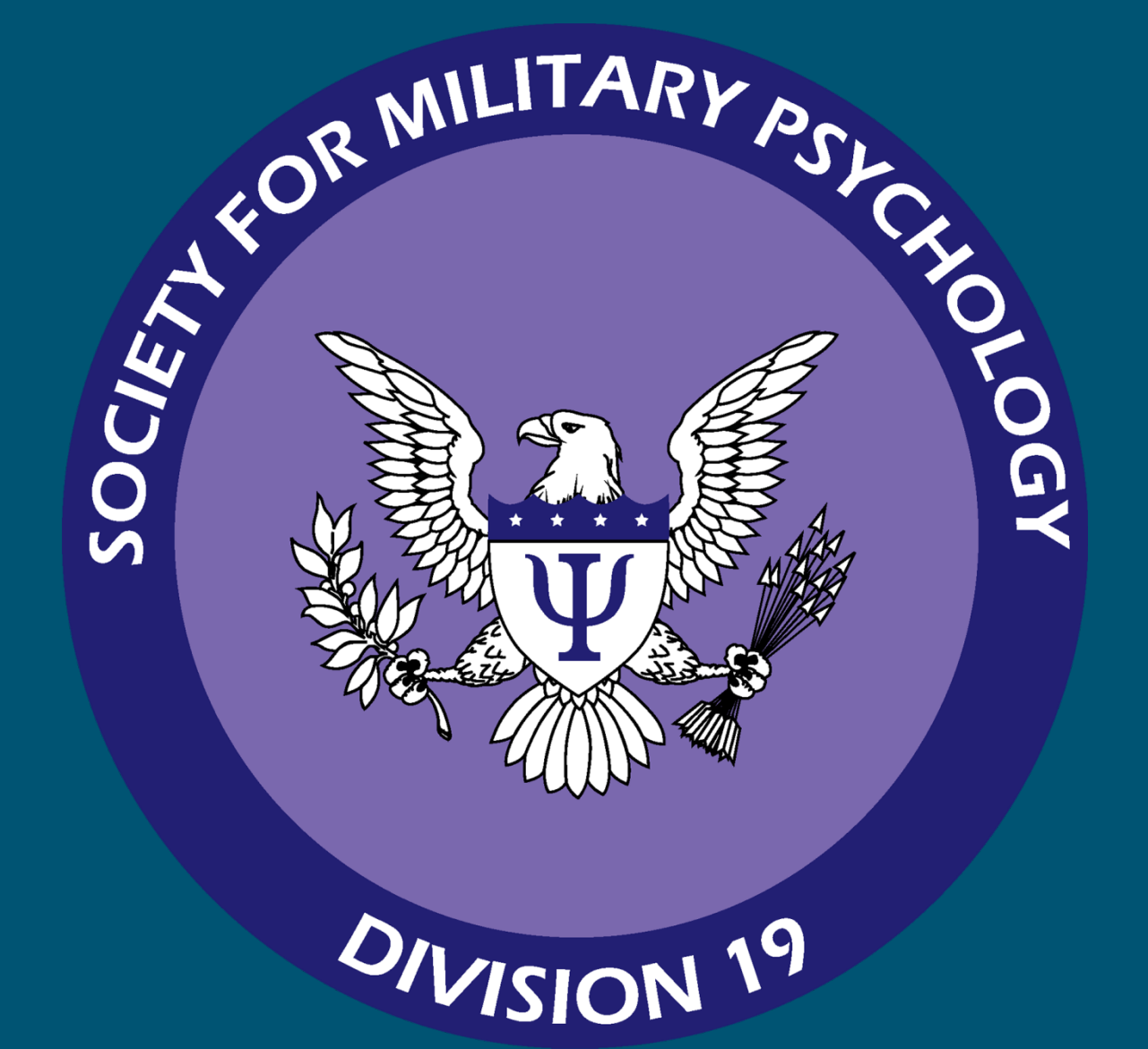




From Grief to Growth: Positive Adaptation in Children Following the Death of a Military Loved One*



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Introduction

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) creates meaningful connections through peer mentorship. Good Grief Camps are for bereaved military children where helpers volunteer their time to support a child grieving the death of a military loved one. We examine the impact of TAPS Good Grief Camp and Youth Programs on attendees who return after the age of 18 to serve as volunteer Legacy Mentors. Anecdotal evidence suggests they find this volunteer service richly rewarding and adds positive meaning to their own loss. This study will evaluate whether TAPS Legacy Mentors (LMs) show more Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) and resilience (hardiness) than controls (graduates of TAPS Good Grief Camp who are not LMs, or a sample of military survivors who experienced loss under the age of 18 and are now between the ages of 18–30 years of age.)

