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Coronavirus (COVID-19) Climate Snapshot Poll: Top Resource Needs of Veterans and Active Duty Service Members

Linda Rougeau Euto
Syracuse University

Rosalinda Maury

Nicholas Armstrong

Brice M. Stone

Rachel Linsner

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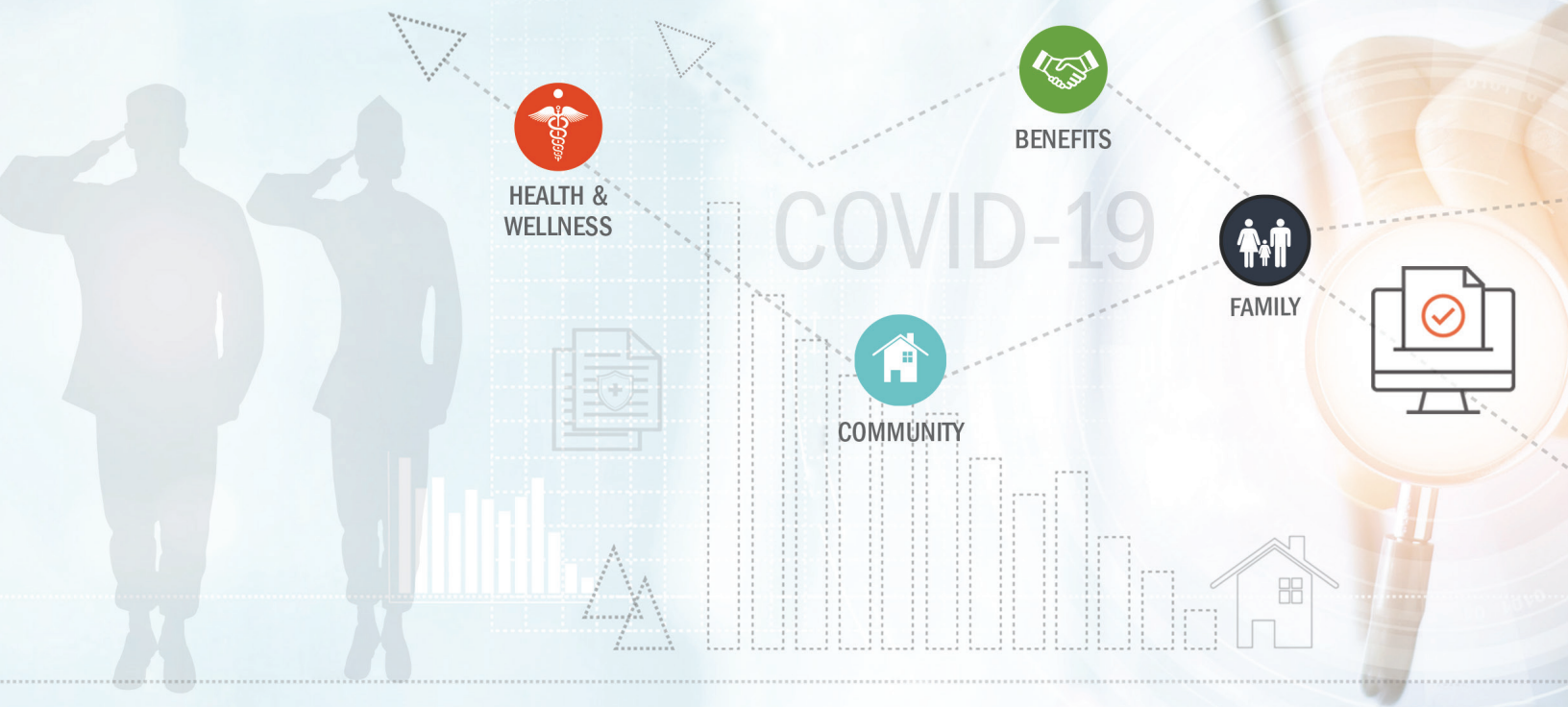
BRIEF #2:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Climate Snapshot Poll:

TOP RESOURCE NEEDS OF VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS

L. Euto, R. Maury, N. Armstrong, B. Stone, & R. Linsner

Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University



This brief is part of a series based on results of the COVID-19 climate poll. We plan to conduct follow-up polls to monitor and share changes and trends so that we can continue to engage and best support those we serve.

Authors

This brief is published by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families. Principal authors of this report are Linda Euto, Ph.D., Rosalinda V. Maury, M.S., Nicholas Armstrong, Ph.D., Brice Stone, Ph.D., & Rachel K. Linsner, M.S. Any views expressed in this paper are of the authors only.

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OVERVIEW

From finding and accessing their benefits and services, to making sure those around them have the right medical, educational and community support, veterans, active duty service members, and military families want to know what to do to keep themselves and those around them safe, healthy, and supported during the COVID-19 crisis.

In the second installment in a series of snapshot poll briefs, the IVMF research team, in partnership with Military Times, examines the impact of the coronavirus on the military and veteran community, including financial and other stresses during these unprecedented times. This second brief analyzes resource needs among veteran and the active duty service member populations in key areas such as employment, education, childcare, mental and physical health, along with caregiving resources.

Key needs assessed include:

- **Benefits and claims assistance** (e.g., assistance with veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)
- **Financial assistance** (e.g., money management, insurance, tax assistance, living assistance)
- **Legal services** (e.g., veterans' court services, available and accessible legal aid)
- **Employment and career development** (e.g., support services for veteran job search and placement, unemployment assistance, career services)
- **Post-secondary education and training** (e.g., access to and availability of services and resources for education)
- **Community support** (e.g., resources related to day-to-day life in your community)
- **Food and nutrition** (e.g., food stamps, meals from school assistance)
- **Housing and public utilities** (e.g., energy assistance, housing loans)
- **Housing and shelter** (e.g., homelessness prevention and treatment programs, shelter beds dedicated to veterans, facilities for women and children)
- **K-12 education** (e.g., access to and availability of services and resources for children's education)
- **Family and children services** (e.g., childcare/child support, death/survivor, early childhood services)
- **Caregiving resources** (e.g., resources related to caregiving needs day-to-day life in your community)
- **Behavioral and mental health** (e.g., access to and availability of mental health services)
- **Medical care** (e.g., access to and availability of medical care for military members, veterans, and their families)

