

RETENTION OF MID-CAREER FEMALE SERVICEMEMBERS

LYNDSAY BAKER | 2022

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I also want to acknowledge my friends and family who have supported me throughout my journey at Batten. Lastly, I owe a tremendous amount to my parents who have given me their unwavering support, challenged me to do my best work, and reminded me to laugh along the way.

DISCLAIMER & HONOR PLEDGE

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other agency.

Additionally, the views and positions expressed in this paper are the author's own in her capacity as a student, and do not represent the United States government, the Colorado National Guard, or official policy.

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lyndsay L. Baker". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lyndsay" being more prominent than the last name "Baker".

Lyndsay L. Baker

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado National Guard (CONG) seeks to increase its retention rate of mid-career female servicemembers. Maintaining force diversity increases innovation and readiness, which are critical to mission success. This report aims to provide substantive recommendations that CONG can implement to increase retention.

Understanding the important separation factors that cause women to leave service earlier than their male counterparts is necessary to outlining potential policies for success. This report reviews the current state of two central separation factors, organizational culture and dependent care, and the obstacles to changing policies surrounding these factors. Analysis of existing policies and practices at the Department of Defense and Army, state legislators, law enforcement, the private sector, and medical academia ultimately inform the recommended policy options.

This report evaluates three alternatives: establishing a best practices catalog, establishing an additional P3 policy advisor duty assignment, and prioritizing funding toward existing equity initiatives. Each alternative will be weighed by effectiveness, feasibility, cost, and adaptability to determine which is the best course of action for CONG to implement.

I recommend CONG establish the best practices catalog to increase information sharing on various diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to improve the retention of female servicemembers. This recommendation also empowers CONG to apply this to other minority groups that serve in the Army National Guard, making it a large value add for my client. Implementing the catalog requires an information collection phase, policy evaluation phase, and policy adaptation phase. This course of action will be the most effective in increasing female retention at the mid-career level, thereby increasing force diversity, innovation, and readiness.

INTRODUCTION

There are 63,000 women in the Army National Guard, comprising 19% of the force (DOD 2020). Retaining these women is essential to maintaining force resiliency, readiness, and lethality. Encouraging women to remain in the Guard and hold mid and senior career positions is also vital to recruiting new servicemembers to join the force. This report seeks to define the problem the Army faces with retaining women in later career positions and establish why this problem is imperative for the Colorado National Guard to solve specifically. The report includes pertinent background information as a foundation for understanding the scope of women's retention. Due to the limited availability of data that is specific to the National Guard or the Army, Department of Defense (DOD) data serves as a substitute in order to speak to larger trends across services. Analysis of relevant existing literature and evidence reveals which initiatives have the most potential for success.

This report also builds upon my previous experience working with the Washington National Guard in partnership with the National Security Innovation Network where my team developed recommendations for improvements to Army policy regarding pregnant soldiers in order to allow for equal opportunities for promotion. The report utilized data collected from 19 interviews with servicemembers and veterans and over 30 blog posts from the Pregnancy & Promotion page on the Defense Innovation Network. Because of my past research specific to improving family planning and pregnancy policies, my APP will focus on recommendations to other issue areas, specifically dependent care and organizational culture, that impact female servicemember retention. This project also extends beyond this technical report as I am partnering with my client through the summer to conduct a survey and interviews to inform recommendations better tailored to CONG.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As of 2020, Female servicemembers are 28% more likely to separate from military service than their male counterparts. Most women cite dependent care, organizational culture, and family planning as the most influential factors in separation (GAO 2020). The Army has a vested interest in retaining female servicemembers because of the investment in training these soldiers to higher ranks. Retaining mid and senior career female soldiers increases force diversity, innovation, and readiness.

CLIENT OVERVIEW

The Colorado National Guard (CONG) is a part of the National Guard, which is under the Department of the Army. The Guard is unique in that soldiers can be deployed both by the governor of their state and the President. Guard soldiers can therefore respond to both domestic emergencies and overseas combat missions. When not deployed, soldiers are required to attend one drill weekend per month and annual two-week training, allowing them to have civilian careers as well (Army National Guard n.d.).

CONG has made fostering an inclusive culture that leverages diversity a priority in their Strategic Guidance Plan for 2030. Leadership has identified that CONG specifically struggles to retain mid-career to senior-level women in their ranks. Increasing efforts to target these female soldiers furthers their mission to ensure war fight and civil support readiness (Adjunct General Colorado National Guard 2021). This problem is of urgent concern to the CONG because high rates of female separation from service result in a loss of diversity, investment from their training, and fewer female mentors for lower-ranked soldiers. CONG has the capability to implement proposed solutions directly dependent on how the solution interacts with national Army policy compared to state-level policies that CONG has oversight over. This project seeks to propose meaningful policy alternatives that the CONG can realistically implement to make lasting change in the retention of female soldiers.

