



Elizabeth Dole Foundation
CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



Strategic Plan

A Letter from our CEO



When the Elizabeth Dole Foundation was first established, few Americans were familiar with the term “caregiver,” much less identified as one or understood the contributions that caregivers make to society or the hardships they face, especially those caring for wounded, injured, or ill service members and veterans.

Over the last 14 years, the Foundation has made significant strides in transforming the climate of recognition and support afforded to military and veteran caregivers. We activated some of the highest national leaders, cultural icons, and a broad coalition of partners to capture the nation’s attention, connect with millions of overlooked caregivers, produce and deliver urgent services, implement life-changing reforms, and secure the country’s largest expansion of caregiver benefits.

As we enter the next chapter of our

work, we know that the need for our leadership and commitment to our community is greater than ever. Today, one in every three adult Americans serves as a caregiver for a loved one or neighbor or friend. That means more than 105 million Americans do everything from administering medications to talking with medical providers to helping with daily tasks like bathing and dressing.

Assessing the Need

From the RAND study we commissioned, we now know that 14.3 million of these Americans care for someone who has served in our nation’s armed forces. These caregivers come from all walks of life. They live in cities and small towns, have different racial and ethnic backgrounds, hold varying faiths and beliefs, and represent all ages. Some are thriving, and all are bringing enormous value to our economy and society, but too many are struggling. Military and veteran caregivers are at heightened risk for depression and suicide ideation; a third live at or below 130% of the federal poverty line; almost 40 percent care for both an adult and a young child; and the vast majority feel excluded from their loved one’s health care team.

Learning from our Past

During the last year, we at the Elizabeth Dole Foundation engaged in a deliberate and forthright





examination of who we are and who we want to be as we continue to rise to this challenge. Looking back on our progress, we assessed where we exceeded our goals, where we fell short, and what we learned from all of it. We solicited feedback from external partners and donors to get an objective evaluation of our strengths and areas for growth. We studied the latest research on caregiving and asked ourselves hard questions about how we needed to adapt. Perhaps most importantly, we listened, as we sought input from our caregiver community—those who have the most at stake in our success.

Envisioning our Future

The following strategic plan is an outcome of a year-long process. What became clear through this work is that our next chapter must be defined by deepening our direct

impact on the lives of military and veteran caregivers. Our research, landscape analysis, and engagement with caregivers confirmed that too many are falling through the cracks, even as services for veterans expand. We are uniquely positioned to use data and lived experience to focus where others are not, ensuring measurable improvements without duplicating existing efforts. The plan provides a clear roadmap for the years ahead, grounding our work in evidence, accountability, and measurable results. It is also designed to focus our energies on the areas where we truly shine or, as more than one trusted partner deemed it, our “sweet spot.” Much of the progress we have made since our founding in 2012 has been through deep, trusting, and productive partnerships with individuals and organizations across the country, and that will continue to be true for our next decade. In everything we do, we will also continue to lean into the power of convening thought leaders and doers in communities small and large, embrace the importance of using research and data to guide us, and leverage the value of forging partnerships to drive innovative and lasting change.

So, this is not just a plan; it is also an invitation. Join us. Let us know where you think you can help and where, together, we can recognize, celebrate, and lift up the millions of caregivers who need our help. With optimism and excitement for the future,

Steve Schwab
CEO
Elizabeth Dole Foundation





Our Vision

An America where all caregivers and the people they care for thrive.

Our Mission

To empower military and veteran caregivers, their families, and their communities through programs, partnerships, and advocacy that drive innovative, impactful, and sustainable solutions.

Our Core Values



Selfless Service Through hard work, humility, and unending compassion, we will honor the remarkable sacrifices that our caregivers, their veterans, and their families have made.



Integrity We will uphold the highest standards of honesty, transparency, and accountability across all of our activities and interactions.



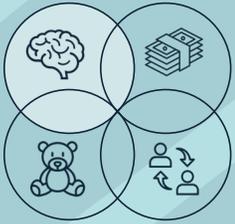
Courage We will boldly seek innovative solutions to complex challenges and fearlessly advocate for our community.



What We Hope to Achieve



The Elizabeth Dole Foundation has identified four key pillars that will drive our work over the next decade. Taken together, we aim to help military and veteran caregivers reach optimal physical health, psychological wellbeing, social connectedness, personal growth, and sense of purpose in life.



PILLAR ONE Strengthen Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

Objectives

Reduce caregiver isolation and break down the stigmatization of mental health and substance use disorders

Expand caregivers' access to mental health and wellness services

Improve mental health quality of life for military and veteran caregivers

Reduce suicide ideation among care-givers and their veterans

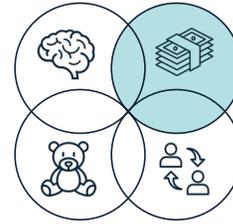
Activities

- Leverage multichannel, interactive communication campaigns focused on reducing stigma
- Strengthen our online peer support network
- Expand use of mental health support and treatment
- Design and evaluate new approaches to incorporate mental health and emotional wellness services into our resource navigation program and strengthen our ties to providers who can support our community

