

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team

*A Meeting to Build Partnerships & Improve Services for
New Hampshire Veterans, Service Members and their Families*

June 21, 2021

10:00am – 11:30am

Webex Virtual Platform

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team Attendance

A	Major General David Mikolaities, Adjutant General, NH National Guard
X	Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General, NH National Guard; MLT Co-Chair
X	Kevin Forrest, Director, Manchester VA Medical Center; MLT Co-Chair
X	Amy Cook, Administrator, Community Based Military Programs, NH DMAVS; MLT Facilitator
X	Jim Adams, Chair, NH State Veterans Council
A	Steve Ahnen, President, NH Hospital Association
A	Matt Albuquerque, Next Step Bionics and Prosthetics
X	Pete Burdett, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army
X	Madeline Dreusicke, NH State Veterans Council
X	Brendan Finn, NH State Veterans Council
A	William Gaudreau, Director, Division of Veteran Services, NH DMAVS
X	Jason Grower, Regional Director of Operations, Dead River Company
X	Margaret (Peggy) LaBrecque, Commandant, NH Veterans Home
X	Paul Lloyd, Chair, State Veterans Advisory Committee
X	Bradley Mayes, Director, VA Regional Benefits Offices in MA, NH & VT
X	Sarah Morrissey, Employment Service Bureau Director, NH Employment Security
X	Ginger Munson, Family Representative
X	Jeffrey Newman, Administrator, Division of Higher Education, NH Department of Education
A	Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, WRJ VA Medical Center
X	Roger Sevigny, NH Veterans Council
GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE:	
X	Carol Hitchcock, WRJ VA Medical Center
X	Marcos Lugo-Fontanez, VA Regional Benefits Offices
X	David Tille, Director of Veteran Services, Harbor Care NH
X	Mandy Reagan, Bureau of Housing Supports, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
X	Erin Segaloff, Program Manager, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, Harbor Care NH

Meeting Minutes

I. Review of April Minutes—No corrections made to the February minutes. Peggy L. moved to accept the minutes as written. Jason G. 2nd, all members approved.

II. Initiative Status Updates

Veteran-Friendly Business Recognition Program Update—Amy Cook

Applications are currently being accepted. Promotion of the recognition and the application will be appreciated by MLT members and their organizations if possible. Still not getting media attention, so spreading the word has been difficult. Virtual info sessions are scheduled for 7/12 and 8/12. No registration necessary—simply click link provided on DMAVS website to join the virtual session. Advisory Panel will meet June 24th.

Jason G. shared Dead River's success with recruiting out of state for employees and promoting their NH Veteran-Friendly recognition. Dead River also added a Veteran Landing Page on their website for

interested candidates to connect directly with a Veteran employee who can inform them about the company and connect them with Human Resources. When Dead River had a great Veteran candidate who did not fit any open position at the business, the candidate was referred to another NH Veteran-Friendly Business that had a position for her talents. Participating businesses are excited about this. A new LinkedIn Group has been created for the businesses to join, share practices & challenges and network.

Virtual Living Room—Paul Lloyd

No report available.

Supports for Military Spouses/Families—Ginger Munson & Amy Cook

Results of the military/Veteran family survey were shared using a powerpoint presentation. Slides are attached. 180 families responded to survey. Will be moving forward with creating a podcast for military & Veteran families to inform about opportunities, resources and services available around the state.

III. Old Business

None

IV. New Business

Veteran Initiatives Around the State of New Hampshire

David Tille and Erin Segaloff from Harbor Care and Mandy Reagan from the Bureau of Housing Supports attended today's meeting to share information about the issues related to homelessness and housing stability facing the military & Veteran community in NH. Statistics were provided and information about the services available to this population. Ending Veteran homelessness is achievable in NH. David described the national standard for *ending homelessness*—"not that someone won't ever be homeless, but we have a system of supports to address the problem immediately". At last Point Of Time snapshot, there were 50 or fewer homeless Veterans. Manchester & Seacoast is most acute need. Need landlord engagement, permanent housing, affordable housing.

Warren P. has been participating in a Housing Commission looking at needs and potential solutions. A report will be released soon, after Warren reviews, he'll make recommendations on how the MLT can help or support efforts.

Other

Demographics—Warren P. recommended that the MLT update and promote demographics related to military & Veteran community in state.

V. Information Briefs

Dept of Military Affairs & Veterans Services & NHNG—Warren Perry

Hiring VSOs for Division of Veterans Services.

NH Veteran-Friendly Businesses will have access to a new, free, online training portal created for New Hampshire by Psych/Armor. The DMAVS website has a community calendar that we will post partners' events on—if your organization has events, activities or trainings it would like to share with the military/Veteran community or community providers, please send to Amy.

Cemetery—2021 has had more internments than typical, not related to COVID. Next year is the Cemetery's 25th Anniversary--celebrations & events will be planned.

Warren and Amy will meet with Phil Taub to follow up re: 6/9 event SWAM hosted. Will also invite Phil to attend a MLT meeting in the future.

VA Medical Center, Manchester—Kevin Forrest

Over 6,000 appointments last week, 65% were face-to-face. Opening back up and encouraging in-person appointments.

