



## Webinar Summary

### Hunger, Nutrition, and Health Action Collaborative: Addressing Food Insecurity Among Military Families

**Date:** September 2025

**Hosted by:** CDC Foundation's Hunger, Nutrition, and Health Action Collaborative

**Speakers:**

- **Shannon Razsadin**, CEO, Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN)
- **Sue Potter**, CEO, Nourish Pierce County

### Overview

The September session of the Hunger, Nutrition, and Health Action Collaborative focused on the growing challenge of food insecurity among military families, where one in five military and veteran families—and one in four active-duty families—experience food insecurity, compared to one in eight U.S. households.

Moderator Rachel Ferencik (CDC Foundation) opened the webinar by highlighting the collaborative's mission to spotlight real-world partnerships addressing hunger through research, advocacy and on-the-ground action.

### Key Insights from MFAN

**Shannon Razsadin** shared that MFAN's upcoming *Military Family 360 Survey* will explore the lived experiences of military and veteran families nationwide. Previous research revealed that food insecurity often follows major life disruptions, including:

- Frequent moves
- Military spouse unemployment (persisting at ~24%)
- Family expansion
- Unexpected financial strain

MFAN's findings show that junior and mid-enlisted families with children face the highest rates of food insecurity, with many spouses sacrificing their own meals to ensure others are fed. Frequent relocations also disrupt access to programs like WIC, which vary by state.

Razsadin emphasized that the stigma of seeking help remains a critical barrier. Because financial hardship can affect security clearance and readiness, many service members struggle in silence. “Families don’t care who provides the help—they care that they get the support they need,” she said, stressing the value of cross-sector collaboration among nonprofits, bases and local partners.

### **Community Solutions in Action**

**Sue Potter** described how Nourish Pierce County—serving communities near Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington—has built practical, trust-based systems to reach military families. By surrounding the base with food pantries, Nourish brings resources directly to where families live and work.

Partnering with MFAN provided the data and credibility needed to strengthen advocacy and engage policymakers. “MFAN brought the research; we brought the relationships,” said Potter. “Together, we created the stories and evidence needed to reach local and federal leaders.”

She also shared that collaboration with the Armed Services YMCA helped establish an on-base food bank after years of advocacy. Her advice to peers: “Be flexible and benevolent. Partner without agenda—just focus on feeding people.”

### **Policy and Advocacy Takeaways**

Both speakers highlighted the need to clarify eligibility for SNAP and WIC, since SNAP counts the Basic Allowance for Housing as income (making many families ineligible), while WIC does not. They urged advocacy for legislative changes to align eligibility standards and remove barriers that keep military families from receiving benefits.

MFAN’s upcoming research results, due in May 2026, will inform national policy discussions and help shape military and federal approaches to food assistance.

### **Food as Medicine and Readiness**

The conversation also touched on nutrition and health. Nourish Pierce County integrates nutrition education, recipes, and culturally relevant food access into its programs, while federal initiatives such as the National Defense Authorization Act are beginning to recognize the role of nutrition in military readiness and recruitment.

### **Key Takeaways**

The discussion underscored how hunger in military families mirrors broader national challenges—but with unique dimensions tied to relocation, employment, and stigma. Partnerships that combine national research with local action offer the most promise for sustainable solutions.

As Ferencik summarized, “Local and national partnerships can amplify each other’s impact—research meets reality when organizations like MFAN and Nourish work hand in hand.”

### **What’s Next**

The next Hunger, Nutrition, and Health Action Collaborative webinar will take place October 15. For more information or to view recordings, visit [ImpactHunger.org](https://ImpactHunger.org).