BACKGROUND

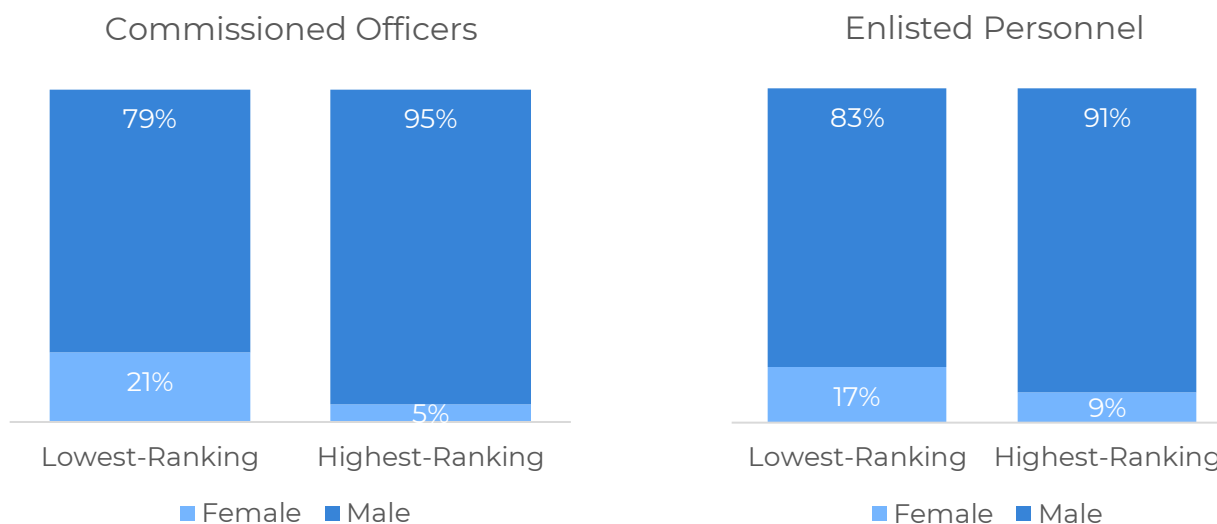
Understanding the extent to which females separate from service and why this is a problem for the CONG is necessary before exploring potential policies. Additionally, examining the existing problems within dependent care and organizational culture will illuminate what policy alternatives must address moving forward. Although family planning policies are an important separation factor, the Army and DOD have recently implemented many changes to address these problems, which are explored in the review of existing policies and evidence section. This background reviews female separation rates, the importance of female soldier retention, and the realities of dependent care and organizational culture policies within the services.

FEMALE SEPARATION RATES

In a review of female retention and promotion in the military, the Government Accountability Office found that women are underrepresented in more advanced stages of leadership. The proportion of women in the highest ranks of officer positions was lower than women in the highest ranks of enlisted personnel. The proportion of women in enlisted (lower) ranks decreased by roughly half from the lowest to highest position whereas the proportion of women in officer (higher) ranks decreased by roughly three quarters from the lowest to highest positions, as depicted in Figure 1 (GAO 2020). This highlights how retaining women in leadership is a concern at all ranks but is especially a problem for mid and senior career women.

Understanding the separation factors that lead to this disproportionate loss of female senior leadership is imperative to improving retention. The following background examines the extent to which organizational culture and dependent care impact women's careers as servicemembers.

Figure 1: The Percentage of Women in Low- and High-Ranking Positions by Commissioned Officers and Enlisted Personnel



IMPORTANCE OF RETAINING MID AND SENIOR CAREER FEMALE SOLDIERS

Retention of female soldiers is important because of the investment spent on training these soldiers. Mid-career soldiers earn \$3,500-7,300 in basic pay per year dependent on years in service for drill, which does not

include training costs, benefits, or bonuses. In the Air Force, for example, it costs between \$5.6 and \$10.9 million cumulatively over the officer's career to train a fighter pilot (which is a mid-career position, up until a Captain/O-3) (Mattock et al. 2019). By losing women later in their careers, there is a larger loss of investment, incentivizing the Guard to specifically retain these later career women.

Female soldiers also increase force diversity, which drives innovation and force effectiveness. In combat, military inequality adversely affects battlefield performance in terms of casualty rates and defection (Lyall 2020). More broadly, the retention of women soldiers is associated with an increased inclusive work environment and driving innovation at all levels (Tarallo 2020). Retaining female soldiers in their mid and senior careers thereby increases readiness and effectiveness of the force.

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture influences the everyday experience of soldiers and ensuring that the work environment is conducive to fostering women's career development is essential to retaining women in leadership positions. Current culture within the military suffers from a lack of female mentors and role models on account of the lower proportion of women in leadership positions (GAO 2020). Proximity and availability of women soldiers in leadership are critical factors in establishing mentorship relationships among women soldiers (McAteer 2016). Additionally, there is a perception of a "good old boy" culture within the military that contributes to sexism and favoritism in common interactions but also leadership selection. In a 2021 report by the National Guard Bureau Office of Complex Investigations, they found that when they surveyed members of the Vermont National Guard, there was a perception of this "good old boy" network and that this culture affects how leaders were selected, personnel assignments, and school selection. In response to this culture, female servicemembers often feel like they have to work harder to prove themselves and are not always treated equally because of their gender (GAO 2020).

Women who become mothers face specific stigmatization within Army culture. Motherhood often triggers false assumptions that women are less competent and less committed to their careers. In both the active, reserve, and Guard components, women face accusations of avoiding deployment through pregnancy, contributing to the stigma surrounding pregnancy in the military (Adams et al. 2020). Former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper issued a

memo in July of 2020 launching an initiative specifically to “prohibit pregnancy-based discrimination” (Sisk 2020), demonstrating the need to address maternal bias across the services.