VA Medical Center, Manchester—Kevin Forrest *CONT*

Accompanied Dean Kamen and Central Office to NJ at end of May. Donating 50 iBots, personal mobility device similar to Segway, for spinal cord injury patients. Going to 25 VAs and 25 veterans. Dr. Stone, Acting VA Undersecretary for Health, will be resigning in a couple weeks—will be new Acting soon.

Carol and Kevin will be looking at market assessments done by VA—looking at current and future demographics of veterans across nation. Determines infrastructure decisions.

Last week Congressman Pappas recognized Manchester VAMC and workers on the House floor for the work they did helping community hospitals work through billing issues.

Personnel update—promotions and new hires

Specialists being deployed to CBOCs.

Clinical Services building update—coming along; Labor Day intended open

VA Medical Center, White River Junction, VT—Carol Hitchcock

WRJ VAMC opening sites. Trying to start seeing people in person. Closing COVID clinic—moving that to Primary Care system. Construction beginning in September

Veterans Benefits Administration—Brad Mayes

Backlog of 480,000 from Records Department—many steps have recently been taken to address this national backlog.

National Defense Authorization Act—3 new disabilities related to Agent Orange have been added. VA is going to apply the NEMR effective date to those—going back to earliest instance of disease in record.

VA is in process of reviewing scientific evidence for particulate matter—adding service related disability for asthma, etc.

Member Updates & Announcements—

Due to time, members were asked to provide only important and brief announcements. There was nothing shared during this time.

VI. Next Steps

Next meeting date—Monday, August 16, 2021; **10:30am-12pm***

Location: NH Veterans Home, Tilton, NH

Call-in Phone Line: 1-855-658-5908 Conference ID: 5060322#

*Note time change and that the meeting will be held in person! There is a conference phone line available for those who cannot attend in person, but all are encouraged to physically attend if possible given that technical and audio difficulties always seem to occur! There will not be a virtual/video option for attendance, only phone conference call-in.

