

**RESULTS FOR THE FIRST IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE MILITARY FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM SURVEY**

**by
Peter Gabor, PhD**

**for
Director Military Family Services**

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Introduction

The Military Family Services Program (MFSP) survey was implemented for the first time during the period January 1 to March 31, 2006. With a few exceptions, the survey was implemented during a two-week period selected by each centre within that period. This document reports the main quantitative findings from the survey, from a system-wide perspective.

This report is organized as follows. First, a brief background to the survey will be provided. Next information regarding respondents and their participation will be reported. Then, an analysis of the items providing feedback about experiences with the Canadian / Military Family Resource Centres (C/MFRC) and the MFSP service objectives will be provided, beginning with the items relating to principles of family resource programs followed, in turn, by items relating to each of the four service categories. Finally, concluding comments will be presented.

Background

The MFSP Participant Survey is part of the accountability system described in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*. The purpose of the survey is to collect feedback from military families who use one or more of the services offered by a C/MFRC. It is intended that one member from each family completes the survey and, in his or her responses, reflects on the experiences of the family.

The MFSP Participant Survey was designed to reflect the philosophy of *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*, which sets forth the objectives of the MFSP but does not prescribe how these objectives are to be achieved. This philosophy makes it possible for each C/MFRC to design its services according to identified needs in its community, and with regard to services that may already be available through other local service providers. The MFSP Participant Survey, thus, looks at military families' feedback on the extent to which, in their experience, the objectives of the mandated services described in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice* were achieved.

The MFSP Participant Survey's structure reflects the content of *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*. The first section of the MFSP Participant Survey is composed of 21 rating items, with the first 4 items relating to the principles of family resource programs. The remaining 17 items relate to the four service categories: *Personal Development and Community Integration, Child and Youth Development and Parenting Support, Family Separation and Reunion, and Prevention, Support and Intervention*. At least one item is keyed to each of the service components within each service category.

The second section of the MFSP Participant Survey contains a series of structured items designed to obtain information about respondents and their families, and about participation patterns.

The MFSP Participant Survey concludes with three open-ended questions where respondents can write additional comments or suggestions. Since this report deals with the quantitative results, only results from the first two sections of MFSP Participant Survey will be presented.

Description of Respondents and their Participation

A total 15,787 blank MFSP Participant Surveys were requested by the 41 C/MFRCs world-wide, based on their estimates of the maximum number needed for distribution. A total of 2,550 completed MFSP Participant Surveys were received for analysis from 38 C/MFRCs. This represents a return of 17% of the total number of MFSP Participant Surveys initially requested for distribution by these 38 C/MFRCs.

An analysis of the response indicated that, when taken system-wide, the results of the MFSP Participant Survey can be considered to be highly accurate. However, it is important to understand that this statement applies only to the results when considered system-wide; within each C/MFRC, the size of the response was, of course smaller, and thus the sampling error was greater.

Since there was only one respondent for each family, the 2550 returned MFSP Participant Surveys represented 7,472 actual participants.

Selected descriptive information about the respondents and participation is provided below:

- 73% of the respondents were female.
- 35.5% of the respondents reported themselves as a serving member of CF, while 58.1% indicated they were the spouse or partner of the member. The remaining 6.4% of respondents was composed of parents, relatives or caregivers.
- 45.2 % of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40; 23.8 % were 30 years old or under, and 31% were over 40 years of age.
- 22.5% of respondents were in their current posting less than one year. 33.1% had been in their current posting for 1-3 years and 44.4% were in their current posting for over 3 years.
- 29.9% of the respondents indicated that they participate in C/MFRC programs and services less than once per month; another 25.4 % reported that they participated once or twice per month. 16.4 % indicated that they participate 3-4 times per month and 28.2% participated 5 or more times per month.
- Approximately one third of the respondents indicated that they had been participating in C/MFRC services for less than one year; another third indicated that they had participated for 1-3 years and a final third reported that they had participated for more than 3 years.
- 87.1% of the surveys were completed in English; 12.9% were completed in French.