METHODOLOGY

Military Times/IVMF conducted a voluntary, confidential online survey to collect information and perceptions related to the COVID-19 climate. Participants were subscribers of Military Times publications and their military status was verified through official Defense Department email addresses. The data included in these analyses were collected between March 26, 2020 and March 31, 2020. At the time the poll was downloaded for analysis, on March 31, 2020 at 10:50am, a total of 7,693 Military Times subscribers had responded, and 4,047 finished the poll. Of those that provided their current military status (n= 4,022), 1,507 were active duty service members (38%), 47 were National Guardsmen (1%), 135 were Reservists (3%), 1,783 were veterans (45%), 156 were family members (4%), and 338 reported being "none of the above" (9%). Standard methodology was used to weight the results according to the gender and age for the U.S. veteran population, as well as rank, gender, and service branch for the active duty service member population. The analysis below is reflective of the veteran and active duty weighted samples only.

The primary analysis in this brief is predominately from a question where participants were asked to indicate their level of need and access to various resources on a 4 item scale (1 = I do not need these resources, 2 = I would like these resources, but do not know where to find them, 3 = I would like these resources and I know how to access them, and 4 = Does not apply). The "does not apply" option was excluded from the analysis. In addition, the "I would like these resources, but do not know where to find them" and "I would like these resources and I know how to access them" were combined to create a new "I would like these resources" category. Results were analyzed and compared by military status, gender, age, and race/ethnicity.

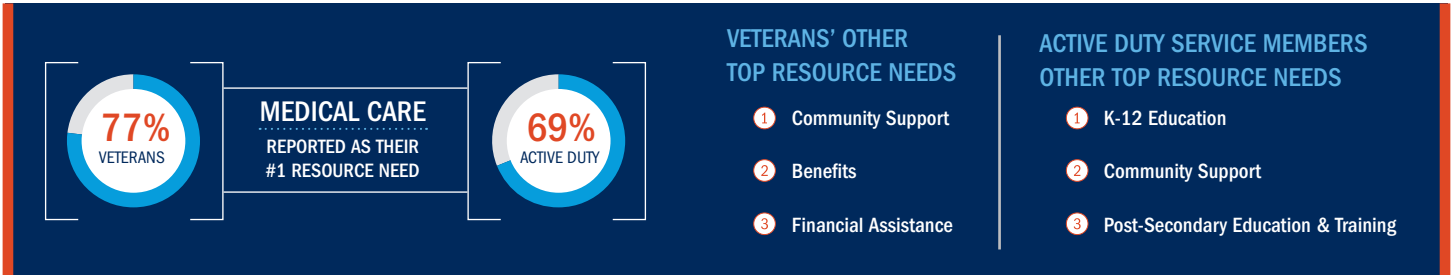




POLL HIGHLIGHTS

The findings from our COVID-19 focused poll reveal widespread concern and resources needed among military and veteran community members together and separately. However, knowing which resources are needed is just half the battle. Our findings also show that both veterans and active duty service members needed help finding resources, with active duty requiring more assistance navigating those services. This report aims to offer insight and recommendations, to the military community, along with multiple stakeholders including policymakers, practitioners, grant makers, and researchers. Below are some of the highlights of this report.

TOP RESOURCE NEEDS OF VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

VETERANS REPORTED NEEDING THE MOST HELP FINDING RESOURCES IN:

- ▶ Financial Assistance
- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Legal Services
- ▶ Employment & Career Development



ACTIVE DUTY REPORTED NEEDING THE MOST HELP FINDING RESOURCES IN:

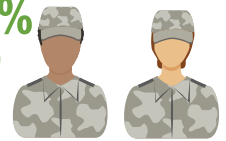
- ▶ Family & Children Services
- ▶ K-12 Education
- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Benefits & Claims Assistance



ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS REPORTED

HIGHER % OF NEED

IN KEY RESOURCE AREAS COMPARED TO VETERANS



TOP RESOURCE NEEDS BY GENDER



HIGHER % OF NEED

WAS REPORTED BY FEMALE VETERANS IN KEY RESOURCE AREAS COMPARED TO MALE VETERANS

OTHER TOP KEY RESOURCES NEEDS

FEMALE VETERANS

- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Benefits & Claims Assistance
- ▶ Post-Secondary Education & Training

MALE VETERANS

- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Benefits & Claims Assistance
- ▶ Financial Assistance

FEMALE ACTIVE DUTY

- ▶ Family & Children Services
- ▶ K-12 Education
- ▶ Community Support

MALE ACTIVE DUTY

- ▶ K-12 Education
- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Post-Secondary Education & Training

TOP RESOURCE NEEDS BY AGE GROUP



MEDICAL CARE #1 RESOURCE NEED

REPORTED BY ACTIVE DUTY IN ALL AGE GROUPS

- ✔ Number one resource need reported by veterans (18-34) was post-secondary education and training.
- ✔ Number one resource need reported by veterans (35-54) and veterans (55 and older) was medical care.

TOP RESOURCE NEEDS BY RACE/ETHNIC MINORITIES



HIGHER % OF NEED in key resource areas

WAS REPORTED BY VETERAN AND ACTIVE DUTY MINORITY WHEN COMPARED TO THEIR NON-MINORITY COUNTERPARTS

- ✔ Number one resource need reported by active duty minority was post-secondary education and training.
- ✔ Number one resource need reported by active duty non-minority was community support.
- ✔ Active duty minority and active duty non-minority also included K-12 education and family and children services as top resource needs.