**NH MILITARY & VETERAN SURVEY
2021**

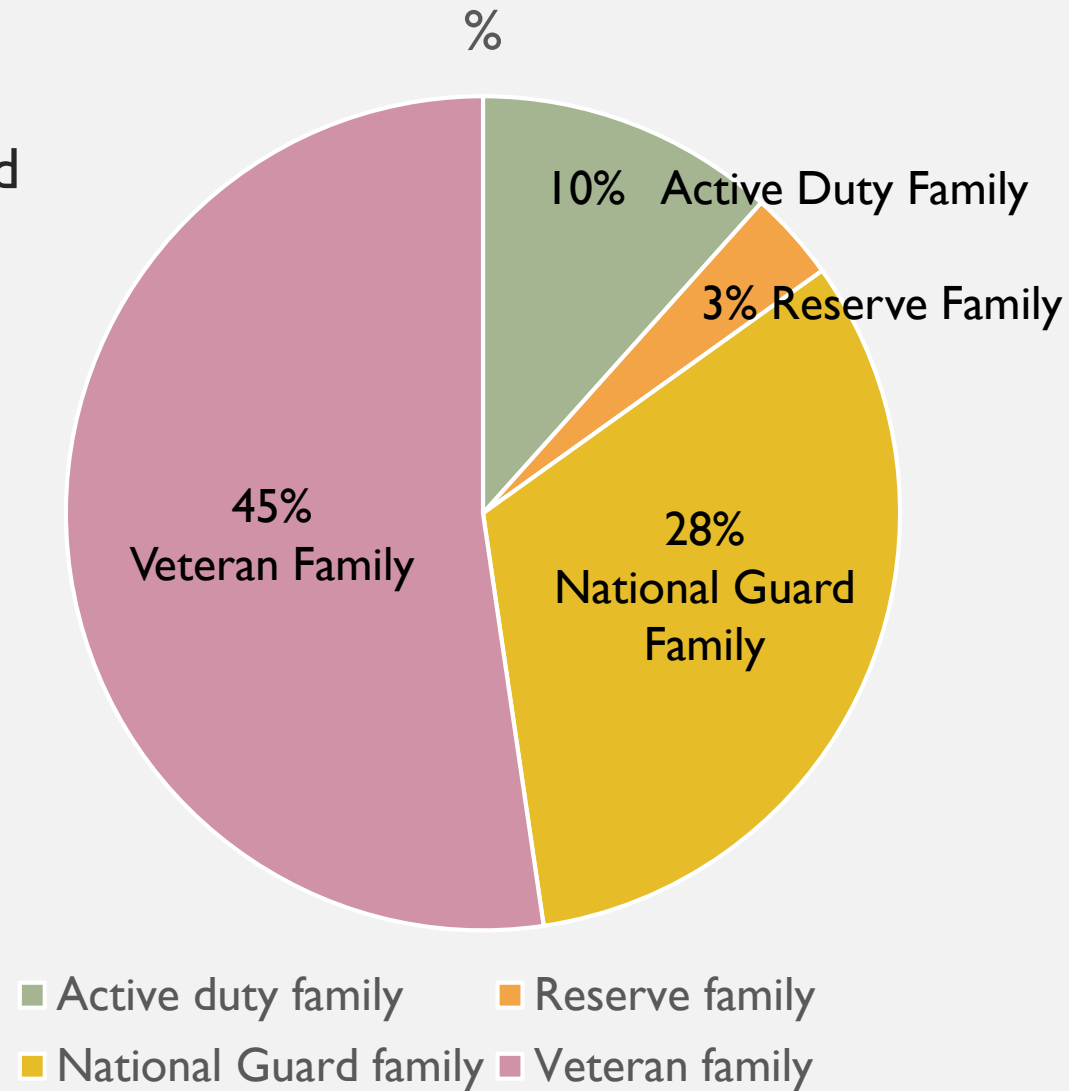
CONTEXT

- Survey was open for 4 weeks. 10 questions. Approximately 4 minutes to complete.
- Respondents were heavily located in more populated regions of the state.
- Respondents were recruited informally and were not verified.
