Bc2a. *If goals are more short-term/immediate outcomes:* Those sound like more immediate goals of the program, what do you think the program aims to accomplish in the long-term?

Bc2b. *If goals are more long-term or abstract outcomes (e.g., improved readiness):* Those sound like the long-term or ultimate goals of the program, but what do you think the program aims to accomplish in the short-term?

- Bc3. What would you say are the top two goals of Air Force Families Forever? These may be short or long-term.

For each goal provide for Bc3, ask Bc4 through Bc7:

- Bc4. What specific activities does Air Force Families Forever carry out that promotes [stated goal]?

Bc4a. How does [specific activity] lead to [stated goal]?

- Bc5. How successful has Air Force Families Forever been at promoting [stated goal]?

- Bc6. What data are collected to track the performance of Air Force Families Forever in promoting [stated goal]?

- Bc7. What specific factors contribute to the effectiveness of Air Force Families Forever to promote [stated goal]?

- Bc8. How can commanders impact the overall effectiveness of Air Force Families Forever?

Bc8a. What actions can commanders take to improve the success of Air Force Families Forever? What can they do to hinder success?

- Bc9. If you were designing a study of Air Force Families Forever, what information would you want to know about how the programs are influencing others?

Bc9a. In other words, what measures or metrics on Air Force Families Forever would be helpful to you in your role?

C. Summary and Conclusion

- C1. Before we end the discussion, is there anything else that you would like to share with us about how to measure and assess the success of Airmen, Guardian, and Family readiness programs or how to make these programs more effective?

Potential Measures for Evaluation of the Relocation Assistance Program

The tables in this appendix contain suggested measures for all the elements of the RAP logic model displayed in Figure 2.1. Table B.1 contains suggested measures for RAP inputs, Table B.2 contains suggested measures for RAP activities (i.e., outputs), and Table B.3 contains suggested measures for RAP outcomes and impact.

Table B.1. Suggested Relocation Assistance Program Measures for Inputs

Input Element	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Guidance	Headquarters level: Check that guidance is complete and up to date	N/A	N/A
Staff	Base level: - Staff ratio to airmen and guardians assigned to base - Staff ratio to airmen and guardians completing a PCS move to base	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A
Briefings and support materials	Headquarters level: Check that briefing and support materials are up to date (e.g., accurate contact information for local resources)	N/A	N/A

Input Element	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
M&FRC	Base level: Ensure that there is adequate space for newcomer orientations	N/A	N/A
Funding	Headquarters level: - Annual funding for RAP Base level: - Amount of funding per airmen and guardians assigned to base - Amount of funding per airmen and guardians completing a PCS move to base	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A

NOTE: N/A = not applicable.

Table B.2. Suggested Relocation Assistance Program Measures of Performance for Activities and Activity Outputs

Activity	Output Measures of Performance	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Provide relocation assistance information and resources through secure DoD information technology system	- Number and percentage of eligible airmen/guardians/spouses served - Airmen/guardian/spouse satisfaction with services	Administrative data, including data from AFPC, and user satisfaction survey	User satisfaction survey: "The information I received about relocating to [name of base] was helpful to me" (strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)
Conduct prearrival orientations	Number of attendees (airmen/guardians/spouses) who attend prearrival orientation	Administrative data	N/A
Provide a supplemental sponsorship course	Number of attendees (airmen/guardians/spouses) who attend the supplemental sponsorship course	Administrative data	N/A
Host newcomer orientations that consolidate PCS-related actions	Number of newcomer orientations provided	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A

Activity	Output Measures of Performance	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
	Number and percentage of eligible airmen/guardians/spouses who attend newcomer orientations		
Military and civilian personnel processing transactions	Number and percentage of eligible airmen/guardians who complete PCS processing	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A
Consolidated training on safety, health, substance abuse, EEO, sexual harassment prevention, suicide prevention, SAPR programs, and UCMJ Article 137 training	Number and percentage of eligible airmen/guardians who complete consolidated training	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A
Brief newly assigned commanders, first sergeants, and command chief master sergeants within 90 days of arrival on station on sponsorship	Number and percentage of eligible commanders briefed within 90 days	Administrative data	N/A
Coordinate with unit commander to schedule newly assigned members for orientation	Number of contacts with unit commanders regarding newly assigned members	Administrative data	N/A
Command, installation, and unit mission briefs	Number of briefings conducted	Administrative data	N/A
Financial document processing	Number and percentage of eligible airmen/guardians who received financial document processing	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A
As needed, provide information on housing, family and personal finances, household goods management, child and youth programs, Force Support MWR programs, and Military Family Life Counseling	Number and percentage of eligible airmen/guardians and spouses provided information on these services	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A
Provide referrals for youth sponsorship support	Number of referrals provided	Administrative data	N/A