TOP RESOURCE NEEDS REPORTED BY BOTH VETERAN MINORITIES AND VETERAN NON-MINORITIES

- ▶ Medical Care
- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Benefits & Claims



TOP RESOURCE NEEDS OF VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS

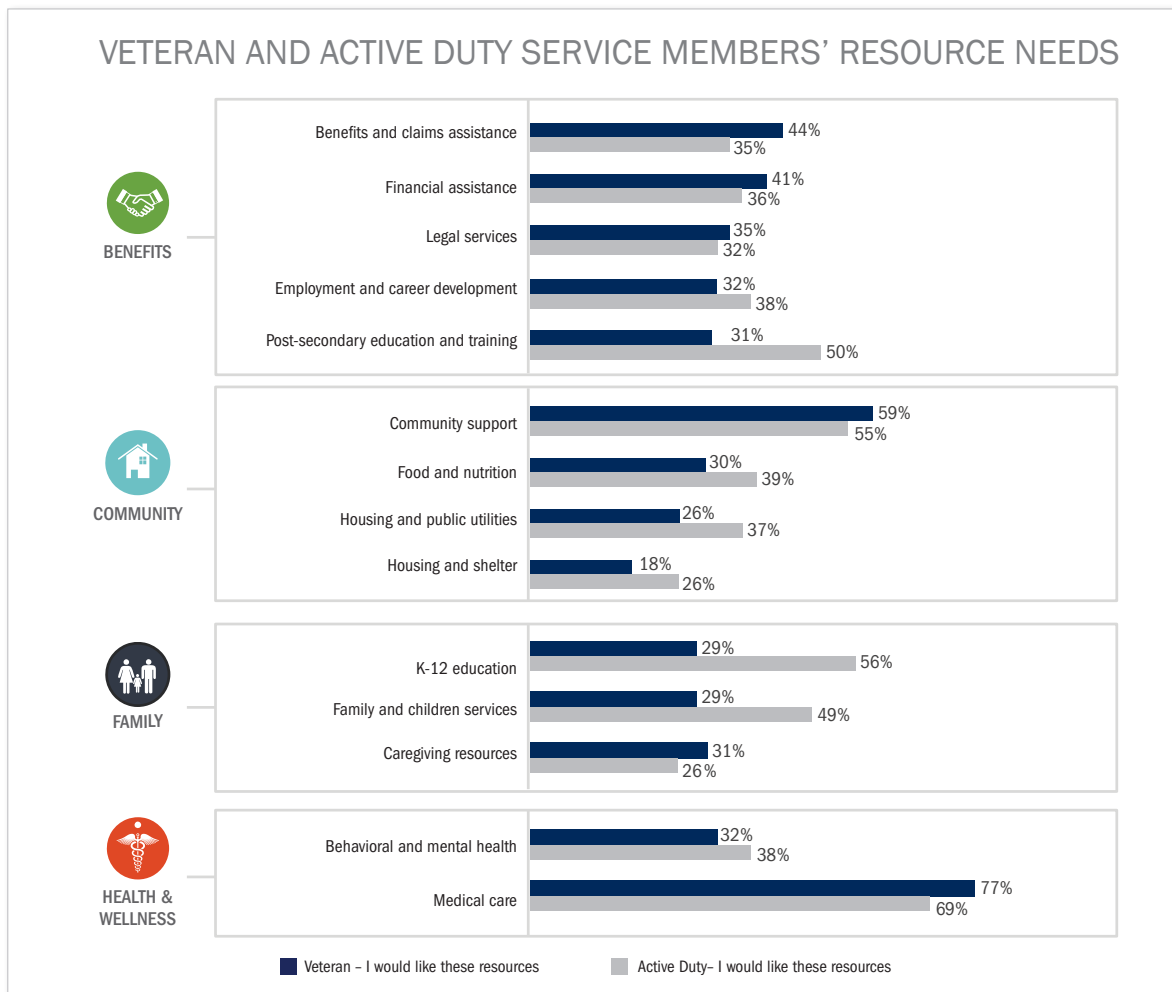
“With schools shut down and childcare facilities closed, these (active duty) personnel may not have access to necessary services so they can continue to perform their duties.” -Anonymous Respondent

“A lot of veterans have small businesses and some of these businesses have sole proprietorship. How do veterans get assistance with their small businesses even if they have no employees?”-Anonymous Respondent



Almost 80% of veterans (77%) and nearly 70% of active duty (69%) participants listed medical care as their top resource need. Veterans also included community support and benefits and claims assistance as top resource needs. Active duty service members reported additional resource needs in K-12 education, community support, as well as availability of services and resources in post-secondary education and training.

Figure 1: Veteran and Active Duty Service Members' Resource Needs



ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Veteran and active duty participants were also asked to express access to resources in their key areas. Both groups reported knowing where to go for most of their resources, however, some expressed not knowing where to find what they needed. Active duty service members reported a higher percentage of needing help finding resources in key areas.

Veterans reported needing the most assistance navigating services in financial assistance, community support, legal services, along with employment and career development, post-secondary education and training, and family and children services.





Active duty reported needing the most help finding resources in family and children services, followed by K-12 education. They also reported needing help finding community support resources, benefits and claims assistance, employment and career development assistance, post-secondary education and training, along with food and nutrition.



Military and veteran families need help in learning how to have supplies for the future, also a plan for saving some funds for such a situation.”

-Anonymous Respondent

Table 1: Percentage of Veteran and Active Duty Service Member Respondents Expressing Need for and Access to Resources

RESOURCES NEEDED		I DO NOT NEED THESE RESOURCES		I WOULD LIKE THESE RESOURCES, BUT DO NOT KNOW WHERE TO FIND THEM		I WOULD LIKE THESE RESOURCES AND I KNOW HOW TO ACCESS THEM	
		VETERAN	ACTIVE DUTY	VETERAN	ACTIVE DUTY	VETERAN	ACTIVE DUTY
 BENEFITS	Benefits and claims assistance (e.g., assistance with veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)	56%	66%	5%	12%	38%	22%
	Financial assistance (e.g., money management, insurance, tax assistance, living assistance)	59%	64%	9%	11%	32%	25%
	Legal services (e.g., veterans' court services, available and accessible legal aid)	65%	68%	8%	8%	28%	24%
	Employment and career development (e.g., support services for veteran job search and placement, unemployment assistance, career services)	68%	62%	8%	12%	24%	26%
	Post-secondary education & training (e.g., access to and availability of services and resources for education)	69%	50%	7%	12%	25%	38%
 COMMUNITY	Community support (e.g., resources related to day-to-day life in your community)	41%	45%	9%	14%	50%	41%
	Food and nutrition (e.g., food stamps, meals from school assistance)	70%	61%	6%	12%	24%	27%
	Housing and public utilities (e.g., energy assistance, housing loans)	74%	63%	6%	10%	20%	27%
	Housing and shelter (e.g., homelessness prevention and treatment programs, shelter beds dedicated to veterans, facilities for women and children)	82%	74%	4%	5%	13%	20%
 FAMILY	K-12 education (e.g., access to and availability of services and resources for children's education)	71%	44%	5%	15%	24%	42%
	Family and children services (e.g., childcare/child support, death/survivor, early childhood services)	71%	51%	7%	16%	22%	33%
	Caregiving resources (e.g., resources related to caregiving needs day-to-day life in your community)	69%	74%	6%	7%	24%	19%
 HEALTH & WELLNESS	Behavioral and mental health (e.g., access to and availability of mental health services)	68%	62%	4%	9%	27%	29%
	Medical care (e.g., access to and availability of medical care for military members, veterans, and their families)	23%	31%	5%	9%	72%	60%