- Survey was completed online only and recruitment of respondents was done online through email and social media.
- Spread of respondents matches the spread of military-connected families in NH. (Veterans = largest population, National Guard = 2nd largest, Active Duty/Reserve = smallest population)

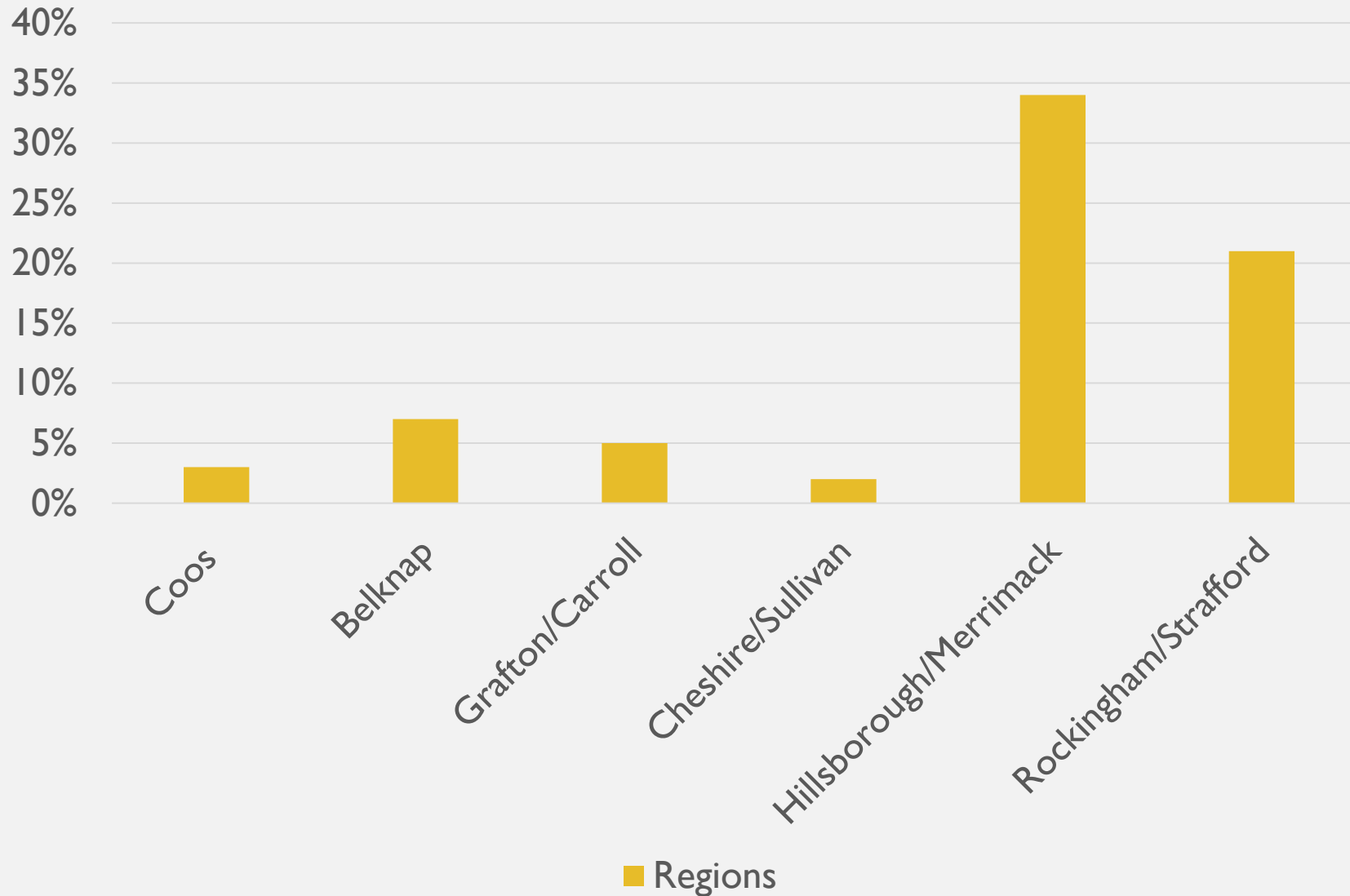
WHO RESPONDED?