Table B.3. Suggested Relocation Assistance Program Measures for Outcomes and Impacts

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Short-term outcomes			
Airmen and guardians complete all applicable PCS processing transactions in a timely manner	Assessment of completion of processing transactions within a month of PCS move	User survey	“Did you complete all of the PCS processing transactions you need to complete within a month of your move?” (yes/no [If no]: “Why not?” [open-ended response])
Airmen and guardians should gain an understanding of command, installation, and unit missions	Assessment of understanding of command, installation, and unit missions	User survey	“How well do you understand the mission of your [command/installation/unit]? Would you say that you have:” (complete understanding; good understanding, but not complete understanding; limited understanding; very little or no understanding)
Airmen and guardians should gain an understanding of required processing transactions for themselves and their family members	Assessment of understanding of required processing transactions for themselves and their family members	User survey	“How well do you understand the processing transactions [you need/your family needs] to complete for this PCS move? Would you say that you have:” (complete understanding; good understanding, but not complete understanding; limited understanding; very little or no understanding)
Airmen and guardians should gain an understanding of the installation’s resources for safety, health, substance abuse, EEO, sexual harassment prevention, suicide prevention, SAPR programs, and issues covered in the UCMJ Article 137 training	Assessment of understanding of the installation’s resources for safety, health, substance abuse, EEO, sexual harassment prevention, suicide prevention, SAPR programs, and issues covered in the UCMJ Article 137 training	User survey, administered 2–3 months post PCS move	Tailor questions to installation’s resources, based on content of newcomer briefing. For example, “Do you know where the Military and Family Readiness Center is on base?” (yes/no)
Medium-term outcomes			
Reduced PCS-related personal and family stressors for airmen, guardians, and their families	Assessment of stress associated with PCS move	User survey, administered 2–3 months post PCS move	“How stressful was your PCS move to [installation name]?” (extremely stressful, very stressful, somewhat stressful, not at all stressful)

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Airmen/guardians and dependents integrate more quickly into the gaining installation	- Assessment of airmen/guardian integration - Assessment of family member integration into the installation and community	User survey, administered 2–3 months post PCS move	- Perceptions of unit cohesion: Defense Organizational Climate Survey, taken from the 2018 Status of Forces Surveys of Active Duty Members - Airmen/guardians are active in installation-sponsored community events and activities, when offered. - Airmen/guardians assume responsibility for making this installation a better place to live and work. - Airmen/guardians take advantage of opportunities to address the support needs of service members and families assigned to this base. - Civilian spouses are active in installation-sponsored community events and activities, when offered. - Civilian spouses assume responsibility for making this installation a better place to live and work. - Civilian spouses take advantage of opportunities to address the support needs of airmen/guardians and families assigned to this base. Rating scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree
Impacts			
Increased airmen, guardian, and family readiness and resilience	Impressions of impact of relocation on readiness and resilience	Qualitative focus groups or interviews	Airman and guardian impressions of whether in-processing procedures helped them more readily do their jobs

Potential Measures for Evaluation of EA

The tables in this appendix contain suggested measures for all of the elements of the EA logic model displayed in Figure 3.1. Table C.1 contains suggested measures for EA inputs, Table C.2 contains suggested measures for EA activities (i.e., outputs), and Table C.3 contains suggested measures for EA outcomes and impact.