TOP RESOURCE NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY GENDER

“Families who have a member deployed have more than the usual challenges with the lock down, school children at home, concern about their virus, and concern about their deployed spouse. Support is going to have to come from family and unit support groups.” -Anonymous Respondent

Results were analyzed and compared by gender of veteran as well as active duty service member participants. Female veterans (79%) reported needing medical care resources more than male veterans (77%). Other top resource needs reported by female veterans included community support, benefits and claims, post-secondary education and training, along with behavioral and mental health. Other top resource needs reported by male veterans included community support as well as benefits and claims, and financial assistance. Female veterans reported a higher percentage of need in top resource areas.

Unlike veterans, more active duty males (69%) than active duty females (66%) reported needing medical care resources. Active duty females also reported family and children services as a top resource need, along with K-12 education, community support, and post-secondary education and training. Active duty males also reported K-12 education, community support, and post-secondary education and training as top resource needs.

Figure 2: Veterans' Resource Needs by Gender

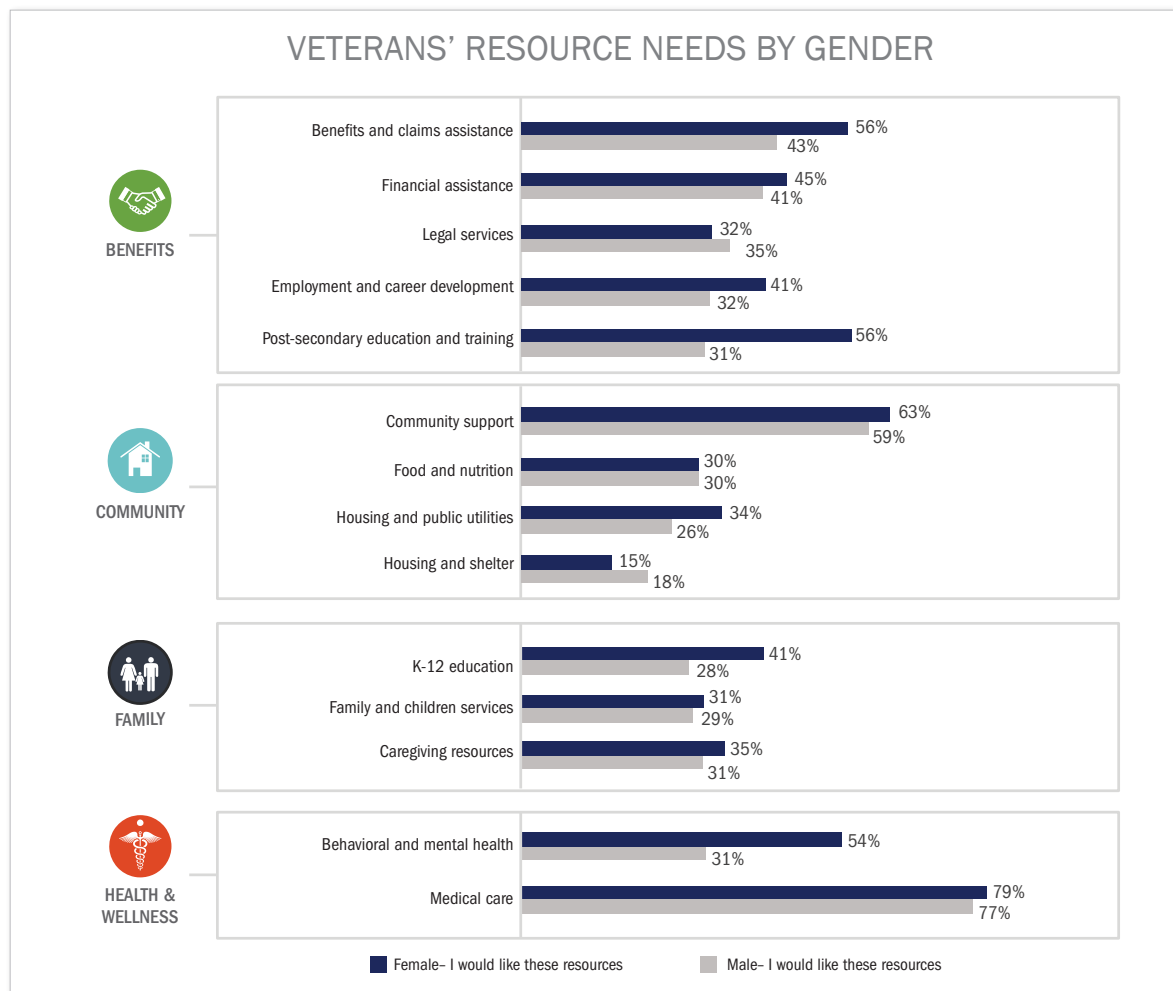
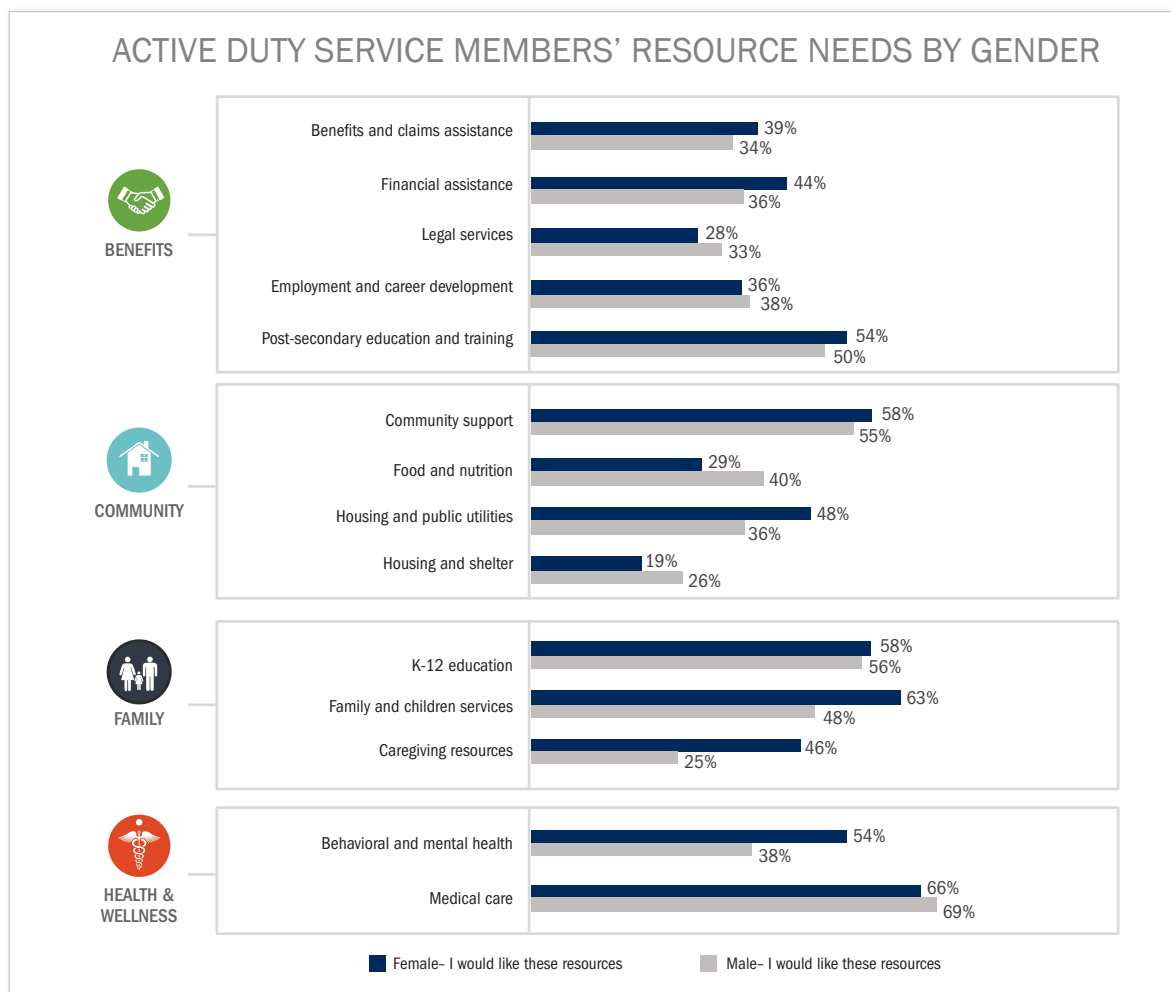