n = 180

153 answered
this question



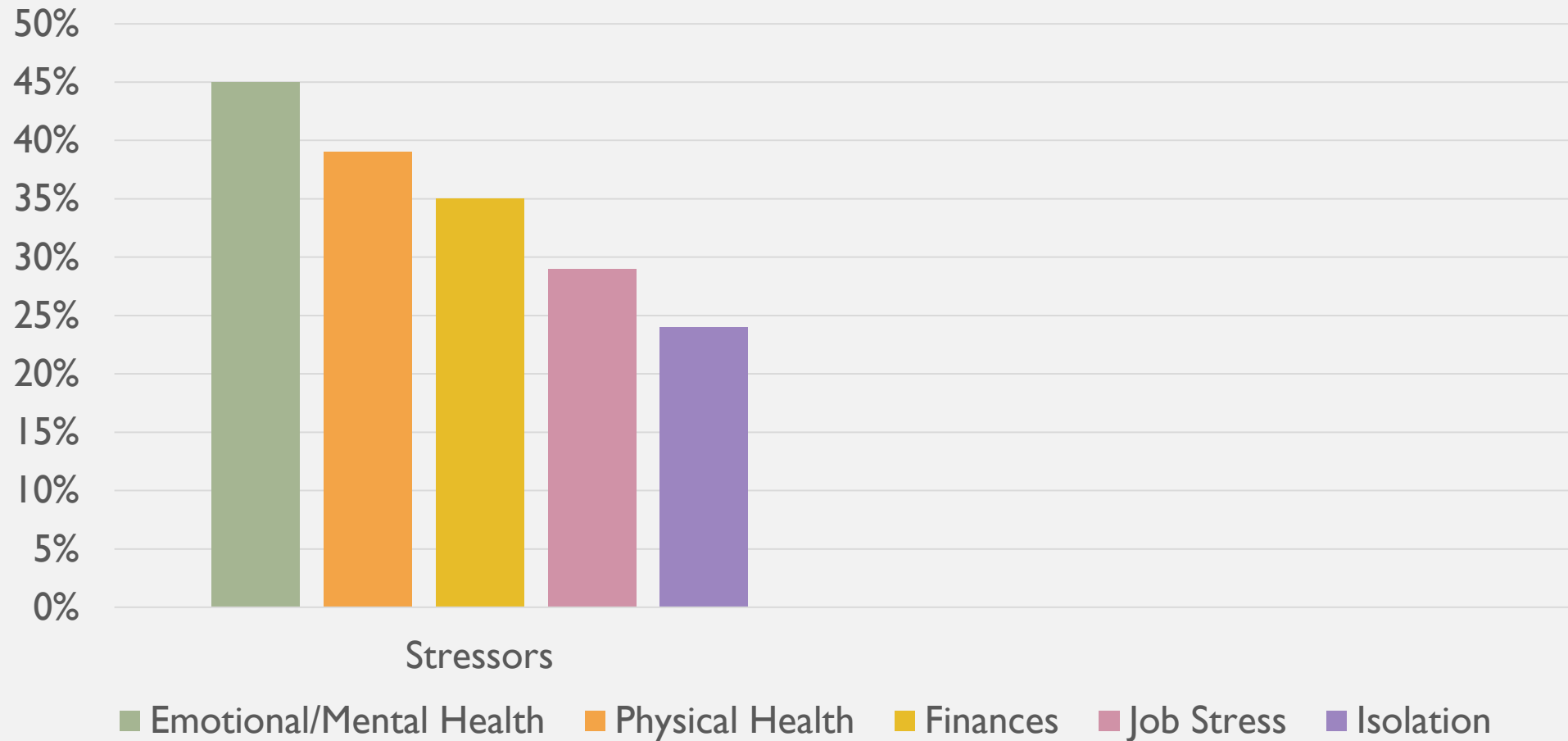
WHERE DO RESPONDENTS LIVE?



