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### **MFAN Data Shows Military & Veteran Families at Risk for Loneliness**

2019 Survey Presented by Cerner Highlights Challenges Faced by Military Families Exacerbated by COVID-19 Pandemic

WASHINGTON — Even before COVID-19 protective measures sent the nation into lockdown, military and veteran family members reported feeling lonely and isolated from their communities, according to survey data released today by the Military Family Advisory Network.

MFAN’s researchers found a statistically significant relationship between loneliness and active duty spouses who reported having poor experiences with the civilian community. The majority of responses, even those who rated their experiences positively, correlated to a rating of *lonely* on the UCLA Loneliness Scale.

Active duty families tend to move every 24 to 36 months, often to communities where they have few social connections. Unsurprisingly, survey respondents who had left military service rated their experiences with the civilian community higher than active duty respondents.

“This data supports what we’ve been hearing for years – that military families often lack the community contacts that make this lifestyle easier and more fulfilling,” said Shannon Razsadin, the Executive Director of MFAN. “We look forward to sharing this information so that more military family members will get help finding the social connections they need.”

The data is especially concerning because loneliness is as much of a health and lifestyle risk factor as smoking, obesity, and air pollution. The Fisher House Foundation, which provides housing at military and veteran medical centers for family members to stay free of charge while a loved one receives treatment, has long recognized and sought to address loneliness in the community it serves.

“For military and veteran families, being part of a community is essential. However, families do not always have loved ones nearby. In the absence of the traditional family structure, Fisher House hopes to provide the next best thing,” said Tish Stropes, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives for Fisher House Foundation. “At Fisher House, we believe a family’s love is good medicine. We bring families together when loved ones are receiving medical care. It is our

communities that support our guests by donating their time, talent, and treasure so that families can focus on healing together.”

MFAN believes defense leaders and policy makers need to recognize loneliness as a health concern and find ways to support families who may not have community connections, particularly in light of the pandemic. That’s why MFAN is expediting this and other findings from the 2019 Military Family Support Programming Survey. Information on the Food Insecurity and Financial Readiness in the military community has already been released and can be found here: <https://militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org/military-family-support-programmingsurvey>

The following data releases are still to come:

**May 20:** The state of mental health among military families, and the role of telehealth.

**June 3:** Intimate partner violence in the military community, and concerns during periods of isolation.

**June 17:** The stressors associated with moving and how moving impacts a family.

The entire survey will be released at an event on July 17, 2020 in Washington, D.C., featuring expert panel discussions and video narratives from military family members around the country who are personally impacted by each issue.

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**About MFAN:** The Military Family Advisory Network is the authentic voice of the modern military family and the bridge that connects military families to the resources, people and information they depend on to successfully navigate all phases of military life. To learn more about MFAN, visit [www.militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org](http://www.militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org).