OBSTACLES TO IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Changing organizational culture is inherently complex because of how ingrained and intertwined norms are within the military (Meredith 2017). The Army and DOD have many initiatives that aim to change culture, like the Army’s Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP), that are required as part of continued education (Army Resilience Directorate n.d.). Some servicemembers indicate that these trainings can become cumbersome because of the frequency of different trainings, which can make them feel less effective (Adams et al. 2020). Additionally, the sheer size of the Army bureaucracy can make it hard to change cultural attitudes quickly, especially considering those in leadership positions must have over a decade of time in service to serve in senior ranks (Baiza n.d.). Required time in service ensures that those most qualified for leadership positions are selected but also has the potential to perpetuate older norms, serving as an obstacle to improving organizational culture.

Another aspect of organizational culture I observed in working with my client was the lack of communication about gender equity or family planning initiatives implemented at the unit or state level. When working both with the Washington National Guard and CONG, a large portion of the data collection focused on determining best practices of other units, states, or services. In interviews with servicemembers across branches, individuals identified the existence of units that had high concentrations of women or women with children because of such best practices (Hylton et al. 2020). We were tasked with seeking these practices out because there was no centralized way to share successful family planning or equity policies. This lack of information sharing across units, states, and services impedes successful policies from implementation and helps perpetuate the lack of awareness servicemembers have of the resources that already exist to assist them.

CURRENT DEPENDENT CARE PROGRAMMING

The DOD operates the largest employer-run dependent care program providing care to over 200,000 families for children from birth to age 12. In fiscal year 2020, military child care programs received \$1.2 billion to operate

its child development centers (CDCs) and offer fee assistance to families when installation child care is unavailable or at capacity. Fee assistance does not cover all costs associated with child care and leaves families responsible for charges above the caps, which are determined individually by each service. In 2019, the fee assistance program provided 36,000 children with child care with \$90 million in funding. The demand for these programs is growing, causing the Navy to create a 3,000-person long waitlist to receive fee assistance (DOD 2020).

DEPENDENT CARE'S IMPACT ON READINESS AND RETENTION

Servicemembers consistently report dependent care to be a top quality-of-life concern, demonstrating CDCs centrality to personal readiness. Advocates for expanded child care in DOD affirm that access to child care improves recruitment, morale, and retention of personnel. Military families additionally indicate that child care issues would be very likely to lead them to leave the military (CRS 2020). The strain of child care also disproportionately affects dual-military couples, who compose only 6% of the active-duty force. Within this subgroup, women are six times more likely to be in a dual military couple than men. Enlisted parents also make up the vast majority of parents in need of child care, meaning that lower-income servicemembers are those most frequently dealing with the lack of available and affordable child care (CRS 2020). This fact demonstrates how improving child care and family planning-related policies impact the retention of all servicemembers and not just women. Therefore, this greatens the imperative to make changes to these policies to not only increase retention of mid-career women but mid-career men who also want to care for their families.

OBSTACLES TO IMPROVING DEPENDENT CARE

The largest obstacle to offering child care to all military families in need is a lack of staffing. The DOD notes this can be attributed to the fact that child care is one of the lowest paying professional fields and lowest paying within the early childhood education occupations, making maintaining a strong child care workforce challenging (CRS 2020). Historically, Congress has underfunded DOD child care programs and received recent criticism for a lack of staffing, facility deterioration, and long waitlists. In response, there is a current initiative in Congress asking for a \$15 billion investment in child care operations facilities (Jowers 2021). Additionally, to address lengthy wait periods for active-duty servicemembers, DOD has changed the priority

process for the waitlists to rank military families above civilian families in need (DOD 2020).

REVIEW OF EXISTING POLICIES AND EVIDENCE

A review of the recent changes to Army family planning policy and DOD-wide retention initiatives is essential to best understand which policies the Army should employ moving forward. The examination of recent changes to Army policy and DOD initiatives for family planning highlights the types of policies that are likely to be implemented quickly. Implementation speed is also affected by the fact that CONG can implement state-level changes to policies. Therefore, analysis of the success of state legislatures looking to other states' policies is essential to determine if CONG should adopt this practice.

Additionally, analysis of dependent care and organizational culture initiatives across other sectors, including law enforcement agencies, the private sector, and academic medicine, will reveal potential solutions that can be applied to the Army. This review focuses specifically on dependent care and organizational culture because of the recent advances in family planning that are already ongoing at the DOD. Because many sectors face similar factors of separation and issues with the retention of female employees, the most successful initiatives can be drawn from the analysis of policies proposed in these sectors. When combined with the research on female retainment in the Army, this review elucidates best practices that can inform the recommendations for the Army.

RECENT CHANGES TO FAMILY PLANNING POLICIES

As of March 2021, women are exempted from physical training for one year after giving birth and then must successfully pass the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT). This is an extension to the previous six-month timeline, which only effectively gave women three months to achieve a passing score when considering most women require 12 weeks of recovery postpartum (Army Public Affairs 2021). This extension can aid soldiers who had C-sections, successive pregnancies, or issues with pelvic floor health achieve passing status. Additionally, as of January 2021, drill-status women are eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave (Rabe 2021). Previously, only active-duty soldiers were granted convalescent leave, primary caregiver leave, and secondary caregiver leave. Current active-duty mothers qualify for six weeks of convalescent leave with an additional six weeks of primary caregiver leave

that must be taken within one year of a qualifying birth event, which includes physical birth and adoption (Shane 2021).