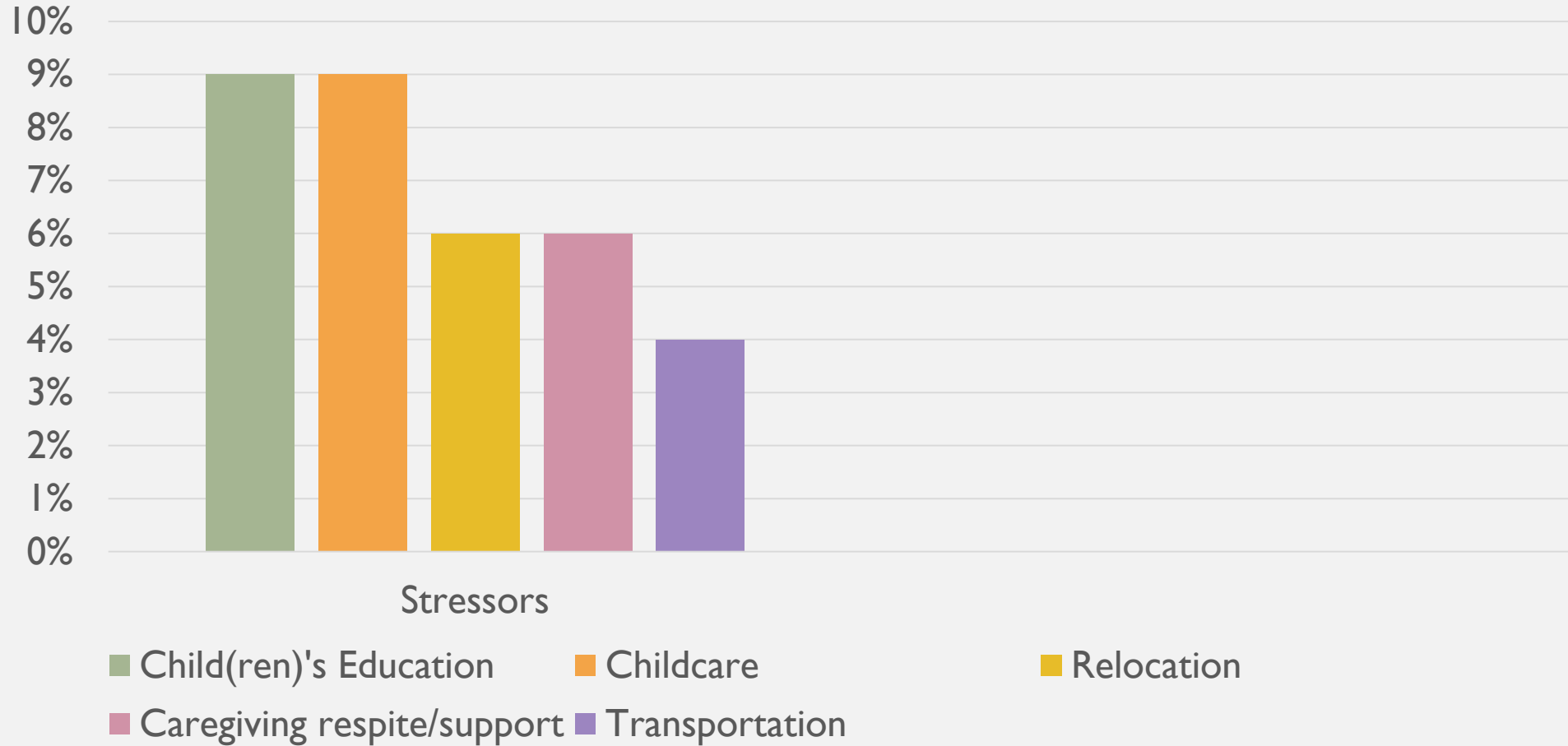
n = 180

128 answered
this question

TOP 5 STRESSORS FOR FAMILIES

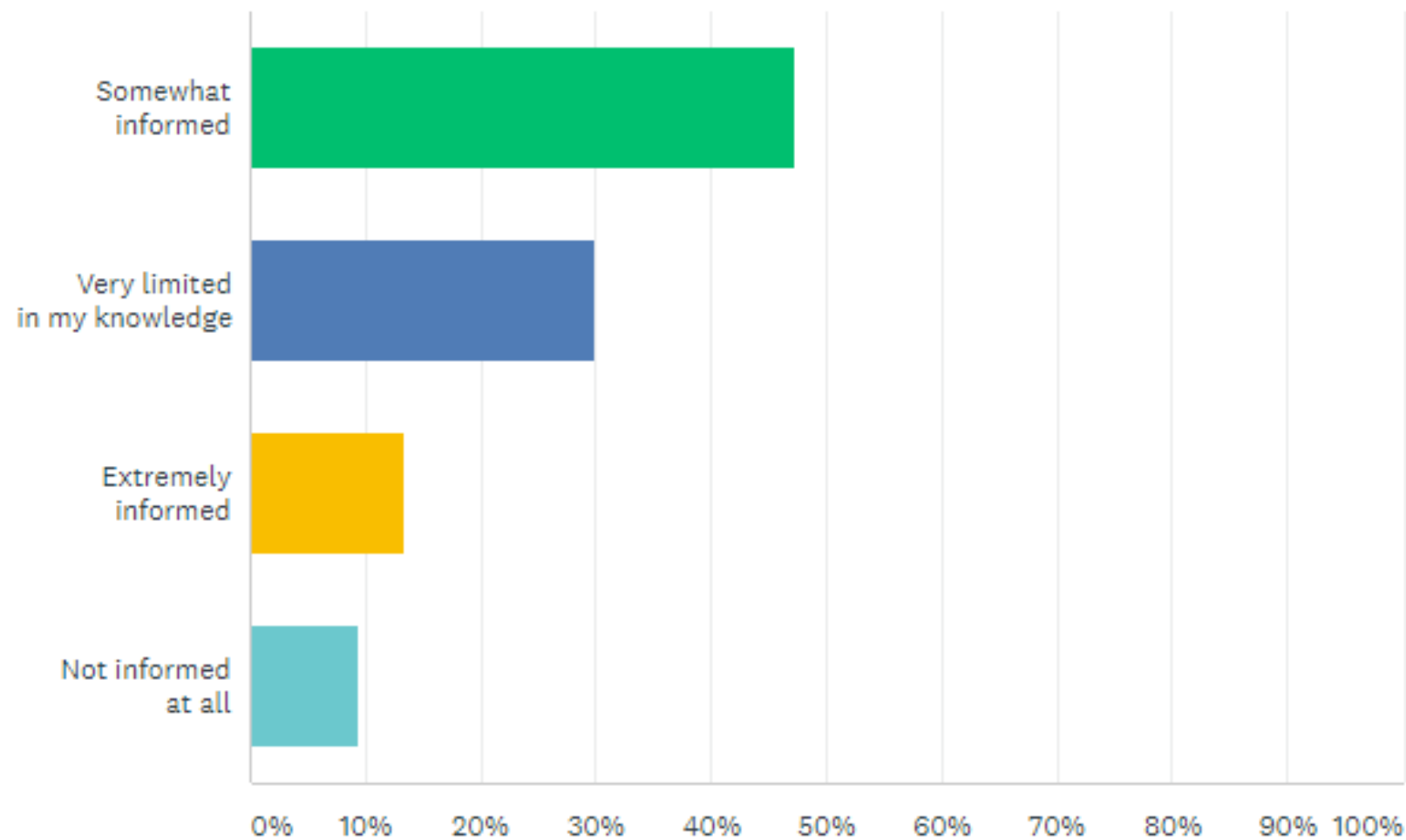


BOTTOM 5 STRESSORS FOR FAMILIES



With regards to the events, services and resources in New Hampshire available to military & Veteran family members, how do you feel?