- Advance policies and partnerships that increase health insurance options, outreach, and coverage for military and veteran caregivers
- Where there are gaps, deliver mental wellness programming online and in communities
- Design and evaluate new approaches to mental health and emotional wellness
- Lead management of the Face the Fight coalition and serve as a role model member of the coalition

Indicator of Progress

Reduced incidence of depression and suicide ideation among military and veteran caregivers



PILLAR TWO Grow and Sustain Economic Mobility

Objectives

Mitigate immediate financial crises among caregiver families

Increase caregiver financial stability

Strengthen caregivers' long-term financial viability

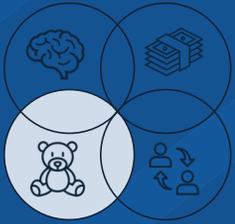
Activities

- Provide critical financial assistance through the Bob & Dolores Hope Foundation Fund for Critical Financial Assistance
- Increase engagement with the Caregiver Financial Journey tool
- Expand and scale our Resource Navigation Program
- Offer financial wellness programming online and in communities
- Launch additional financial counseling services
- Advocate for policies that enhance caregiver financial stability, such as paid family leave

- Design and evaluate new approaches to financial stability and long-term economic growth

Indicator of Progress

Increased percentage of military and veteran caregivers achieving financial growth



PILLAR THREE

Improve Support and Outcomes for Caregiving Youth and Families

Objectives

Increase nationwide identification and recognition of military and veteran caregiving youth

Expand access to education, clinical, peer support and other community-based resources

Empower military and veteran caregiving youth by helping them to identify and realize their own personal goals for lifelong success

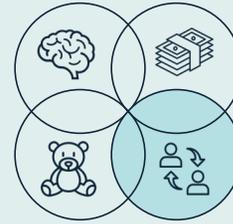
- Advocate for enhanced family support, such as hiring Family Resource Coordinators across VA and expanding TRICARE young adult coverage
- Lead the Hidden Helpers Coalition toward collaborative solutions
- Design and test new approaches for supporting youth, teen, and young adult caregivers

Activities

- Launch a Hidden Helpers public awareness campaign
- Increase engagement with the Family Resource Hub
- Expand our Resource Navigation Program
- Create a Dole Caregiver Youth Fellows Program
- Host community-based caregiver family events
- Equip schools, health systems, and other community-based organizations with tools to recognize and support youth caregivers

Indicator of Progress

Increased percentage of military and veteran caregiving kids whose needs have been met



PILLAR FOUR

Foster Supportive Ecosystems for Veterans and their Caregivers

Objectives

Broaden the practice of caregiver-inclusive care

Promote adoption of caregiver friendly policies and programs in the workplace and school-based settings

Expand adoption of best practices for improving quality of life for caregivers and their veterans in communities nationwide

Harness innovation to connect caregivers with the most useful and promising tools and technologies

Increase evidence-based understanding of caregiving

- Partner actively with industry and government to harness innovations in support of military and veteran caregivers and their care recipients
- Implement new initiative to build caregiver friendly workplaces
- Explore opportunities to build caregiver friendly school-based settings
- Design and evaluate new approaches for building communities of excellence and connecting caregivers to proven solutions

Activities

- Expand the Campaign for Caregiver Integrated Care
- Advocate for improved health care coverage and access within critical health ecosystems
- Work to make every state, county, and city a Hidden Heroes Community that implements concrete actions to prioritize and build support for military and veteran caregivers

Indicator of Progress

Increased percentage of caregivers reporting feeling supported in health care and workplace settings



A Careful, Phased Approach, Grounded in Sound Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Practices

As we continue to implement this strategic plan, we will embrace three core tenets. We will take a phased approach; we will monitor, evaluate, and learn as we go; and we will adjust to emerging needs of our community.

Before establishing new programs, we will examine how well existing programs are working and how they may be adapted to meet the needs of our unique community.

We will also explore and assess how best to leverage our national network of fellows to bring programming and caregiver events into their communities

A Phased Approach

As we expand our work in new ways, we will take a cautious, incremental approach.

First, through rigorous research and landscape assessments, we will seek to understand the specific problems that need to be addressed. Then, we will identify potential effective solutions, determining how they may best be tailored and implemented for the military and veteran caregiver community.



Monitoring, Evaluating, and Learning

The concrete, measurable, and meaningful goals that we have identified for each pillar will help us monitor our progress in achieving our overarching goal of helping military and veteran caregivers thrive. Undergirding this evaluative framework will be strong logic models, theories of change, and performance metrics for each activity, aligned with at least one objective.

We will be dogged in assessing how we are performing and learning from what works and what doesn't work. Because we are committed to delivering the best, we will test, we will evaluate, we will learn, and we will modify.

Responding to Changes

The world we live in is dynamic and ever-evolving, and so often military and veteran families are the first to see or feel the brunt of change, whether it comes in the form of a new military conflict or economic disruption or policy change. As we move forward in implementing our plan, we will maintain our ability to be nimble, responding to developments that affect our community and adjusting and reprioritizing, as needed.



Learn More

To learn more about the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and how you can support our work, please visit www.elizabethdolefoundation.org and sign up to receive regular communications from us.

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation's mission and programs would not be possible without the generous support of our donors, partners, and the leadership of our incredible Board of Directors.

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