

Preparing Military Social Workers for Interprofessional Practice: Aligning Military Social Work Standards with Comprehensive Airman Fitness

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Abstract

This article conceptualizes interprofessionalism through the integration of the Air Force's Resilience Initiative Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF) with the Council on Social Work Education's Advanced Social Work Practice in Military Social Work Standards. CAF, a holistic philosophy, is congruent with social work values, perspectives, practice modalities, and skills. Interprofessionalism in this context is working collaboratively to build positive capacity and connections across disciplines to promote overall health and resilience of service members and their families. Social workers working within military environments can optimize practice efficacy in military contexts by actively participating with CAF and other established resiliency-based initiatives. Reciprocally, the military can enhance resilience efforts by utilizing the knowledge and experience of social workers. Establishing a collaborative response to the pervasive needs of military members that aligns with the established DoD resilience initiatives has substantial implications for fostering advanced military social work practice and improved outcomes for service members.

Keywords: military social work, Air Force, airman, resilience, comprehensive airman fitness, CAF, interprofessional

Introduction

In 2014, as a new Air Force Instruction (AFI 90-506) promoting resilience was announced, the Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III stated: "Our job [...] is not an easy task, which is why Comprehensive Airman Fitness is so important. Our focus is on the well-being and care for ourselves, each other, and our families so we can be more resilient to the many challenges military service brings." (Leslie, 2014, p.1)

In this quote, General Welsh emphasizes the need to not only support the military mission but to also find a way to support the wellness and resilience of service members. This goal relates directly to the Air Force's Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF) as well as the social work profession engaged in military social work efforts. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) articulates how treatment efforts should strive to promote "health, wellness, and resiliency for service members, veterans, their families, and their communities" (CSWE, 2010, p.3). This CSWE statement indicates some of the intrinsic values and perspectives inherent in the social work profession that also align with the strategic military efforts to foster a resilient force.

The connection between military resilience initiatives and military social work practice competencies is an important bridge for social workers engaging in complex military contexts. This collaboration establishes a common thread between social work and military culture.

Social workers endorse holistic strength-based practice strategies, which are the foundation of the military resilience frameworks. The efforts to foster advanced military practice competencies are strengthened when social workers connect with established DoD resilience initiatives and when military systems recognize the value of collaborating with social workers.

1.2 The Need for Competent Military Social Work Practice

Over the past decade, the need for competent military social workers has become a focus of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) with the increased operational tempo of the all-volunteer force engaged in the war on terror (CSWE, 2010). With over two million service members deployed since September 11, 2001, there is an alarming number of men and women returning from deployment with various disruptions to their wellbeing, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, depression, traumatic brain injury (TBI), suicide, and family distress (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Nedegaard, 2012). In response to the escalating needs of the military and veteran communities, the CSWE established the Advanced Social Work Practice in Military Social Work standards in 2010 to outline best practice competencies in this complex context.

The CSWE military practice standards align with the competency-based outcomes based on 9 core competencies outlined in the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 2015). In these standards, the core competencies are enhanced by practice behaviors and specialized knowledge related to military social work contexts (CSWE, 2015). In 2012, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) developed and published the Military Social Work Practice Standard (Canfield & Weiss, 2015; NASW, 2012). The CSWE and NASW standards provide a disciplinary structure and lens for viewing what is necessary with fostering civilian and government collaboration, while caring for the wellbeing of military members, veterans, and families (DuMars & Oandasan, 2015).

1.3 Leveraging Resources

This conceptual article proposes that the social work profession will strengthen practice competencies and contribute to service member outcomes by aligning with established DoD resilience initiatives that are congruent with social work values and perspectives. The Air Force Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF) philosophy and resilience initiative will be compared with military social work practice competencies through the framework of interprofessionalism and ecological perspectives. Interprofessionalism is defined as a cohesive practice that is developed between professionals from different disciplines with a common goal to improve practice outcomes for clients (D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005). In this context, social workers and military communities collaborate with practice strategies that provide an integrated response to needs of the diverse military community.

The ecological perspective provides a lens for understanding the reciprocal exchange that occurs between systems and the influence that the various elements have on service members and families (Germain & Gitterman, 2008). It also explains how social systems and individuals adapt and change according to resources available and the demands of the environment (Brandell, 2011). The ecological framework affirms interprofessionalism by recognizing that building positive capacity and connections across disciplines is valuable for overall health and fosters resilience over time (Germain & Gitterman, 2008).