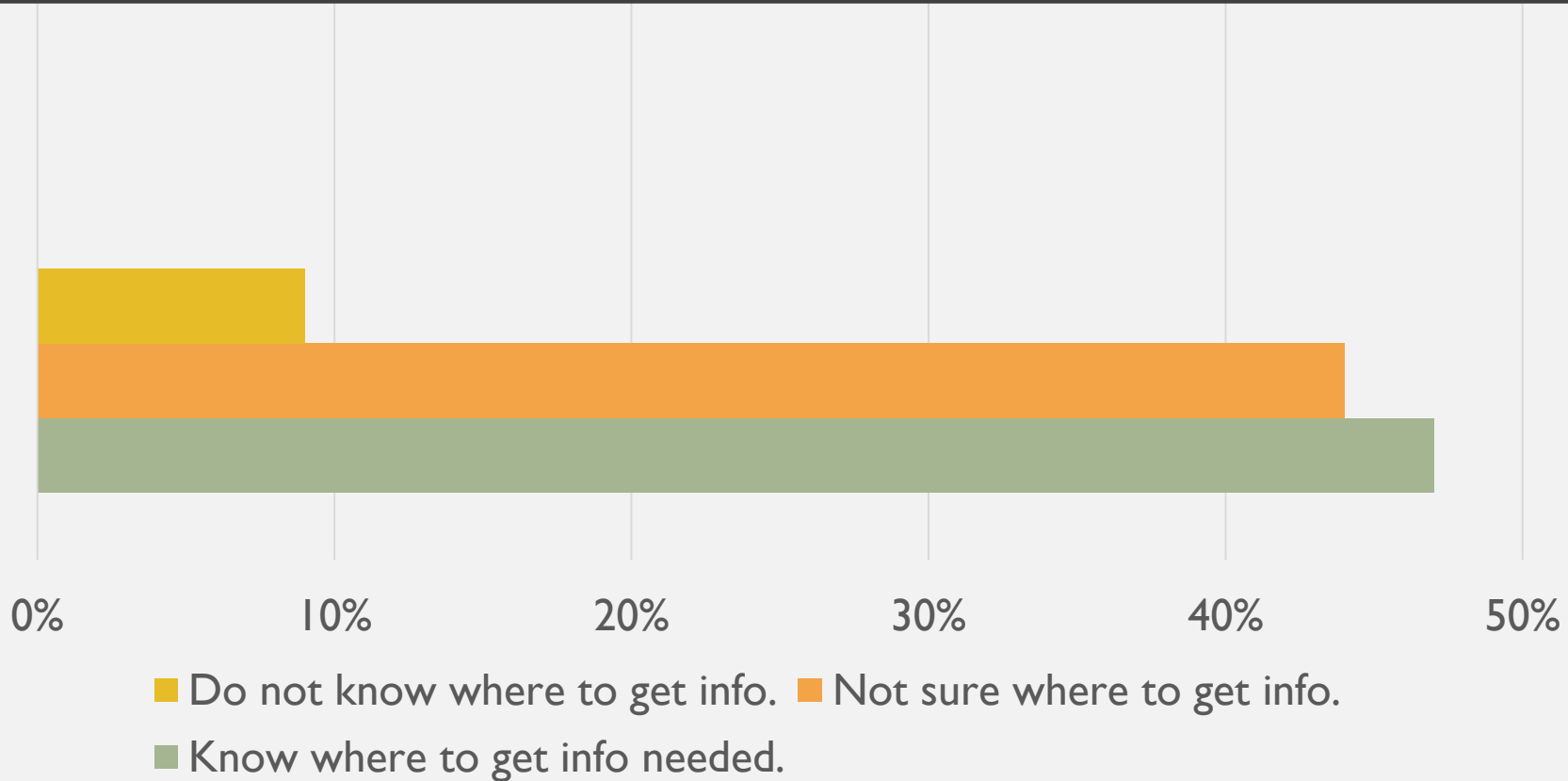
Answered: 180 Skipped: 0



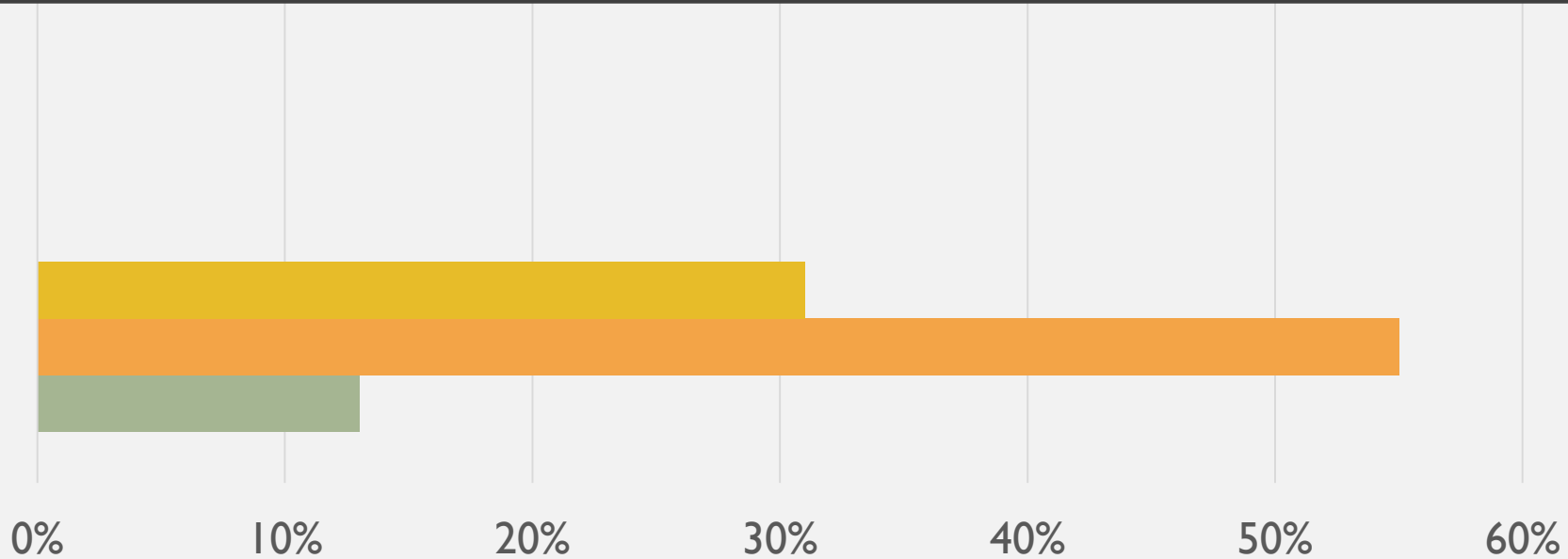
TOP 5 CATEGORIES FAMILIES MOST OFTEN SEEK INFORMATION

1. Physical Health
2. Mental Health
3. Financial
4. Needs related to military service
5. Social

WHEN LOOKING FOR RESOURCES, INFORMATION, HELP OR ASSISTANCE WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE MAJORITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES?