Pregnancy accommodations are currently classified the same way as short-term injuries through a temporary profile. Because the physical capabilities of pregnant soldiers vary greatly, using the same standards as other injuries does not always accurately reflect the capabilities of pregnant soldiers (Department of the Army 2019). Additionally, categorizing pregnancy as a disability reinforces stigmas surrounding pregnancy itself. Previously, Army regulations dictated that pregnant women were not allowed to attend Professional Military Education (PME) because their temporary profile prevents full participation in each course. As of January 2021, soldiers selected for employment who are on a pregnancy or postpartum profile can be temporarily promoted to the next rank and have two years after the expiration of their profile to complete PME (Cox 2020). This new policy enables women to make substantive progress in their careers while having a family.

DOD-WIDE INITIATIVES

In May 2021, DOD made its temporary sabbatical program, the Career Intermission Program (CIP), permanent for active-duty soldiers, Army Reserve, and Active Guard Reserves. The program allows soldiers to transition to the Individual Ready Reserve for no more than three years. Soldiers can use this time to start families, care for ailing parents, attend college, or anything else. The CIP program provides soldiers a stipend of two-thirtieths of their basic pay, regular benefits, and commissary privileges. For every month the soldier takes off in the program, they are obligated to return to service for two months (Brading 2021). A RAND report focused on sabbatical programs for servicemembers found that programs with limited-length leaves generally have a positive return on investment for the retention of officers (Thie 2004).

A 2019 RAND study examining female retention in the Coast Guard, however, indicates mixed reviews on sabbatical programs. In servicemember focus groups, female participants described that the perception after reentry from the Coast Guard Temporary Separation Program (TEMPSEP) is not entirely positive and upon return, members can receive undesirable assignments. The TEMPSEP policy explicitly aims to combat these perceptions but the focus groups demonstrated that these perceptions persist regardless, influencing attitudes toward entry into the program. Yet,

female participants indicated they were happy that the program existed and provided an option between staying in and separating completely.

In an Air Force Institute of Technology dissertation, Astudillo examined the most influential factors affecting female retention of female Air Force officers utilizing statistical analysis of Air Force personnel data up until 2020 (2021). Her results indicate that the number of dependents, number of deployments, marital status, and spouse's career category are the most influential on female retention. She also determined that the resources available to servicemembers are largely not aimed toward female members and are catered toward an older family model that focuses on a working father and stay-at-home mother. The perception of this family model is echoed in the RAND Coast Guard study: in focus groups, male members viewed their female spouses as responsible for childcare and did not view childcare as a large factor in retention (Hall 2019). These studies highlight the importance of dependent care and the need for better information regarding family planning policies for servicemembers.

LESSONS FROM STATE LEGISLATURES: USING STATES AS LABORATORIES

Because CONG has the ability to make changes to equity or family planning policies at the state level, comparison to how state legislatures enact policies may glean insight into how to select policies with the greatest odds of success. Federalism affords states the opportunity to enact different versions of similar legislation, enabling states to act as policy laboratories that react to the successes and failures of different policies and adapt theirs accordingly (Volden 2006). This learning mechanism of political diffusion, when policymakers simplify the search for a solution by selecting an alternative that already has proven success elsewhere, can aid states in adopting policies that are potentially more successful or cost-effective (Berry & Baybeck 2005). Volden demonstrates how the demonstrated success of lowering the uninsured rate among poor children led to an increased rate of states adopting this best practice (2006). Berry and Berry similarly demonstrate how the probability that a state adopted a gas tax increased with the number of neighboring states that adopted the tax (1992). Yet, researchers warn of imitating other governments by copying their policy choices because it may lead to the selection of inappropriate policies for that state (Volden 2006) on account of the differences across states.

LESSONS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

Because of the similarities in the type of work, examining separation factors and retention initiatives of U.S. law enforcement agencies will elucidate helpful recommendations for the Army. Women only constitute 13% of the American police force and face struggles with organizational culture, work schedule, and family planning that impact their decision to separate from the force. Neely finds in “Are Law Enforcement Policies and Practices Rigged Against Women and Mothers?” that generally women in law enforcement resign at higher rates than their male counterparts because of these issues (Neeley 2019). It is important to note that despite the similarities in job duties and separation factors across the police force and military, law enforcement agencies’ larger struggle is with recruiting women, making their retention efforts even more strained (National Institute of Justice 2019).

DEPENDENT CARE PROGRAMS

In a 2001 survey of a large midwestern metropolitan police department, Whetstone found that 40% of female respondents who declined promotion to the supervisor level cited childcare concerns as their main reason to decline, compared to only 20% of male respondents (Whetstone 2001). Yet, in 2019, a study by the Police Executive Research Forum noted that only 8% of responding law enforcement agencies offered childcare services, with 80% of those programs implemented in the last decade (Police Executive Research Forum 2019). This large gap between the demonstrated need for childcare support and actual programming highlights how expanding dependent care programs has a high potential to increase retention of officers.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

From her analysis of female police officer separation, Neely recommends leadership interventions to address prejudicial behavior, gender equity training, and mentorship programs. Because of the “good ole boys club” culture that persists in law enforcement agencies, Neely stresses the need for organizational leaders to discourage prejudicial behavior. In practice, this would be sergeants or chiefs holding themselves and their officers accountable for gender disparities within precincts and harassment. Additionally, Neely notes that interventions more effectively change work culture in the long term when men actively supported gender diversity. Implementing gender equity trainings would empower male officers to contribute to a more positive workplace environment. Finally, Neely

recommends that senior female leaders should offer guidance to lower-level female officers. Creating a networking program provides women with support, knowledge, and promotion opportunities that keep them in the force (Neely 2019).

