

They Don't Know What They Don't Know: Using Retrospective Pretest to Adjust for Response Bias

*Bettie Ann Carroll, JD CFLE, **Dennis Orthner, PhD, & **Steven Day, MS

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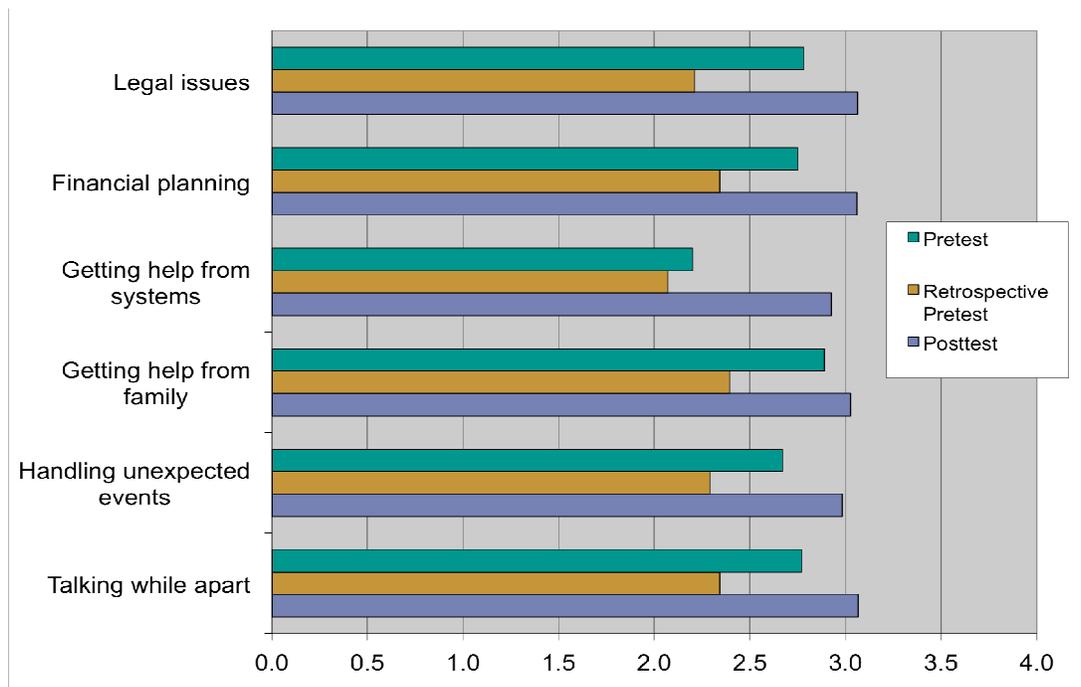
The Essential Life Skills for Military Families (ELSMF) Program strengthens marriages and couple relationships among Military Reserve and National Guard families via an 8 hour workshop series held during military drill weekends. The ELSMF Program prepares single service members and married/unmarried couples for deployment by focusing on skills that help them effectively manage the relationship, financial, and legal matters in their lives. The program is a collaborative between academic programs at three North Carolina Universities, local guard and reserve centers, and NC Cooperative Extension.

Results from rigorous evaluation of 1363 service members and spouses who have completed the program demonstrate that participants are highly satisfied with the content and usefulness of the sessions. Among the evaluation participants, 89% are in Reserve Component personnel or family members, 91% enlisted, 59% male, and 30% deployed in the past 3 years (9 months average).

Some of the most encouraging results of this project are shown in the Figure below where Actual Pretests are compared to Retrospective Pretest and Posttest Results. These results demonstrate that most Reserve Component service members begin the program thinking they are quite competent to deal with the various issues and skills discussed in the program, but leave the program realizing their earlier perceived competence was exaggerated and having realized significant gains from participating in the program.

Overall the ELSMF program is highly regarded by participants, who demonstrate high levels of satisfaction with the program and who rate the value and usefulness of its content highly. Program participants also report that the program produces positive changes in their lives, by helping them feel more prepared for deployments and better equipped for success in their relationship with their partner. The ELSMF program is reported to be a fun and engaging experience that leaves its participants with new skills and knowledge for successfully dealing with the demands of military family life.

If a deployment occurs in the next 12 months, how well could your family manage the following?



Affiliations:

* East Carolina Univ

** UNC-Chapel Hill

For further information, Contact:

carrolle@ecu.edu
or 252-737-1850