Figure 3: Active Duty Service Members' Resource Needs by Gender



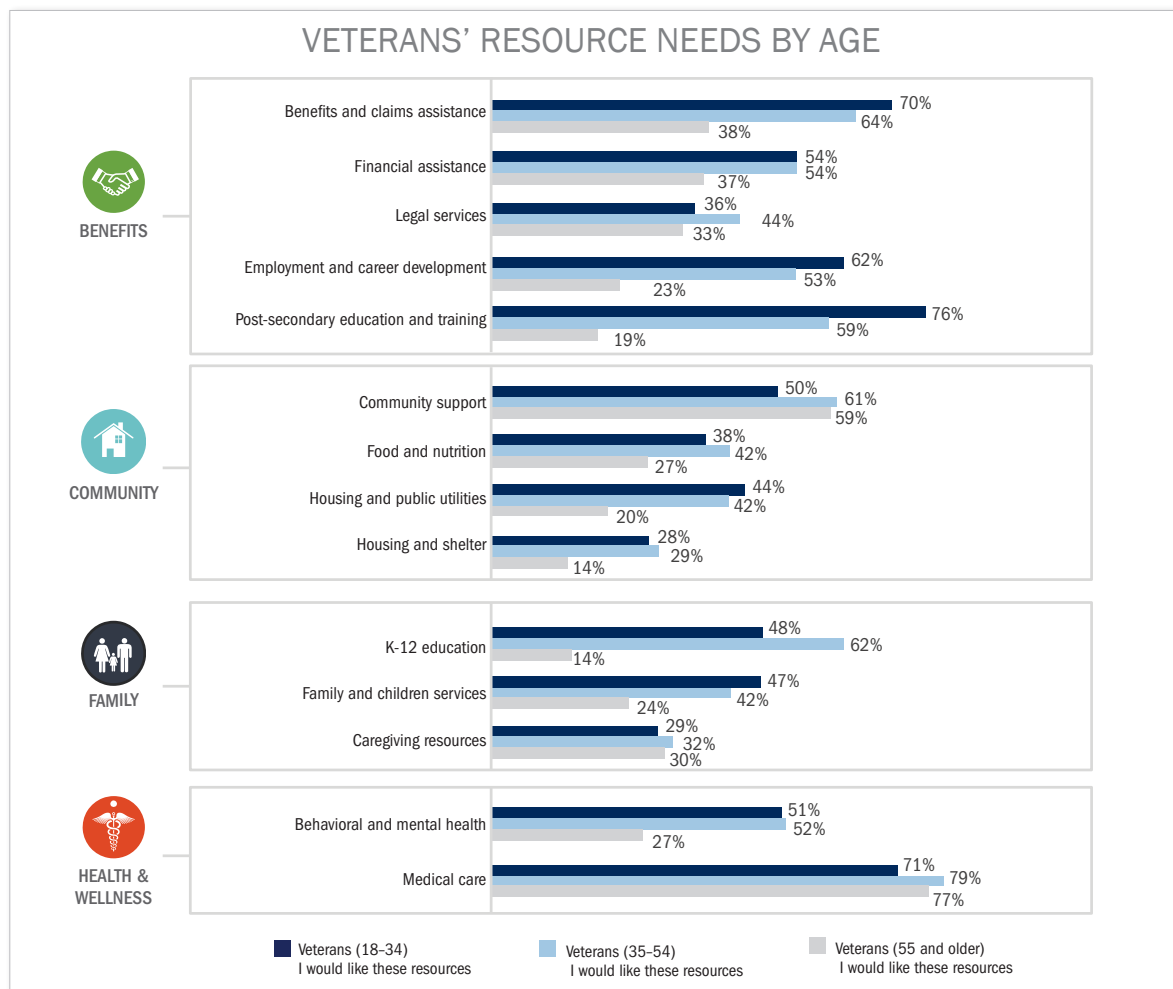
TOP RESOURCE NEEDS BY AGE GROUP

Results were also analyzed and compared by age (18-34), (35-54), and (55 and older) of veteran and active duty participants. Veterans in all three age groups reported medical care along with benefits and claims assistance as resource needs. Veterans (18-34) reported post-secondary education and training as their number one resource need. Veterans (35-54) also reported needing access to resources in K-12 education. Veterans (55 and older) also reported wanting additional resources in community support.

Active duty participants from all age groups reported medical care as their top resource need followed by community support. Active duty service members (18-34) also reported that they would like resources in post-secondary education and training. Active duty service members (55 and older) reported the most need in key resource areas. Nearly 90% (89%) of active