LESSONS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

As of 2020, women occupy 29% of global senior management roles (Catalyst 2020) and 8% of CEO positions at Fortune 500 companies (Hinchliffe 2021). Women in the workforce leave at higher rates than men 7-12 years into their careers, indicating a similar issue with mid-career and senior-level retention. Private sector metrics are more difficult to interpret because it is hard to track if individuals leave a company but remain in the same sector (Kidder et al. 2015). Analysis of private sector retention efforts targeting dependent care may glean important lessons that can be applied to the Army.

DEPENDENT CARE PROGRAMS

Analysis of the success of changing child care policies will help determine if improving dependent care is a viable policy option. Choudhary investigates the relationship between the cost of child care and the proportion of female managers at the S&P 500 firms. The results indicate that an increase in the cost of child care leads to a decrease in the percent of women in managerial positions and this effect decreases as the child grows from infant to preschool age (Choudhary 2021). This demonstrates the potential burden that finding child care has on women in leadership positions and emphasizes the necessity to ensure equal access to quality dependent care for servicewomen.

Piszczyk examines the relationship between workplace child care initiatives and turnover rates for both men and women in German businesses in the early 2000s. The cross-sectional research found that businesses have lower turnover rates for women in the year after a child care initiative is implemented compared to the year after a childcare initiative is not implemented (Piszczyk 2020). This research indicates that dependent care initiatives have demonstrated success in lowering the separation of women from business and could potentially have the same effect for female servicemembers.

LESSONS FROM MEDICAL ACADEMIA

Another field that struggles to specifically retain mid-career women is academic medicine. Lewiss et al. suggest that this invisibility of academic women physicians at the mid-career stage is caused by an accumulation of micro-inequities. As women stay in the field longer, these subtle disparities that cause women to become less visible and increasingly marginalized build upon each other until there are fewer women in the field by mid-career. Women comprise more than 50% of the healthcare force yet only hold 22% of professor positions, 18% of department chairs, and 17% of medical school dean positions (Lewiss et al. 2020). The career timeline is not compatible with pregnancy and raising a family, which negatively affects a woman's career trajectory (Rochon et al. 2016). Over time, the harassment and culture within academic medicine influence a woman to leave the field. Because women in academic medicine specifically face similar separation factors as women in military service, recommendations from medical academia that focus on these separation factors may provide valuable insight for the Army.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Based on these separation factors, Lewiss et al. recommend gender bias training, mentorship and sponsorship programs, and accountability within equity initiatives. They endorse gender bias training and workshops because these initiatives raise awareness of existing issues within organizational culture (Lewiss et al. 2020). Although few studies report a positive change in work climate, trainings that focus on intentional behavior exchanges among faculty do have an impact specifically on gender equity within the work climate (Devine et al. 2017). Lewiss et al. also recommend mentorship programs to build relationships and skills necessary for the mid-career level (2020). Yet, sponsorship programs may be more effective in retaining women because they offer a relationship dedicated to advocating for a woman's promotion for certain positions (Ayyala 2019). Finally, Lewis et al. discuss how the National Institute of Health has a longstanding policy to promote the inclusion of women on panels and other speaking opportunities but lacks the metrics and enforcement to see meaningful inclusion. They stress the need for accountability within diversity and inclusion programs to ensure that they accomplish their goals (Lewiss et al. 2020).

ANALYSIS

Examining the existing problems within dependent care and organizational culture reveals critical gaps in policies: a childcare system struggling to meet demand, gender and maternal bias that contribute to unequal treatment, and how being in a dual military couple compounds existing issues. Motherhood has an effect on a soldier's career beyond the physical break that giving birth causes because of the stigmas in military culture. Understanding how family planning and dependent care policies interact with organizational culture is essential to creating a policy that can be enacted despite certain stigmas or assumptions.

Recent substantial changes in family planning policies in the Army demonstrate the service's dedication to retaining female soldiers. Just a year ago, many of these initiatives were non-existent, highlighting how policies that can be enacted quickly to address change are more likely to pass. Longer, systemic policies that address organizational culture may be more difficult to implement. Addressing the gaps in dependent care and exploring other avenues for increased retention, similar to that of the CIP program, would likely yield the best results.

Analysis of state legislature habits to learn from the successes and failures of other states highlights how CONG should adopt this approach when considering policies to implement to increase retention. The contextual examples of child healthcare insurance costs and gas taxes demonstrate the influence that states have on one another through political diffusion and how this influence can be positively utilized to simplify the search for effective policies. Because CONG has little information currently on the initiatives of other states, leveraging the policy laboratories of states could be a strategic approach for CONG.

From the research regarding the efficacy of dependent care programs in the private sector, there appears to be strong potential that improving access to dependent care for female soldiers would decrease female turnover, thereby increasing the number of women in mid and senior career positions. Although the existing research pertains to businesses, the relationships between decreased turnover or proportion of women in managerial positions and childcare can be applied to a military setting. This is possible because of the similar separation factors that women cite across sectors with dependent care being one of the most influential.