Table C.1. Employment Assistance Program Measures of Inputs

Input Element	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Staff	Base level: - Staff ratio to married airmen and guardians assigned to base - Staff ratio to married airmen and guardians completing a PCS move to base	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A
Facilities	Base level: Ensure there are adequate facilities to help spouses with employment-related tasks	N/A	N/A
Local job market information and resources	Base level: Verify that information on the local job market is current	N/A	N/A
Funding	Headquarters level: - Annual funding for EA Base level: - Amount of funding per married airmen and guardians assigned to base	Administrative data, including data from AFPC	N/A

Input Element	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
	Amount of funding per married airmen and guardians completing a PCS move to base		

Table C.2. Suggested Employment Assistance Program Measures of Performance for Activities and Activity Outputs

Activity	Output Measures of Performance	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Employment skills training	- Number of employment skill training sessions offered - Number of attendees at each session - Number of career workshops/classes held - Number of attendees at each workshop/class	Administrative data	N/A
Individual career counseling and planning, career assessments and interpretation	- Number of career counseling sessions held - Number of unique individuals who completed career counseling sessions - Number of counseling sessions completed per unique individual - Number of career assessments completed - Number of unique individuals who completed career assessments	Administrative data	N/A
Distribution of resources for self-employment, small business, and entrepreneurial efforts	- Number of contacts with individuals where resources are distributed - Number of events where resources are distributed	Administrative data	N/A
Referrals for education/training	Number of referrals made to education resources	Administrative data	N/A

Activity	Output Measures of Performance	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Connect with DoD spouse education and employment programs (e.g., MSEP)	- Number of referrals made to employment resources - Number of referrals made to DoD resources - Number and percent of spouses who obtain MyCAA scholarships	Administrative data, including data from DoD Military Community and Family Policy	N/A
Resource centers provide guided access to employment-related resources (e.g., computers, laser printers, internet information on careers, job listings, and the development of job search skills)	- Number of unique employment resource center users - Number of engagements with unique employment resource center users	Administrative data	N/A
Host job fairs	- Number of job fairs held - Number of attendees at each job fair	Administrative data	N/A

Table C.3. Suggested Employment Assistance Program Measures for Outcomes and Impacts

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Short-term outcomes			
Users are equipped with adequate knowledge and assistance to aid in their job search	Assessment of helpfulness in helping with job search and finding resources for their career	User survey	RAND survey: "Overall, how helpful has the Military Family and Readiness Center in helping you with your job search?" SECO user survey: "Overall, how helpful has the Military Family and Readiness Center in helping you find the resources you need for your career?"

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Users establish career goals and plan	Assessment of helpfulness in establishing career goals	User survey	Rating scale: Very helpful, somewhat helpful, a little helpful, not at all helpful SECO user survey: “Overall, how helpful was the Military and Family Readiness Center in helping you establish a career goal?” “Overall, how helpful was the Military and Family Readiness Center in helping you establish a plan to reach your career goals?”
Users have improved individual employment skills	Assessment of helpfulness with employment skills	User survey	Rating scale: Very helpful, somewhat helpful, a little helpful, not at all helpful RAND: “Overall, how helpful has the Military Family and Readiness Center in helping you develop skills to help with your job search (for example, help with your résumé, assistance with job searches)?”
Users are connected with employment opportunities, including self-employment	Assessment of connection with employment opportunities	User survey	Rating scale: Very helpful, somewhat helpful, a little helpful, not at all helpful “Overall, how helpful was the Military Family and Readiness Center in helping connect you with such employment opportunities as job listings or self-employment resources?”
Medium-term outcomes			Rating scale: Very helpful, somewhat helpful, a little helpful, not at all helpful
Short or long-term employment is obtained	Assessment of employment	User survey, 4–6 months post contact	Bureau of Labor Statistics and RAND: “Which of the following describes your current employment status? (Check all that apply)” Working full-time (typically 35 or more hours per week in one or more jobs; including self-employment)

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
			– Working part-time (typically less than 35 hours per week) – Unemployed and looking for work – Unemployed but not looking for work – Full-time care of the house and/or children – Volunteer work on post (for example, at special events) – Volunteer work off post – Full-time student – Part-time student – Other_____
Career goals are pursued	• Assessment of employment consistent with career goals	User survey, 4–6 months post contact	SECO user survey: “Overall how helpful was the Military Family and Readiness Center in supporting your education and career objectives?” Rating scale: Very helpful, somewhat helpful, a little helpful, not at all helpful
Impacts			
Improved airmen and guardian retention	• Relationship between perceptions of helpfulness of employment assistance and retention intentions	User survey, 12 months post contact	Retention intentions, from 2019 Survey of Active Duty Spouses: “Do you favor your spouse staying or leaving the military?” – I strongly favor staying – I somewhat favor staying – I have no opinion one way or the other – I somewhat favor leaving – I strongly favor leaving – N/A service member retiring soon
Improved financial security	• Financial security	User survey, 12 months post contact	Financial Well-Being Scale, 2020 Status of Forces Survey.