Social workers have recognized the heightened needs of military and veteran communities by creating a framework for a comprehensive and meaningful response to the overarching issues. Therefore, collaborating with established strength-based, holistic resilience military initiatives such as CAF increases the efficacy of social work efforts “as a pivotal healing profession during wartime and in the aftermath” (CSWE, 2010, p. 2). Leveraging resources that foster resilience attending to cultural sensitivity and to the complexity of needs present in military environments has positive implications for promoting advanced military social work practice standards and building capacity for service member outcomes.

2. Military Social Work Education

The literature related to military members and veterans validates the importance of social work education adequately preparing students for this diverse practice context. The complex psychosocial issues reported by both service members and veterans demonstrate the need for intervention (Brand & Weiss, 2015). Frey, Collins, Pastoor, and Linde (2014) surveyed licensed social workers who identified common client concerns among military and veteran clients that include mental health, physical health and wellness, social environment, and interpersonal and family needs. The study, although limited in scope, encouraged social work education to continue preparing BSW and MSW students to work with returning service members and their families.

In recent years, with the increased need to prepare social workers for military contexts, social work education has developed specialized curricula into social work programs (Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). Selber, Chavkin, and Biggs (2015) examined a collaborative model that trains military social work students. They outline the critical need for social work curricula to develop competent social workers qualified to work with military members or veterans. Weng et al. (2015) examined a program that connects veterans with student social workers and in a qualitative study and demonstrates that collaboration strengthened practice competencies among the students and better prepared them to work with military and veteran clients and families. Wooten (2015) argued for an integrated model of intellectual capital that guides social work education in preparing social workers for responding to the complex needs of military members and their families.

Brand and Weiss (2015) contend social workers are trained and equipped in assessment, case management, intervention, and cultural competence, which translate well with military-specific practice competencies. The findings and implications of the studies in the review of the literature demonstrates how establishing social work education programs that prepare students for military contexts and adhering to advanced military practice standards are essential for the social work field moving forward with both efficacy and competency (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Frey, Collins, Pastoor, & Linde, 2014; Selber, Chavkin, & Biggs, 2015; Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009; Weng et al., 2015; Wooten, 2015).

3. Social Work Perspectives

Social work is a profession that supports individuals, families, groups, and communities with a focus on improving conditions to promote health, wellness, and positive outcomes for all. Recognizing the dignity and worth of each person, social workers seek to build positive capacity and connections for clients by working collaboratively in multi-disciplinary contexts. The various foundational perspectives that social workers utilize to guide practice are analogous with the principles inherent in CAF and other DoD resilience initiatives. The congruency between the theoretical underpinnings of social work and the resilience initiatives demonstrate the value of social workers actively engaged in the process of fostering resilience within military environments.

3.1 Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective emerged from an evolutionary construct recognizing the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the environment (Brandell, 2011). Evolving out of science, the perspective asserts that individuals will make accommodations to ensure a goodness-of-fit with the environment (Gitterman & Germain, 2008). The goal is to improve the quality of reciprocity between individuals and their environment considering the characteristics of context and culture (Powers, 2010). This concept is directly related to the tenets within both CAF and social work practice competencies. In both constructs, the personal and environmental complexities are addressed through a holistic, strength-based framework to advocate for adaptive strategies that improve capacity of fit. The ecological perspective provides a valuable framework for military social workers using an interprofessional lens to collaborate within complex military environmental systems and to align with resiliency initiatives.

3.2 Person-In-Environment and Systems Perspective

Social workers recognize the person-in-environment approach as a foundational lens for viewing how individuals are connected to the environment with reciprocal influences and relationships (Gitterman & Germain, 2008). Similar to the person-in-environment perspective, social workers utilize the systems perspective to consider the context of issues and seek solutions by examining the multiple systems that are involved with the individual or issue. With a systems perspective, social workers view clients on a continuum ranging from micro, mezzo, and macro levels of care recognizing the importance of system boundaries, hierarchy, equilibrium, and mutual causality. In this context, changes that happen in one system will have a rippling effect in the other.