Reviewing independent analyses of medical academia's and law enforcement agencies' separation factors and retention recommendations provides more complete context to approach developing policy options for female retention in the Army. It is clear that women across sectors face issues with family planning, childcare, and organizational culture. These common themes should then serve as the main targets for policy options because they pose obstacles to women everywhere. Additionally, law enforcement and medical academia recommended implementing mentorship or sponsorship programs and some version of gender bias trainings. This would indicate that these initiatives are broadly accepted and would be easier to enact. This review of literature across sectors elucidated common themes in female separation that are not unique to the Army and identified well-researched interventions that could be implemented rapidly.

ALTERNATIVES & CRITERIA EVALUATION

To improve female retention in CONG, I will evaluate three alternatives: establishing a best practices catalog, establishing an additional P3 policy advisor duty assignment, and prioritizing funding toward existing equity initiatives. Each alternative will be weighed by effectiveness, feasibility, cost, and adaptability to determine which is the best course of action for CONG to implement.

CRITERIA

EFFECTIVENESS

This criterion seeks to measure the extent to which the policy directly addresses separation concerns and would increase retention. Effectiveness also encompasses the extent to which the policy contributes to incremental change or attacks a larger, systemic problem that influences separation. A policy with high effectiveness would directly address a separation factor for women in CONG and would tackle an adaptive issue that impacts retention. A policy with low effectiveness would not address specific separation factors and would solve a technical issue that impacts retention.

FEASIBILITY

Feasibility aims to measure how quickly the policy can be implemented and if there would be any political resistance to the policy. A policy with high feasibility would be able to be implemented at the state level and would require months to a few years to have an impact on retention. A policy with

low feasibility would require approval or implementation at the Army or DOD level and require several years to a decade to have an effect on retention in Colorado.

COST

CONG prioritizes the time that leaders and soldiers must spend on implementing these policies. To measure cost to CONG, policies that build on existing initiatives would be considered less costly compared to something that would need to be built from the ground up. A high-cost solution would require a large investment of leadership time and training of personnel. A lower-cost solution could be implemented at any level and would not require widespread training.

ADAPTABILITY

CONG originally expressed interest in increasing retention more broadly, with women and Hispanics as the focus. Alternatives that can be used by CONG or other guards to address retention more broadly across different minority groups, including Hispanics, is a large value add for my client. Adaptability measures the extent to which the alternative can apply to other contexts to increase retention at CONG. A policy with high adaptability would encompass and be applicable to DE&I initiatives as a whole. A policy with low adaptability would specifically address factors that apply only to female soldiers.

ALTERNATIVE 1: ESTABLISH BEST PRACTICES CATALOG

Currently, there is no communication across state National Guards to communicate existing or planned gender equity or family planning policies. The states lack communication and the ability to learn best practices from different states. Borrowing the structure of the Pollution Prevention (P2) Catalog from the Army Environmental Command, the National Guard should establish a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion catalog. The P2 catalog enables installations across the Army to upload information on technology or practices they use to minimize pollution. The catalog provides contact information so that if another installation wants to use the technology or practice in a listing, they can reach out to someone at the home installation for more information, minimizing operating costs (U.S. Army Environmental Command 2021). This catalog would enable different states to collaborate on successful initiatives to address retention across different DE&I areas and learn which things may be easy to implement on a state level. This will also

increase awareness for DE&I initiatives across the Guard and enable individual states to make more informed policy decisions when attempting to address different soldiers' concerns.

EFFECTIVENESS

Although the catalog itself does not directly address separation factors, the potential for this dedicated information-sharing to directly address multiple factors is very likely. The catalog targets the institutional issue of a lack of communication across states and therefore addresses the more adaptive component of retention. This alternative seeks to remedy a larger systemic problem that can have a large effect on retention once established.

FEASIBILITY

The catalog may require some centralized management but would largely be contributed by individual states or units. Because the catalog does not require any changes in policy and instead encourages the sharing of existing policies, this would take very little time to implement. The Army has also encouraged the sharing of best practices and, therefore, there would be little institutional resistance to establishing the catalog.

COST

Because this alternative only adds an additional reporting requirement, the costs of implementation include a minimal additional administrative task are low. The catalog builds upon an existing information-sharing framework within the Army, lowering the cost in time investment. To estimate the monetary cost, this additional administrative task would require two hours biweekly. This translates to a labor cost of \$1,563 annually, as estimated in the Appendix.

ADAPTABILITY

The catalog is inherently adaptable because it can encompass any initiative that states or units have seen increase retention, soldier morale, or DE&I. The catalog is not limited to gender equity policies and encourages states and units to share successful best practices that can target a variety of populations, making it extremely adaptable.

ALTERNATIVE 2: ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL P3 ADVISOR DUTY ASSIGNMENT

In order to address a culture that lacks knowledge about pregnancy, postpartum, and parenting (P3), CONG should create an additional duty assignment to be a P3 advisor at the brigade and battalion levels. The P3 Advisor duties are adapted from a proposed program at the Wisconsin Army National Guard and seek to increase the information soldiers have regarding P3 policies (Hellenbrand 2021). Right now, P3 policies are scattered across at least 25 different Army Regulations and DOD policies, thereby increasing the barriers for soldiers to understand what resources and support are available to them throughout their careers (Clarke 2020).

The P3 Advisor would advise and assist Commanders on the rights and care of pregnant and postpartum soldiers in addition to serving as a liaison for soldiers and leaders to provide guidance and resources. Duty requirements would include obtaining HIPAA certification within 90 days of assignment and attending the P3 Advisor Workshop annually (Hellenbrand 2021). This utilizes existing frameworks within the Army to educate soldiers and remove some of the burden on female soldiers to be experts on all policies surrounding family planning. This alternative would also contribute to normalizing P3 policies by adding them to duty assignments, thereby decreasing the stigma around such issues.