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Improved financial readiness for active, Guard and Reserve members	Financial preparedness, including savings available for emergencies	User survey, 12 months post contact	Financial Preparedness, 2020 Status of Forces Survey

Appendix D

Potential Measures for Evaluation of AFFF

The tables in this appendix contain suggested measures for all elements of the AFFF logic model displayed in Figure 4.2. Table D.1 contains suggested measures for AFFF inputs, Table D.2 contains suggested measures for AFFF activities (i.e., outputs), and Table D.3 contains suggested measures for AFFF outcomes and impact.

Table D.1. Air Force Families Forever Measures of Inputs

Input Element	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Items
Staff	Number of staff who directly support AFFF	Administrative data (i.e., count of staff)	N/A
Surviving family member representative/survivor advocate	Survivor advocate billet filled (yes/no)	Administrative data	N/A
M&FRC AFFF point of contact	Identification of the primary staff member responsible for AFFF at an installation who serves as the point of contact (yes/no).	Administrative data	N/A
Tracking systems: AFFIRST	Headquarters level: AFFIRST (or equivalent) data system is up-to-date and accommodates data needed for tracking metrics	N/A	N/A
Tracking systems: DCIPS	AFFIRST (or equivalent) data system is up-to-date and accommodates data needed for tracking metrics	N/A	N/A

Input Element	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Items
Training (staff training materials)	Number and proportion of staff who have received initial and refresher training at each installation	Training attendance, maintained by A1S	N/A
Partners	Current organizations—both DAF internal and external—who have provided support to AFFF; installations at which they have provided support	Maintained by A1S, Include in AFFF staff survey	N/A
DAF survivor advocacy council	Has the DAF survivor advocacy council met within the past year? (yes/no) If yes, what was the time frame to accomplish each do-out? For each, is this time frame being followed? Why or why not?	Maintained by A1S	N/A
Senior Air and Space Force leaders	Have senior Air and Space Force leaders received a briefing on the current state of AFFF within the past 12 months? (yes/no)	Maintained by A1S	N/A
Policies and procedures	List of DAF and DoD policies relevant to AFFF updated when needed (yes or no); list made easily available to all M&FRCs (yes/no)	Maintained by A1S	N/A
Facilities	Ensure that there are adequate facilities and supplies to conduct AFFF-related tasks (could obtain feedback on the quality of facilities from M&FRC personnel within a staff survey)	Staff survey or focus groups	N/A
Installation commanders	Direct involvement of installation commander in interaction/event/etc. (yes/no). If yes, name and position of commander(s)	Administrative data	N/A
M&FRC	Ensure that the M&FRC is suited for AFFF-related tasks (e.g., space to have a private conversation with a surviving family member)	Maintained by A1S	N/A

Table D.2. Suggested Air Force Families Forever Measures of Performance for Activities and Activity Outputs

Activity	Output Measures of Performance		Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Staff training	Staff knowledge of AFFF and perceptions of training	AFFF staff feel prepared, AFFF staff know available resources, AFFF staff satisfaction with training and resources	Currently in AFFF Staff survey	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the training you have received on AFFF? (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 5 = extremely satisfied)
Staff training	Training attendance	Number of staff training sessions attended by each person each year	Add to AFFF Staff survey	How many training sessions that have addressed AFFF have you attended in the past 12 months?
Initial and quarterly contact with survivors	Percentage of survivors receiving initial and quarterly contacts	Date of each contact with each survivor	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A
Referral to eligible governmental and nongovernmental resources	Percentage of referrals to resources in past year	For each survivor, checklist of categories of resources they have explicitly been provided with; extent to which survivors are satisfied with information they have received on resources	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A
Referral to eligible governmental and nongovernmental resources	Percentage of survivors connected to TAPS in past year	TAPS Air Force family intakes (requires sharing information with TAPS); TAPS referrals	TAPS; Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A
Track surviving family members in AFFIRST	Percentage of survivors with current contact info in tracking system in past year	Date of last update of contact information for survivors	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A