Results for the Rating Items

Principles of Family Resource Programs

Items 1-4 of the MFSP Participant Survey were designed to obtain feedback about the extent to which respondents perceived that the C/MFRC adhered to major principles of family support, as highlighted in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice* and identified by leading family resource program organizations.

As shown in Table 1, the results indicate that there was a high level of agreement that the C/MFRCs adhered to these principles. In fact, two of the items in this group, relating to respectful treatment and confidentiality, were accorded the highest ratings in the entire MFSP Participant Survey. The remaining two items, while rated somewhat lower, were still among the highest item ratings in the MFSP Participant Survey. Together, these results indicate that the programs and services of the MFSP are delivered, through the network of C/MFRC's, in a manner that is congruent with the principles set out in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*, and with generally accepted family resource program principles.

The overall mean rating for this category was 4.30, which makes this the most highly rated category in the MFSP Participant Survey.

Table 1 *
Results for Principles of Family Resource Programs category

	N	Mean Rating	Percent Agreement
Staff members of this MFRC treated our family with respect	2405	4.54	92.1
When we participated in MFRC services our strengths and abilities were recognized	2107	4.10	78.0
I am confident that the MFRC and its staff kept confidential any personal information we provided	2379	4.36	86.3
When we wished to get involved, there were opportunities for members of my family to participate in planning, providing and evaluating the services of the MFRC.	2004	4.11	77.7

RESPONSE OPTIONS: 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE; 2=DISAGREE; 3=NEUTRAL; 4=AGREE; 5=STRONGLY AGREE

* In all tables in this document, the *N* column indicates the number of respondents for each item. The *Mean Ratings* column reports the mean of all ratings for each item; the ratings are based on a 5-point scale with higher numbers indicating higher levels of agreement with the statement in an item. The *Percent Agreement* column indicates the percent of respondents who expressed some level of agreement (either *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*) with the statement in an item.

Personal Development and Community Integration

Items 5-10 of the MFSP Participant Survey were designed to obtain feedback about the components of the *Personal Development and Community Integration* service category.

As shown in Table 2, the highest rated item was *awareness about the various services of C/MFRCs*, with a mean rating of 4.26 and 86.6% of respondents agreeing that they were aware of these services. This indicates that C/MFRCs were effective in making military community members aware of their offerings.

The lowest rated item in this category was elicited by the item: *When we first moved into this community, civilian members of my family were able to make a successful employment transition*. The mean rating for this item was 3.40, with just over half the respondents (53.6%) indicating agreement. It is worth noting that this was, in fact, the lowest rated item on the entire MFSP Participant Survey.

The overall mean rating for this service category was 4.01.

Table 2
Results for Personal Development and Community Integration
Service Category

	N	Mean Rating	Percent Agreement
I am aware of the various services offered by my local MFRC	2493	4.26	86.6
When we first arrived, members of my family felt welcomed in this community	2274	4.01	74.2
When we first moved into this community, civilian members of my family were able to make a successful employment transition	1585	3.40	53.6
When we first moved into this community, civilian members of my family were able to make a successful educational transition	1428	3.90	74.3
Members of my family have had access to services and resources that supported their skill development or personal growth	2124	3.97	74.9
Members of my family have had opportunities to learn the predominant language of this community	1395	4.08	77.0

RESPONSE OPTIONS: 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE; 2=DISAGREE; 3=NEUTRAL; 4=AGREE; 5=STRONGLY AGREE

Child and Youth Development and Parenting Support

Five questions on the MFSP Participant Survey, items 11-15, were designed to obtain information about the *Child/Youth Development and Parenting Support* service category. Table 3 reports the results for these items.

Two items in this service category drew relatively high ratings. These items indicate that parents felt they had access to information and resources relevant to children and youth, and also that their preschoolers and children had sufficient opportunities for interaction with others.

The remaining three items received some of the lowest ratings on the entire MFSP Participant Survey. These items indicate that a large number of parents, although not a majority of parents, felt they had inadequate child care plans in case of emergencies and also had trouble finding accessible and affordable child care, both during times of deployment as well as at other times.

The overall mean rating for this service category was 4.05.