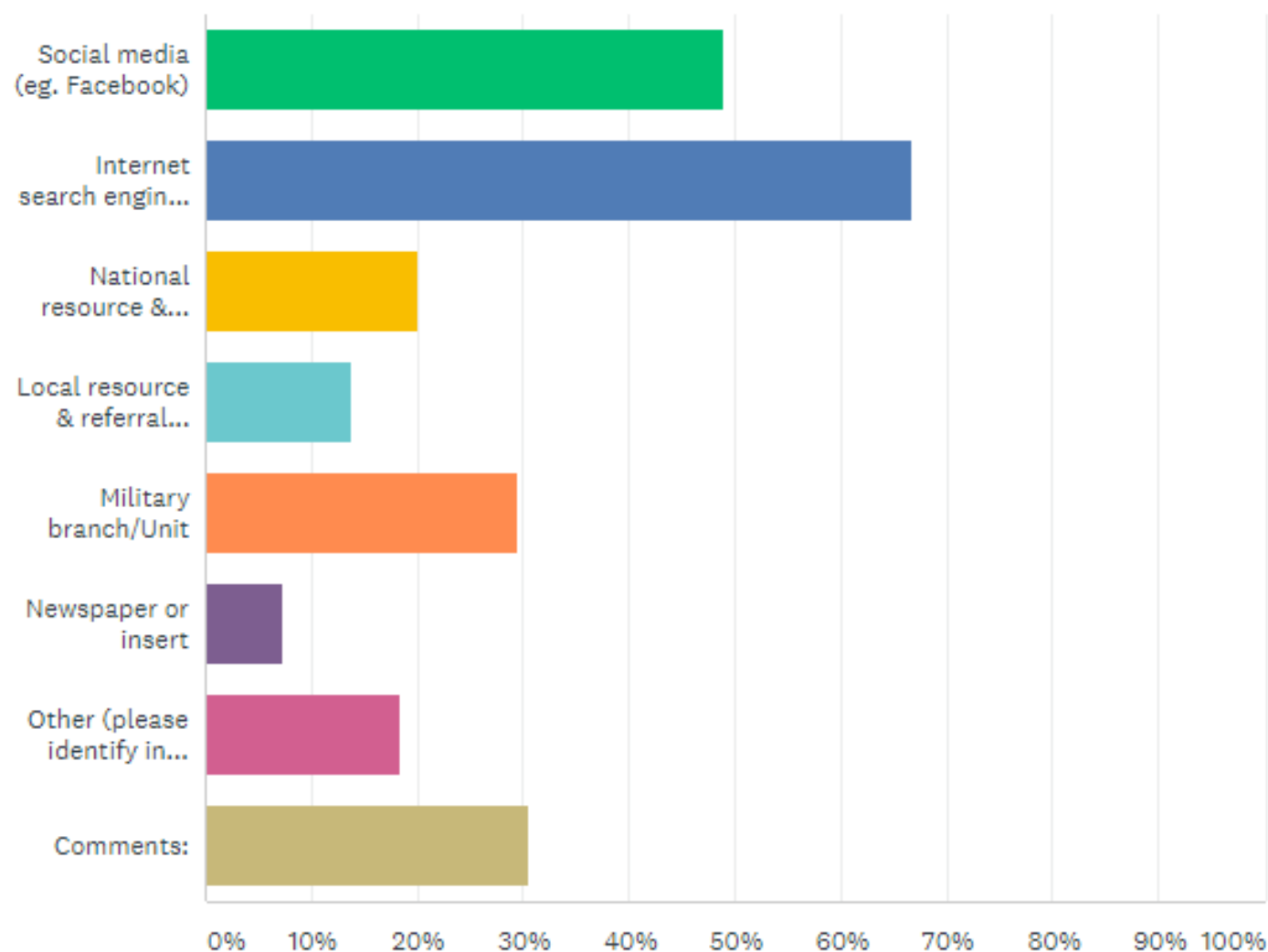
AFTER FINDING RESOURCES, WHAT BEST DESCRIBES THE MAJORITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES?



- No difficulty navigating/accessing services. Received service in timely manner.
- Some difficulty navigating/accessing resources. Delayed receipt of services.
- Extreme difficulty navigating/accessing services. Did not receive service.

When looking for event information, support or resources, where do you go for information? (select all that apply)

Answered: 180 Skipped: 0



COMMON THEMES AMONG COMMENTS

Struggles accessing military records

“Accessing disability services and getting my medical records [has been difficult]. I have not been successful in getting my Navy records or my USMC medical records.”

Isolation from other military families/peers and from civilian family/friends

“This is something I would be VERY interested in [connecting with other military families]. Being part of the reserves, I do not have good connections with many of the other families in the Battery. With our current deployment, I certainly wish that I knew more families in our current situation.”

”I think we have been having problems making friends in the community since I retired from the Army.”

Financial stressors related to transitioning into civilian life

“Soon will be retiring and the transition financially will be a change.”

Mental health challenges

“I suffer in silence as trained.”

COMMON THEMES AMONG COMMENTS

Navigating and completing requirements to access services for physical & mental health issues is difficult. Satisfaction with the service, but not the red tape around getting the service.

“I have lost out on over \$1000 in community care travel pay this past year due to Manchester VA not accepting VA card scans to input our completed community appointment travel pay. The travel pay department never processed my paper travel pay vouchers either, then halfway through the pandemic they transitioned to an online input system that didn't work because you couldn't attach files. Now I believe there is another online process. I give up. How much effort do you expect us to give?”

Feeling/belief that NH does not offer many services or benefits to Veterans

“NH has extremely limited resources for veterans. Some lists are years out of date and calling contact numbers often get no response. For single parent veterans the transition is exceptionally challenging. I am not even able to use my GI bill to buy a house because the cost of housing is 100,000 or more over what I can afford based on my retirement and employment pay. We are honored by small things and lip service...real assistance is sorely lacking.”

COMMON THEMES AMONG COMMENTS

Spouses experiencing struggles there is not help readily available to address

“This is my first deployment with my husband, and I made the wrong choice to move back with my parents, which causes added stress. My husband is in sunny California, and has basically moved on in life without me and the family he has at home. I am a teacher, so add all the stressors together, and it feels like my world is crumbling down.”

CONCLUSIONS

- Coordinated and reliable methods to communicate to the military & Veteran population and their families in NH is lacking. (Survey response rates across regions and branches validate this.)
- Reducing barriers to accessing services, such as red tape, would be welcomed.
- More readily available supports for spouses/families are needed in times of crisis (not often, but important when needed).
- Large majority of families get information online and through social media outlets; however, there still remains a portion of the population that is not online.

NEXT STEPS

- Create social media calendar with important information to share throughout the year on NAMI NH's Military & Veteran Family Facebook Group page.
- Develop a podcast to highlight resources available in NH for military & Veteran families as well as social opportunities.
- DMAVS should move forward with creating social media accounts.
- Other thoughts or feedback?