Activity	Output Measures of Performance	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Coordinate with casualty assistance representative and mortuary affairs	Percentage of survivors for which coordination with casualty assistance representative and mortuary affairs has occurred in past year	Date of last contact with casualty assistance representative and mortuary affairs about case; name of contact	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)
Quarterly calls with survivor representatives	Survivor representatives at this installation met within the past quarter	Date of last survivor representative meeting including in AFFF staff survey about AFFF; have survivor representatives at this installation met within the past 3 months (yes/no)	Maintained by A1S; consider
Connect to installation and community support networks through M&FRCs	Percentage of warm connections between losing center and gaining center when survivor moves	Did survivor move? (yes/no); If yes, does survivor have M&FRC connection at nearest installation? (yes/no)	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)
Connect to installation and community support networks through M&FRC	Percentage of survivors connected to initial M&FRC in past year	Date of initial communication with survivor	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)
Recognition/memorialization of deceased airmen/guardians	Number of events recognizing deceased airmen/guardians in past year	Date of event; name of event; purpose of event	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)

Activity	Output Measures of Performance	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)	Activity
Recognition/memorialization of deceased airmen/guardians	Number of announcements/communications acknowledging deceased airmen/guardians in past year	Date of communication; type of communication; purpose of communication	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A
Encourage commanders to include survivors in relevant unit events	Percentage of installation commanders contacted about AFFF in past year	Name and rank of commander contacted; date of communication with commander; type of communication; topics covered	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A
Encourage commanders to include survivors in unit events	Percentage of survivors invited to unit events and MWR activities by commanders	Whether contacted by commander to participate in event in past year (yes/no)	Administrative data (AFFIRST or equivalent)	N/A
Installation access	Percentage of installations allowing survivor MWR access	Does installation allow survivors access? (yes/no)	AFPC quarterly updates; maintained by A1S	N/A
Installation access	Percentage of survivors with approved access to nearest installation	Does survivor have access to nearest installation? (yes/no)	AFFF survivor survey	Does the Air Force installation closest to you allow survivors access to Morale, Welfare, and Recreation activities on base? (yes, no, I don't know)
Sponsorship for survivors through the DBIDS process	Percentage of survivors with DBIDS cards issued	Has survivor been issued a DBIDS card? (yes/no)	AFFF survivor survey; AFFIRST	Do you have a Defense Biometrics Identification System (DBIDS) card? (yes, no, I don't know)

Invite survivors to installation approved MWR activities	Percentage of survivors attending recognition/ memorialization ceremonies	Does the survivor feel that the DAF honors and remembers their airmen or guardian; attendance at events (A&FRC sponsored events, installation events, events with partner organizations, etc.).	AFFF survivor survey; AFFIRST	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how the Department of Air Force honors and remembers your service member? (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied)
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Table D.3. Suggested Air Force Families Forever Measures for Outcomes and Impacts

Outcome	Measure	Data Collection	Sample Survey Item(s)
Short-term outcomes			
Survivors receive benefits from referred resources	Feels knowledgeable about resources; has received needed resources; satisfied with accuracy and timeliness of resolution of questions or issues, if applicable	AFFF survivor survey	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the timeliness of the Air Force Families Forever assistance? (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied)
Survivors remain in contact with DAF	Knows who their AFFF representative(s) is/are; satisfied with connection to AFFF; has received communication from DAF organization or commander in past year	AFFF survivor survey	Have you received communication from a Department of Air Force representation in the past 12 months? (yes, no, I don't know)
Survivors visit installations and utilize approved services	Has accessed nearest installation in past year; has used DAF services in past year	AFFF survivor survey	Have you accessed the nearest installation in past 12 months? (yes/no) Have you used DAF services in past 12 months? (yes/no)
Survivors attend unit and MWR events and activities	AFFF use of MWR activities; has attended MWR activity in past year	AFFF survivor survey	Please select all of the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation activities that you have used on base within the past 12 months.