Table 3
Results for Child/Youth Development and Parenting Support
Service Category

	N	Mean Rating	Percent Agreement
Our preschoolers and children have sufficient opportunities to interact with others.	1733	4.27	84.7
As a parent, I have access to information and resources relevant to children and youth.	1978	4.27	86.8
My family has plans for childcare arrangements in the event of an emergency.	1698	3.79	66.9
When my family member was deployed, and I really needed it, I was able to obtain emergency respite childcare services.	694	3.64	54.9
Generally speaking, I have been able to obtain affordable casual childcare that met my needs.	1397	3.84	69.1

RESPONSE OPTIONS: 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE; 2=DISAGREE; 3=NEUTRAL; 4=AGREE; 5=STRONGLY AGREE

Family Separation and Reunion

Two questions on the MFSP Participant Survey, items 16 and 17, were designed to obtain information about the *Family Separation and Reunion* service category.

As Table 4 indicates, the two items related to this service category drew ratings just under 4.0, which is defined as *agree* on the rating scale. These results indicate that a majority of respondents felt that they had access to services to help them manage separation and reunion and that they did, in fact, manage the process well.

At the same time, 12% of respondents indicated that they did not agree that they had access to services that could help them manage separation and reunion, and 8.4% indicated they had not been able to effectively manage the separation and reunion process. While comparatively small, these percentages nevertheless represent the responses of 140 and 96 families, respectively.

The overall mean rating for this category was 3.94, with a standard deviation of 0.99. It is worth noting that the standard deviation for this service category was the largest among all service categories. This reflects the fact that there was a relatively large variance in the experiences reported for this service category.

Table 4
Results for the Family Separation and Reunion Service Category

	N	Mean Rating	Percent Agreement
My family had access to services to help us manage deployment related separation and reunion	1170	3.86	68.1
My family was able to effectively manage deployment related separation and reunion	1145	3.98	72.8

RESPONSE OPTIONS: 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE; 2=DISAGREE; 3=NEUTRAL; 4=AGREE; 5=STRONGLY AGREE

Prevention, Support and Intervention

Four questions on the MFSP Participant Survey, items 18-21, were designed to obtain information about the *Prevention, Support and Intervention* service category.

Table 5 reports the results for these items and, as indicated, the mean item ratings were under *agree*, the fourth point on the scale. The overall mean rating for this service category was 3.93, which makes this category the lowest rated of the service categories, coming in slightly lower than the *Family Separation and Reunion* category.

Table 5
Results for the Prevention, Support and Intervention Service Category

	N	Mean Rating	Percent Agreement
My family has access to information to help us understand general health and lifestyle issues	2222	3.99	76.1
Members of my family feel connected to and supported by peers	2268	3.84	69.3
Members of my family were referred to appropriate community resources when they needed it	1889	3.97	74.8
When dealing with crisis, members of my family received the support they needed	1104	3.85	66.6

RESPONSE OPTIONS: 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE; 2=DISAGREE; 3=NEUTRAL; 4=AGREE; 5=STRONGLY AGREE

Concluding Comments

The system-wide results obtained during the first implementation of the MFSP Participant Survey indicates that participants rated these services quite highly and generally agreed that the main objectives of MFSP had been met. Typically, mean item ratings were around the fourth point of the rating scale, defined as *agree*.

The highest ratings on the MFSP Participant Survey were related to principles of family resource programs, indicating that services were delivered in a manner consistent with these principles.

The lowest rated items indicated that a significant minority of respondents experienced problems obtaining emergency respite child care when their family member was deployed, and that civilian members of military families experienced difficulties in making a smooth employment transition when moving into a new community.

When looking at service categories as a whole, the *Personal Development and Community Integration* and *Child and Youth Development and Parenting Support* categories were rated somewhat higher than the *Family Separation and Reunion* and *Prevention, Intervention and Support* categories.

These overall trends, as well as the detailed results presented earlier, are most useful as feedback. At the system-wide level, they indicate that, on the whole, the MFSP is highly rated by participants. At the same time they also identify areas that could benefit from a closer look and, perhaps, further development.

At the individual C/MFRC level, these results provide information that can place the C/MFRCs own results into context and, again, help in the identification of areas of strength and areas that could be further developed.