EFFECTIVENESS

The P3 duty assignment specifically addresses multiple separation factors for women. This alternative also addresses the institutional issue of a lack of general awareness of P3 policies and attempts to remedy this systemic challenge that contributes to the stigma around such policies. By normalizing these policies into an assigned duty, the policy has potential to make lasting systemic change.

FEASIBILITY

Adding the duty assignment would occur at the state level. Because this alternative is based on efforts in place at the WIANG, establishing the details of the position would not slow implementation but getting approval to add an entire duty assignment may take several months to even get approved. This would then require some months after that to assign soldiers to the duty assignment and get the position up in running.

COST

The additional duty assignment would only require additional training of one individual in units that adopt the P3 advisor duty. There would be some initial time investment required to train the soldiers but this largely builds on existing Army frameworks to divide responsibilities. There would also be an opportunity cost as the soldiers could be fulfilling a different duty, which is estimated to be valued at \$7,680, as noted in the Appendix.

ADAPTABILITY

The P3 duty assignment specifically addresses factors that impact female separation but do apply to parents more generally. This, however, does not make the position adaptable to address retention concerns with other minority groups unless another duty assignment is made to address other gaps in policy that other groups may experience. Therefore, this alternative may not be the most valuable to CONG for retention of other groups.

ALTERNATIVE 3: PRIORITIZE FUNDING FOR EXISTING EQUITY INITIATIVES

The Army and DOD have made substantial improvements to P3 policies in the last several years. The implementation of these policies, however, lags behind their publication. For instance, the Army Directive 2015-37 called for soldiers to have access to lactation rooms as soon as command determined how to best support them (Secretary of the Army 2015). Yet, some commands are still struggling to acquire funding for the lactation rooms in 2022 (Hellenbrand 2022). The CONG should issue guidance to prioritize allocating funds to policies that address P3 or equity concerns. Simultaneously, CONG should do a review of which policies their commands are unable to meet because of budget concerns.

EFFECTIVENESS

Prioritizing funding toward equity initiatives specifically addresses separation factors that women face because the policies that are not being immediately funded specifically seek to address these issues. This policy, however, solves a more technical aspect of retention because it aims to ensure the execution of an existing initiative. It does not directly address issues with organizational culture or information sharing.

FEASIBILITY

Adjusting budgeting priorities is incredibly difficult to do and would take time to get approval from leadership before implementing. Even once approved to readjust the priorities, the projects still need to win funding. Once funded, installing a lactation room, for example, may take several months. The implications on retention would be more long-term.

COST

Shifting budgetary priorities does not require any training of personnel and operates within the existing budgetary weighting system. Because there are multiple initiatives that require higher budgetary priority, this cost estimate utilizes lactation room access as a case study. The opportunity cost of stalling the implementation of lactation rooms estimates the lost return on investment. Installing a lactation room would have an estimated return on investment of \$3,417-\$12,747 in increased worker productivity and health, as estimated in the Appendix.

ADAPTABILITY

This policy can be adapted to shift priorities toward policies that address DE&I more broadly or retention of other minority groups. These initiatives would have to be implemented at the DOD or Army level, which makes this a policy that can be adapted retroactively to supplement the other policies once put in place.

OUTCOMES MATRIX

| | ALTERNATIVE 1 | ALTERNATIVE 2 | ALTERNATIVE 3 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| EFFECTIVENESS | Medium | High | Medium |
| FEASIBILITY | High | Medium | Low |
| COST | Low | Medium | High |
| COST VALUE | \$1,563 | \$7,680 | \$3,417-\$12,747 |
| ADAPTABILITY | High | Low | High |

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the predicted outcomes, I recommend that CONG establish a best practices catalog for DE&I practices across states and units. Although it is not the most effective alternative because it does not directly address specific separation factors, it is very feasible for CONG to implement and does not require high costs in terms of leadership time commitment or in tangible labor costs. The catalog confronts the systemic issue of fractured information sharing across states and units, making it more broadly effective while leveraging existing policies that are in place and, potentially, positively impacting retention in other locations.

The previous success of the Pollution Prevention Catalog demonstrates the Army's larger interest in increasing sharing of best practices across installations and commands. Because the DE&I catalog would build off the Pollution Prevention Catalog's framework and implementation process, there is a clear path to follow and decreasing the burden on individuals to increase the odds of policy take-up. Because different units have previously reported to an Army policy catalog, they will more easily be able to successfully engage with the proposed catalog. This recommendation also provides CONG with a variety of policy options and connects them with those who were already successful at implementation. CONG can then assess which policies work best for them by comparing similar or different states and selecting those that seem most applicable.

The catalog also includes DE&I initiatives more broadly, which makes it the most adaptable recommendation that increases the number of policy options available. CONG can expand the catalog to examine how to best increase retention of their Hispanic population as well as women. This would follow a similar implementation framework but would require slightly different analysis of the policies in the catalog to tailor them to Hispanic soldier populations.

IMPLEMENTATION

ESTABLISHING THE CATALOG

Modeled after the Army's Pollution Prevention Catalog, which is published every year to increase information sharing across Army installations, the DE&I Catalog aims to share best practices of DE&I policies across National Guard units and states to increase retention of a diverse force.