Methods

Data Collection:

- ★ **Semi-Structured Interviews**
- ★ **Survey** including measures of **grief symptoms** of well-being, hardiness, and post-traumatic growth (PTG) with larger sample size.

Participants:

- ★ **Qualitative:**
N = 85 eligible
N = 6 Legacy Mentors, 3 Male, 3 Female
- ★ **Quantitative:**
N = 4,249 Email distribution for all Young Adults including Legacy Mentors
n = 163 Responses

Results

Thematic Analysis of 6 Qualitative Interviews

Themes	LM1	LM2	LM3	LM4	LM5	LM6
Lasting and meaningful bonds with peers/mentors	☑	☐	☑	☑	☑	☑
Importance of family in their experience of grief	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
GGC as an open and safe space to share about grief	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
"Giving back" as a reason for returning as a Legacy Mentor	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☐
A sense of belonging or of being "not alone"	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Continued connection with the military community	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☐
Grief as a continuous or evolving process	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑

NOTE: All interviews were scored by 2 independent (blind) raters, with 89% agreement on major themes identified



"I avoided talking about my dad because nobody truly understood what our military life was all about. At the TAPS Good Grief Camp, for the first time, I was comfortable talking about my father - sharing his story, honoring his memory, and expressing how his loss impacted me."

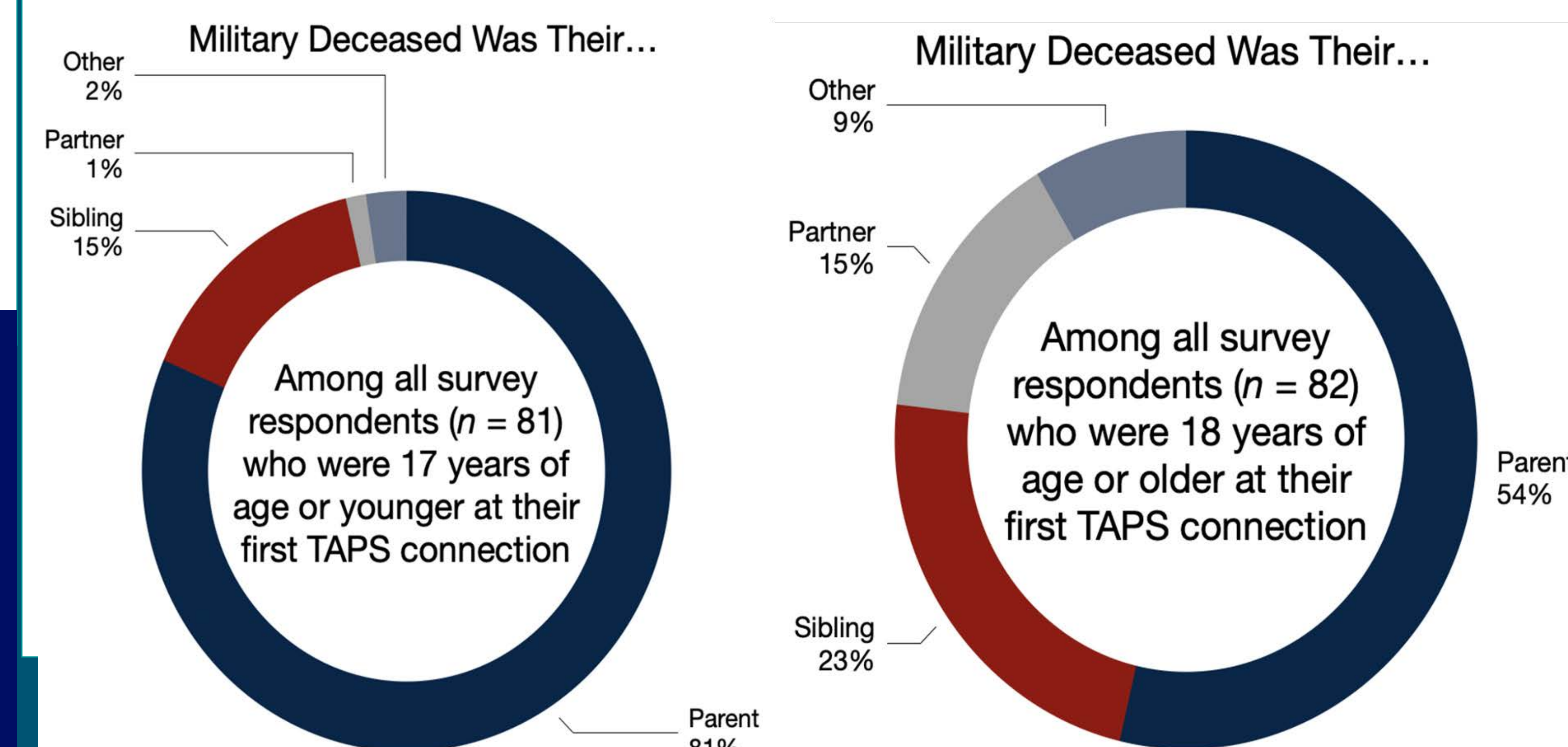
-Nathaniel Lee, Legacy Mentor



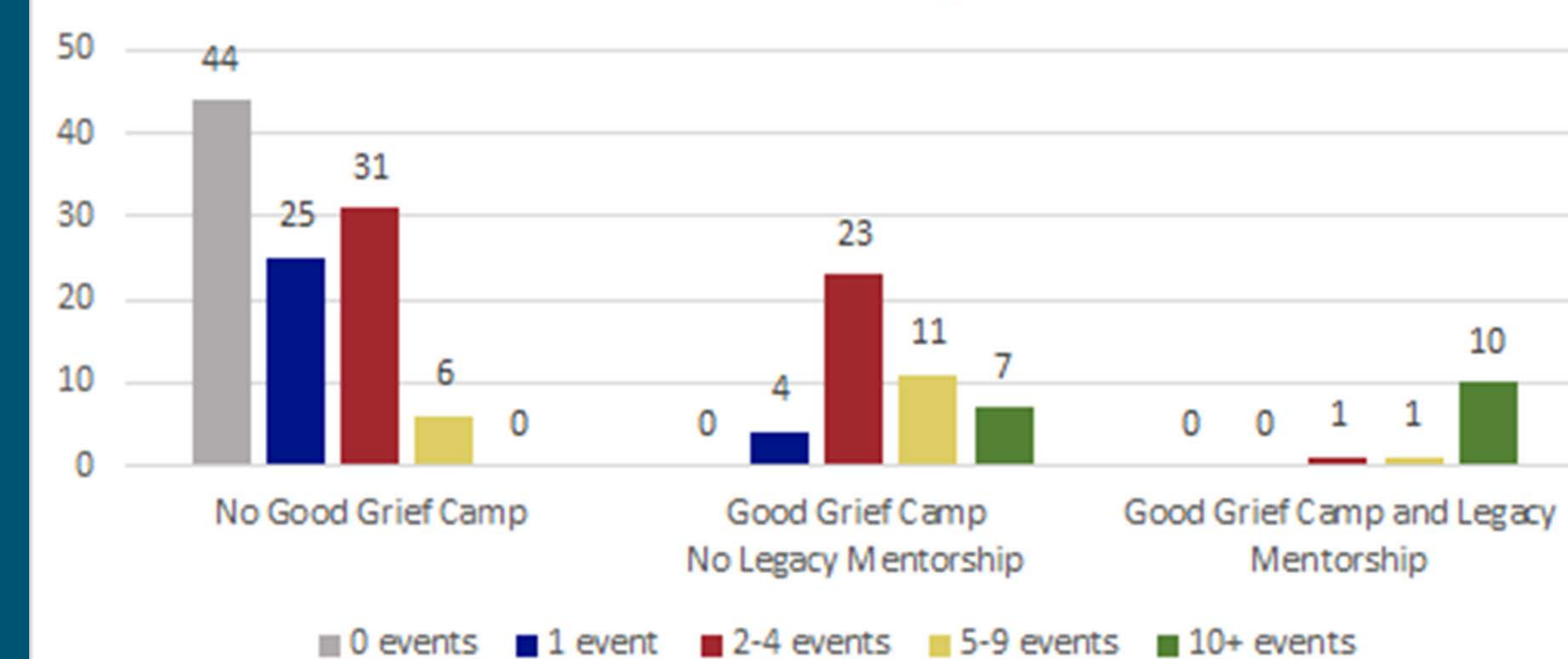
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"Young adult military and veteran survivors who receive grief and trauma support at a young age describe a sense of belonging and a feeling of giving back when they return to mentor other children at a TAPS Youth Program event. Early findings suggest that integrating peer-based emotional support and meaningful mentorship engagement for grieving children can have lifelong benefits."

Relationship of survivor to deceased, by age at first contact



Number of Events Attended by Connection Points



DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this report shows a small portion of the entire population of those grieving the loss of a military loved ones, and is for academic and informational purposes only. While this is based on preliminary findings, there are limitations and these results may not apply to all situations.