duty service members (55 and older) said they would like medical care resources, compared to 70% of active duty (35-54), and 66% of active duty (18-34). Active duty service members (35-54) along with active duty service members (55 and older) also reported K-12 education as top resource needs.



Figure 4: Veterans' Resource Needs by Age



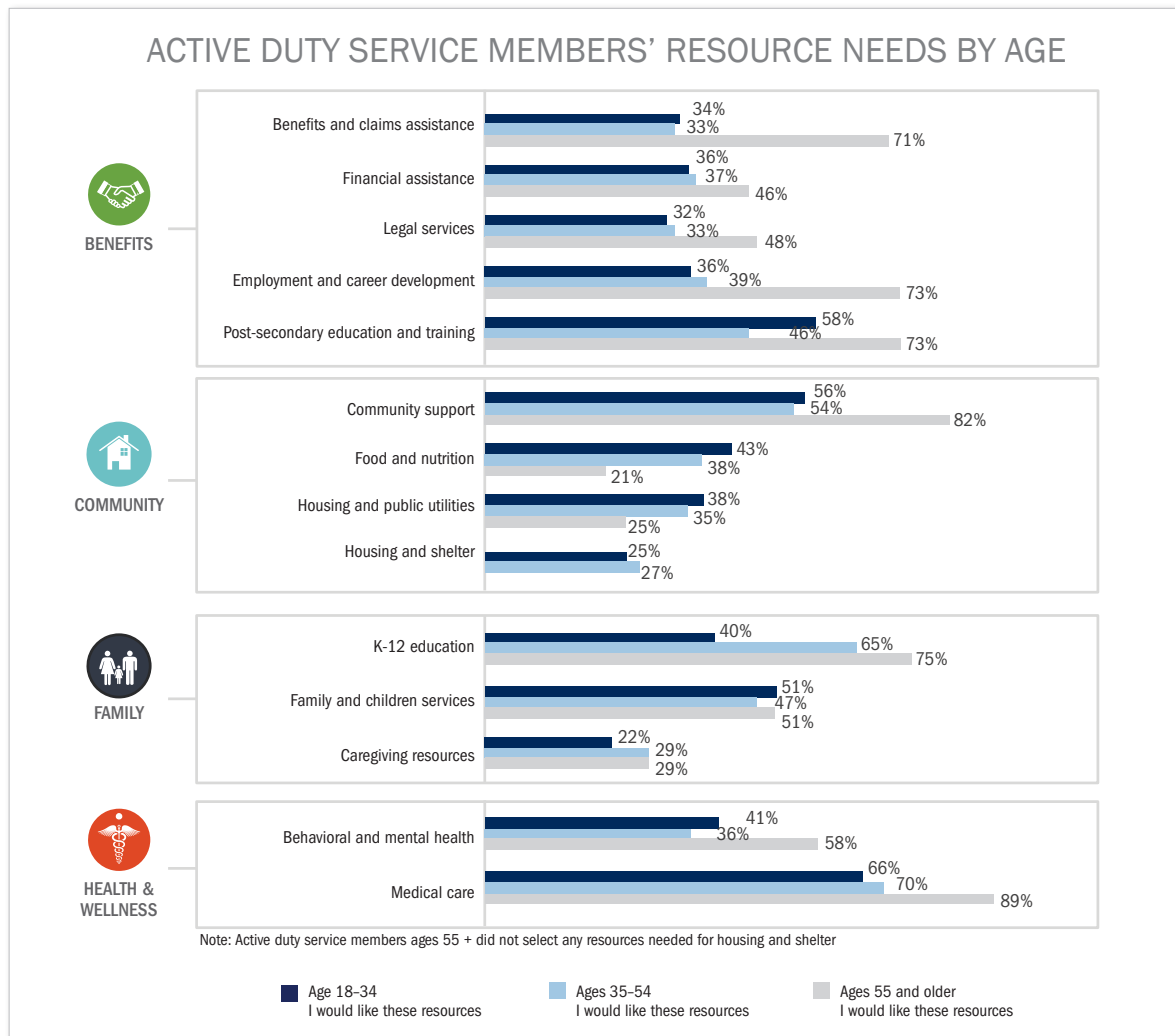
“This outbreak will burden the older veterans the most, since they normally go to the (Naval) hospital for care and medicine. Most of them cannot get a mask to wear and they shouldn’t be going to a hospital at all. Communities need to look out and take care of older veterans.”

-Anonymous Respondent

“As a younger veteran, I am still in the workforce and am the sole income source for my family. My biggest fear right now is that I am asked to choose between my health and my financial well-being, knowing that if I am asked to go back to work, get sick, and am in the unfortunate minority of COVID-19 patients that die.”