This reduces the burden on individual units and states to establish policies from the ground up and minimizes project operational costs because of the increase in information. The catalog should outline these goals, the scope of the project, and define what policies CONG is looking for (whether that be focused specifically on women or include other minority groups). Each policy included in the catalog should include a description, benefits, implementation cost, cost avoidance (savings), recurring costs, return on investment, and points of contacts for those who implemented or oversee the policy.

Submissions for the catalog should be solicited first at the CONG unit level to gather best practices across the state. This would require surveying unit leadership to investigate what policies are currently in place that target DE&I and result in increased unit resiliency and retention. Then, using the information learned from the internal Colorado state process, the initiative should be broadened to capture policies from across states. This should be done by reaching out to Equal Opportunity Offices and known advocates of P3 or DE&I initiatives, such as LTC Shannon Hellenbrand who consulted on this project and leads the Wisconsin Army National Guard's P3 initiatives. Leveraging the formal and informal information networks is essential to gathering a diversity of policies.

ASSESSING POLICIES IN THE CATALOG

Once the policies are collected in the catalog, CONG must then analyze which are most appropriate to adopt. CONG should establish criteria to weigh which possible policies would be the best to implement. These criteria should be based on the criteria established in the findings section of this report and incorporate any changes to the project mission or additional criteria from leadership. Following the formatting of the previous section should minimize additional work done by CONG in the selection process and make selecting the best option more streamlined.

The best practices from Colorado units should be reviewed first to see what is already within CONG's capabilities to enact just on a larger scale. Then, CONG should look to states that have similarly sized Guard populations, such as Connecticut, Nevada, or West Virginia, or have similar demographics or retention rates to Colorado (Defense Manpower Data Center 2021). This will help CONG see what is capable with a similar level of resources available, which may be different than if looking at states that have the highest retention rates. Reviewing the states with the smallest gaps between male

and female retention would also be beneficial to see how these may be adaptable within CONG's limitations.

STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT CHOSEN POLICIES

Once CONG selects its policy or policies from the catalog to adopt, utilizing the following strategies should help speed implementation. First, leverage the connections made from the catalog itself: the contact information for the person who implemented the policy elsewhere will be included and enables CONG leadership to learn from those who have already gone through this process. Be sure to note their keys to success, setbacks or obstacles, or strategies they used to get the particular policy implemented and how their policy can be altered to fit Colorado's circumstances. Establishing this network of relative policy experts is the most powerful thing about the catalog so be sure to use it.

Then, be sure to establish broad coalitions within CONG. Get buy-in from senior leadership as well as individual soldiers who are impacted by these policies. By broadening the support base for the policy, CONG will have more leverage when attempting to enact the policy and when actually implementing it. Because there may be initial resistance to change, ensuring broad support will make the transitional period less taxing on unit morale or lessen the burden on leadership to implement the change. Lastly, bolster the policy proposal with data. The catalog proves this policy has been successful somewhere else, which is incredibly powerful information. Incorporating this with soldier testimonials and feedback from leaders will strengthen the case for enacting the policy and help CONG implement the change quickly, thereby increasing retention as soon as possible.

CONCLUSION

Seeing the great changes that have been made to family planning and pregnancy policies over the last year highlights the momentum behind implementing policies to address the retention of women and, more broadly, all soldiers. These successful circumstances present CONG with a unique window of opportunity that they must seize and determine the best policies to positively impact retention. Establishing the catalog and increasing information sharing on DE&I initiatives is the first step in ensuring that the collection of policies leads to concrete changes in CONG policy. Expanding the catalog's reach to other states will be the most effective way to

accumulate the largest diversity in policy options. Once acquired, a careful review of these policies using the criteria in this report will streamline the process and enable a quick decision of what policy to adopt. To implement the selected policy efficiently, CONG must utilize the catalog's supportive network and broad coalitions, which will result in positively impacting the retention of mid and senior-career female soldiers.

This report serves as interim recommendations for CONG. In the next few months, I will continue to partner with LTC German and Batten's National Security Policy Center to release a survey to collect better demographic information and data on separation factors. We then plan to conduct interviews to follow up on the survey data to bolster our qualitative data and better inform my policy analysis. After this data collection phase, I will utilize the research of this report to present recommendations better tailored to the specific needs of CONG servicemembers.

APPENDIX

Alternative 1: Establish Best Practices Catalog

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Average Hourly Compensation for O-2 with 6 YIS | \$32 (Army 2022) |
| Anticipated Hours of Work per Month | 4 |
| Calculation of Hourly Rate X Hours X Months | 4 X 12 X \$32 |
| Estimated Cost | \$1,563 |

Alternative 2: Establish Additional P3 Advisor Duty Assignment

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Average Hourly Compensation for O-2 with 6 YIS | \$32 (Army 2022) |
| Anticipated Hours of Work per Month | 20 |
| Calculation of Hourly Rate X Hours X Months | 20 X 12 X \$32 |
| Estimated Cost | \$7,680 |

Alternative 3: Prioritize Funding Toward Existing Equity Initiatives

| | |
|--|---|
| Estimated Cost of Lactation Room Set Up | \$1,139 -\$4,249 (Business Wire 2018) |
| Estimated Return on Investment to Cost of Lactation Room Ratio | 3:1 (Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services n.d.) |
| Calculation of Cost x ROI Ratio | $\$1,139 \times 3 = \$3,417$ $\$4,249 \times 3 = \$12,747$ |
| Estimated Return on Investment | \$3,417-\$12,747 |

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