Medium-term outcomes

Recommend AFFF to others

- Would recommend AFFF to other families

AFFF survivor survey

Would you recommend Air Force Families Forever to other surviving families of deceased members seeking support services? (yes, no, I don't know)

Survivors feel a sense of connection to DAF

- Connected to other military survivors, AFFF survivor survey if desired

Psychological sense of community measured using Omoto and Snyder's (2010) multidimensional measure of psychological sense of community (e.g., I feel strong ties to the community of people concerned about the environment).

Impact/long-term outcomes

Increased survivor well-being

- Improved emotional-subjective well-being over time

AFFF survivor survey

Pleasant and unpleasant affective tone can be measured using the 9-item scale derived by Diener and Emmons (1984). The 20-item PANAS can assess affective arousal (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988).

Increased survivor resilience

- Decreased emotional disturbance over time
-

AFFF survivor survey

Can be assessed using the 20-item Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression scale (Radloff, 1977) or the 21-item BDI II (Beck, Steer, and Brown, 1996). Anxiety can be measured using the 20-item State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1983) and the 9-item Profile of Mood States anxiety subscale (McNair, Lorr, and Droppleman, 1971).

Abbreviations

A1S	Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Air Force Services
AFFF	Air Force Families Forever
AFFIRST	Air Force Family Integrated Results and Statistical Tracking
AFPC	Air Force Personnel Center
BDI	Beck Depression Inventory
DAF	Department of the Air Force
DAFI	Department of the Air Force Instruction
DBIDS	Defense Biometric Identification System
DCIPS	Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
EA	Employment Assistance
EEO	equal employment opportunity
M&FRC	Military and Family Readiness Centers
MSEP	Military Spouse Employment Partnership
MWR	Morale, Welfare, and Recreation
MyCAA	My Career Advancement Account
N/A	not applicable
PAF	RAND Project AIR FORCE
PANAS	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
PCS	permanent change of station
RAP	Relocation Assistance Program
SAPR	sexual assault prevention and response
SECO	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities
TAPS	Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice

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Evaluation Design for Department of Air Force Military and Family Readiness Programs

Considerations for Air Force Families Forever, Relocation Assistance Program, and Employment Assistance

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ISSUE

Military service can be rewarding but also challenging for airmen, guardians, and their families. For example, frequent relocations require navigating housing and movement of household goods and can lead to difficulties for spouses wanting employment. Another aspect of military service that presents difficulties for family and friends is coping with a service member's loss of life. To help address these challenges, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) has several programs that are implemented via Military and Family Readiness Centers (M&FRCs), namely the Relocation Assistance Program (RAP), Employment Assistance (EA), and Air Force Families Forever (AFFF). RAP provides education and referrals to assist airmen, guardians, and their families with issues surrounding permanent change of station (PCS) moves. EA supports service members, U.S. Department of Defense civilian employees, and family members in achieving employment. AFFF provides long-term information and referrals to eligible next of kin of deceased airmen and guardians. DAF Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Air Force Services (A1S), asked RAND Project AIR FORCE to assist with the design of evaluations for these programs.



APPROACH

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the existing evidence on airman, guardian, and family readiness programs, related programs, and individuals' experiences navigating related challenges, we conducted a review of the literature on each of the programs and the underlying challenges the program seeks to address. We also interviewed M&FRC flight chiefs to get their perspectives on program implementation and development.



CONCLUSIONS

- The success of each of the programs is unclear because of limited feedback and evaluation.
- Factors believed to reduce effectiveness of each of the programs are limited personnel capacity, inadequate manning, and inadequate administrative oversight.

continued

- A factor commonly believed to positively affect program effectiveness is active support and engagement from the unit commander.
- The logic models map the various assumptions regarding what resources the programs need to run, how they run, and what effects they have, and they provide a road map for the development of a program evaluation.
- Potential sources of data to measure elements of the logic models include administrative records, surveys, and qualitative assessments.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations parallel those made for the companion report on the True North Program (Matthews et al., 2024):

- Adopt and communicate the program logic models in ways that ensure stakeholders know and understand them.
- Continue to engage stakeholders in the evaluation design process.
- Implement measures that align with the program logic model.
- Present the results of evaluations in ways that are clear and useful for stakeholders.
- Modify the program logic models as needed, drawing from the results of evaluations.
- If A1S considers creating or using additional databases to track measures, involve stakeholders in its development.



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