



Caring for Children and Teens in Military Caregiving Families: A Three-Part Professional Development Training for Healthcare Providers and Care Teams

Project History

In April 2021, [Joining Forces](#) (a White House initiative to support military families) partnered with the [Elizabeth Dole Foundation](#) and [Wounded Warrior Project](#) to launch [Hidden Helpers](#). The 60+ member organizations in the Hidden Helpers coalition seek to fill gaps in supports and services for the 2.3 million children of wounded, ill or injured service members or veterans, and to increase awareness of their unique needs.

[Nemours Children's Health](#) was the first pediatric health system to join the Hidden Helpers coalition and is part of the Campaign for Inclusive Care, a clinical transformation effort aimed at making health care environments more responsive to the needs of caregiving children and youth within military and veteran families.

At a [White House event](#) in November 2021, the partners behind Hidden Helpers announced a series of commitments to address gaps and needs identified in the first major research study focused on military caregiver children and adolescents, [Hidden Helpers at the Frontlines of Caregiving: Supporting the Healthy Development of Children from Military and Veteran Caregiving Homes](#). Nemours Children's Health committed to create, in collaboration with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, continuing education resources aimed at increasing the ability of health care providers to understand and support the needs of Hidden Helpers. The continuing education course is intended to provide a high-level overview and is supplemented by a resource document with links for taking a deeper dive into topics addressed in the modules.

Course Overview

["Caring for Children and Teens in Military Caregiving Families: A Three-Part Professional Development Training for Healthcare Providers and Care Teams"](#) was created in response to findings from a 2021 groundbreaking study by Mathematica, made possible through support from the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Wounded Warrior Project, and the Lilly Endowment. The study found that there are approximately 2.3 million children and teens under the age of 18 living with a Veteran with at least one disability. Many of these children and teens are proud to support their wounded, ill, or injured family member, but they need more support to foster healthy development. According to Mathematica,

children and teens living in caregiving homes are more likely than children and teens in non-caregiving homes to experience high levels of stress, burnout, fatigue, anxiety, and depression. They're also more likely to experience stigma and isolation from friends, family, and their community; and have difficulties in school.

The course is housed on the [continuing education platform of Nemours Children's Health](#). It is publicly available. There is no cost to create a user account on the platform or to complete the course.

Intended Audience: This three-part training is designed for primary, specialty, and behavioral health care providers and care team members who see children and teens from military and veteran caregiving families.

Goal: The training series is intended to increase the ability of primary, specialty, and behavioral health care providers and care team members to understand and support the needs of children and teens from military and veteran caregiving families. In support of the goal, the training videos will:

- I. Provide an overview of the impact of family caregiving on Hidden Helpers and their well-being.
- II. Share strategies to support and acknowledge the vital role of Hidden Helpers in caregiving families.
- III. Apply trauma-informed care principles in building trust and rapport with caregivers to encourage open communication and information sharing.

The recommendations offered in this series were informed by more than 200 survey and focus group responses from parents and guardians of children and teens growing up in military caregiving homes as well as the experts featured in the presentation.

Module 1: An Introduction to Hidden Helpers (30 minutes; .5 CEUs)

Learning Objectives:

- I. Recall the definition of military and veteran caregivers and Hidden Helpers.
- II. Explain the roles and responsibilities of family caregivers and Hidden Helpers in caregiving.
- III. Understand the need for providing care to children and teens in military and veteran families via a holistic and supportive approach.

Narrated by: Megan Powell, Dole Caregiver Fellow

Featured Speakers:

- Kylie Briest, a Hidden Helper, South Dakota
- Silvia Lopez, Dole Caregiver Fellow and mother of five Hidden Helpers and a grandmother from Delaware
- Meghan Lines, PhD, Clinical Director, Integrated Primary Care and School-Based Behavioral Health at Nemours Children's Health. Dr. Lines also serves as a Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Sidney Kimmel Medical College, at Thomas Jefferson University.
- Amanda Lochrie, PhD, Chief of the Division of Psychology at Nemours Children's Health

Module 2: Letting Families and Patients Lead: Understanding What Being Part of a Military Caregiving Family Means to the Patient (36 minutes; .5 CEUs)

Learning Objectives:

- I. Recall key concepts and principles of trauma-informed care and its relevance in supporting Hidden Helpers.

- II. Provide examples of how healthcare professionals can utilize trauma-informed care strategies during patient visits.
- III. Explain why some Hidden Helpers and/or their parent(s) may be concerned about sharing details of the child or teen's caregiving role or the realities of their military or Veteran caregiving household.

Narrated by: Lisell Perez-Rogers, Director, Clinical Education and Mental Wellness, Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Featured Speakers:

- Todd Glass, MD, Chief, Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Nemours Children's Hospital
- Meghan Lines, PhD, Clinical Director, Integrated Primary Care and School-Based Behavioral Health at Nemours Children's Health; Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Sydney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University
- Laura Shaffer, MD, Pediatric Orthopedics and Sports Medicine, Nemours Children's Specialty Care
- Jake Adkinson, Hidden Helper, Arizona
- Anne Adkinson, Dole Caregiver Fellow and mother to 2 Hidden Helpers, Arizona

Module 3: Supporting the Mental Health of Hidden Helpers (45 minutes; .75 CEUs)

Learning Objectives

- I. Explain why some military and Veteran families may be hesitant to share information about a child or teen's behavioral health issues.
- II. Describe barriers to mental health care for caregiving families, including limited providers in insurance systems.
- III. Apply strategies to assess child well-being in a holistic manner, including sleep, school performance, and other health-impacting aspects of daily life.
- IV. Explain why healthcare professionals who treat Hidden Helpers should be knowledgeable about PTSD and secondary PTSD.

Narrated by: Lisell Perez-Rogers, Director, Clinical Education and Mental Wellness, Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Featured Speakers:

- Kristopher Rotenberry, Hidden Helper, Maryland
- Liz Rotenberry, Caregiver and Mother to 4 Hidden Helpers, Maryland
- Todd Glass, MD, Chief, Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Nemours Children's Hospital
- Meghan Lines, PhD, Clinical Director, Integrated Primary Care and School-Based Behavioral Health at Nemours Children's Health; Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Sydney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University
- Daniel Poberesky, MD, Pediatric Radiologist and Chief Medical Officer of Nemours Children's Hospital Florida and Nemours Children's Health in Central Florida, Air Force Veteran