-Anonymous Respondent

Figure 5: Active Duty Service Members’ Resource Needs by Age



TOP RESOURCE NEEDS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY

“All providers can assist military families, especially those whose family head is serving her/his country away from home, with connections to her/his loved ones to be able to speak/face time her/him.” -Anonymous Respondent

Results were also analyzed and compared by minority status among veteran and active duty participants. Because of small sample size a “minority” category was created of anyone who selected Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and/or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and a “non-minority” category was created for those that only selected White/Anglo/Caucasian.

Veteran minorities (82%) and veteran non-minorities (76%) reported medical care as their top resource need. Veteran minorities and veteran non-minorities also included community support, along with benefits and claims as top resource needs.

Along with medical care, active duty minority and non-minority participants also reported, K-12 education, and child and family services, as well as community support resource needs.

Minority active duty service members participants also included post-secondary education and training as a top resource need. Veteran minority and active duty minority expressed needing more access to resources in all key areas compared to their non-minority counterparts.

Figure 6: Veterans’ Resource Needs by Racial/Ethnic Minority

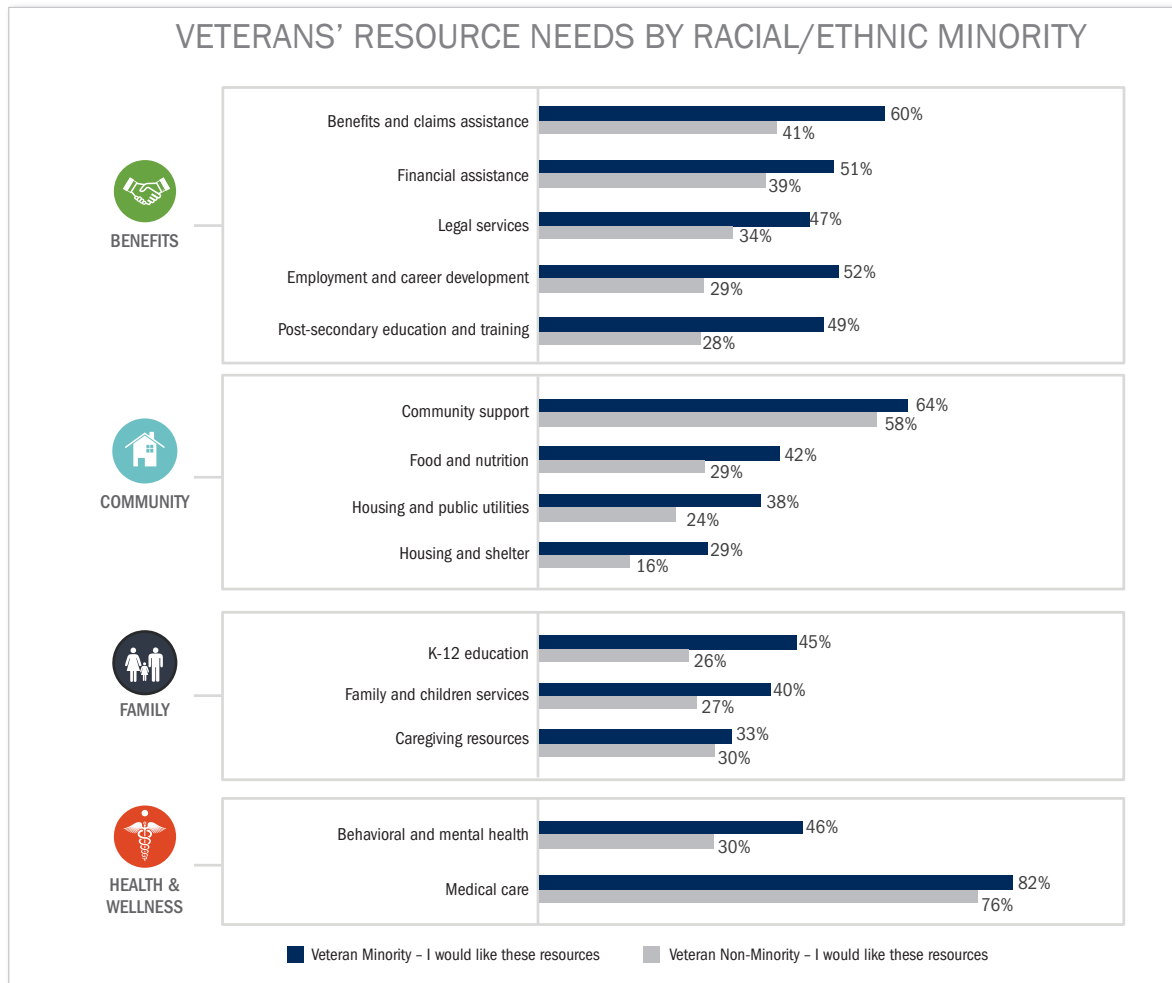
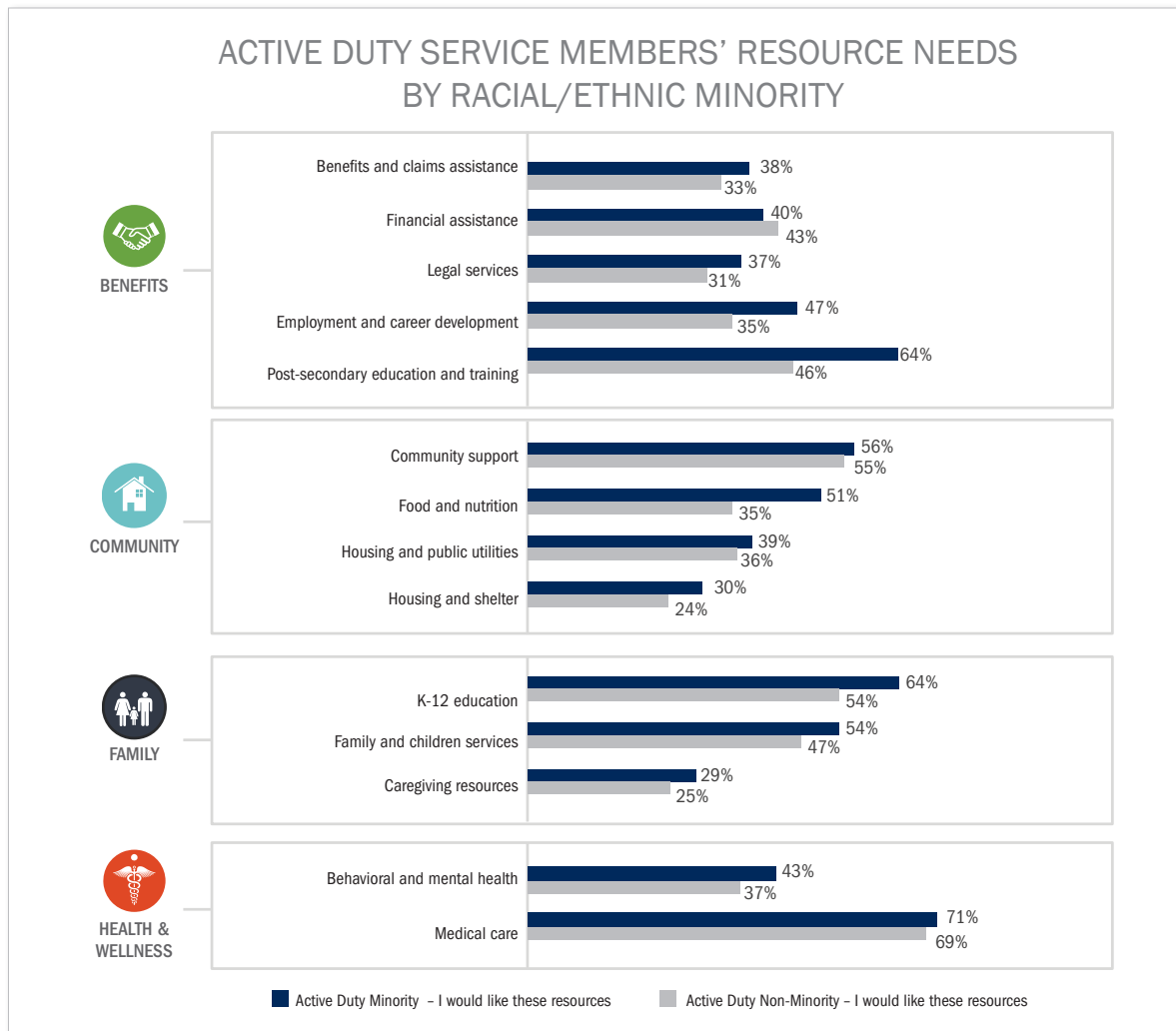




Figure 7: Active Duty Service Members' Resource Needs by Racial/Ethnic Minority



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

As we continue to navigate the new normal and adjust to meet the changing demands of active duty service members, veterans, and their families, it is essential that we stay on top of their overall challenges and needs. The findings from our COVID-19 focused poll reveal widespread concern and resources needed among military and veteran community members together and separately. For example, while both the military and veteran communities listed medical care as their top needed resource, veterans included financial assistance while active duty reported K-12 education as well as post-secondary education and training as top needs. Thus, it is important that stakeholders review, explore, and consider the needs of the military community collectively and independently.

Additionally, knowing which resources are needed is just half the battle. Our findings also show that both veterans and active duty needed help *finding* resources. However, a higher percentage of active duty required more assistance with navigating those services. Thus, it is also imperative that stakeholders review, explore, and consider the distinct needs and navigation difficulties when writing policy, developing grants, and creating programs for veterans, active duty service members, and their families. Based on these findings, we offer the following recommendations for further consideration among stakeholders, including policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

POLICY MAKERS

- ✔ Ensure continuity in policy and programs to make change and support short-term goals as well as long-term changes that align with the current resource needs of veterans, active duty service members and their families. In addition, as resource needs are rapidly changing, especially during these challenging times, make sure that these policies are sustainable.
- ✔ Continue the conversation and continue to strengthen the relationship with researchers supporting veterans, active duty service members, and their families. In addition, make use of research findings and practical experiences to ensure policies are aligned with the current and long-term resource needs of the military population.

GRANT MAKERS

- ✔ Develop specific goals and strategies focused on key areas that align with the emerging resource needs of veterans, active duty service members, and their families.
- ✔ Continue to be an active participant in the funding cycle and to think of how you can further cover the gap when it comes to resource needs for our military community in the short and long-term.
- ✔ Continue to invest efforts that tackle issues on the forefront of our military community, those that will make a lasting impact on veterans and active duty service members and their families within their communities.
- ✔ Do your due diligence. Continue to voice your concerns and challenges when accessing services, and be informed of the research supporting the military community, thus, aligning concerns with the proper funding in an effort to close the gap(s) on the needs of our veterans and active duty populations.

VETERAN SERVICE NONPROFITS

- ✔ Make your organization, programs and services known: redouble your outreach efforts or expand contact lists to veterans and active duty military emphasizing the various resources that your organization has available to help veterans, active duty military, and their families manage their way through these challenging times.
- ✔ Make your organization, programs and services available: develop easy paths of engagement and enrollment for veterans and active duty military; simplify how they connect with your organization and be responsive and flexible in getting them to solutions that meet their current needs.
- ✔ Collaborate with other organizations: depending on your location, explore entities that promote care coordination and outreach.
- ✔ Measure and track your efforts: ensure your existing systems allow you to report on your organization's response-related activities, to order to guide internal strategy and decision making, as well as to inform external stakeholders in such as funders and public sector officials.
- ✔ Continue to build and solidify relationships with veteran and military federal agencies such as the Department of Defense (DoD) or Veterans Affairs (VA), to make sure that they are aware of current active duty, veteran, and military-connected needs.

NOTE: If you are a veteran, service member, or military family member looking for resources, we suggest investigating the existence of collaborative groups, coalitions, and coordinated networks in your community. These entities tend to have a full picture of what services are available, and how to plug you and your family into someone that can help you navigate the landscape. When in doubt, your county Veterans Service Agency or another organization you trust may also be a helpful starting point.

STAY IN TOUCH



p 315.443.0141
f 315.443.0312
e vets@syr.edu
w vets.syr.edu



f t i in y
[@IVMFSyracuseU](#)



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