3.3 Strengths Perspective and Resilience Focused Approach

Social work embraces a strengths-based approach to all aspects of practice. Instead of focusing on a problem or deficiency, a strengths-based approach considers the individuals established strengths, connections, and abilities. This fosters a network of support focusing on a client's potential and protective factors. A resilience-focused approach evolved out of a social-ecological framework and is concerned with the ability to persist during times of change and become stronger in the process (Folke, 2006). Focusing on resilience tenets is a paradigm shift from the historical focus on problems or deficits and considers the strengths and abilities within each situation.

The resilience framework aligns with the strengths, systems, and person-in-environment approaches by considering the human capacity of individuals to overcome difficult circumstances, the environmental protective factors, and the systemic influences that foster well-being.

3.4 Interprofessional Practice Perspective

Interprofessionality is gaining momentum as a cohesive practice between diverse disciplines to achieve goals that are better accomplished collaboratively (Bronstein, 2003; D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005; Jones & Phillip, 2016; Shannon, 2011). Dating back to the 1970s, the construct of interprofessionality originated in the medical field, seeking to develop an integrated approach among professionals providing patient care (D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005). Recognizing the complex needs of health care patients, the coordinated efforts of more than one discipline became a valuable approach to address the issues (Alexandria et al., 2011). The intent of interprofessionality is to exchange knowledge through relationship-centered learning and through fostering a collaborative practice culture (Delunas & Rouse, 2014; Grant & Alexander, 2014). Expanding the tenets of multi-disciplinary methods, interprofessionality provides a cohesive practice among different fields of professionals responding to the same client or issue (D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005; Irvine, Kerridge, McPhee, & Freeman, 2002).

Over the years, the interprofessionality concept has expanded beyond medical contexts and is embraced by diverse professions recognizing the value of intentional collaboration to improve client outcomes. Interprofessionality aligns well with social worker's longstanding utilization of the person-in-environment perspective, ecological frameworks, the strengths perspective, a resilience-focused approach, and the systems perspective. Interprofessionality provides a valuable model for military social work practitioners seeking to connect with military environments. The complexity of military systems and the inherent differences between the social work profession and military culture can be mitigated through the practice of an interprofessional practice. Therefore, responding within an interprofessional framework, military and social work communities can collaboratively attend to practice strategies that espouse a cohesive response to the complex needs of diverse military environments.

4. Resilience Efforts in the U.S. Air Force

The military's interest in resilience began as a response to high rates of suicide, despite the increased efforts with suicide prevention strategies (Meadows et al., 2015). In 2008, with soldier suicide rates at the highest they had been in 28 years, the Army leadership examined the concept of resilience as a strength-based prevention tool to promote overall health and wellness among the force (Simmons & Yoder, 2013). The Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Program was modeled after Martin Seligman's Penn Resiliency Program (Seligman, 2011). Shortly thereafter, the other military branches followed with their own resilience efforts. In 2011, the Air Force developed and launched the Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF) initiative as a holistic philosophy to foster resilience in the face of stressors and changing demands with service members and families (Bowen, Jensen, & Martin, 2016; Gonzalez, Singh, Schell, & Weinick, 2014). The Air Force CAF resilience initiative resembles the Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Program and utilizes constructs from positive psychology and the Penn Resiliency Program (Seligman, 2011). CAF was launched in response to the pressing needs of service members and their families experiencing recurrent transitions and stress. CAF is not one single program or training course but is a holistic and a paradigm shift within Air Force culture that weaves resilience strategies into the fabric of everyday operations (AFI, 2014). CAF utilizes a strength-based tiered approach to teach resilience strategies educating airmen about overall fitness (Gonzalez et al., 2014). CAF includes a diverse array of training initiatives, activities, programs, and other strategies all aimed at sustaining a fit force in the four core domains of mental, physical, social, and spiritual health (Bowen, Jensen, & Martin, 2016). The CAF initiative provides a foundational platform that aligns with social work values and practice ethics and is congruent with advanced military social work standards.

4.1. Specific Tenets of Comprehensive Airman Fitness

The CAF model is based on the biopsychosocial model of human emotion and incorporates an integrated response using multiple avenues to foster health and wellness among service members (AFI, 2014). This includes peer-to-peer education and training that promotes self-help and self-referral, which equips service members with tools to self-calibrate. The science of positive psychology that underpins the CAF Model is consistent with social work's practice models and perspectives and provides a common framework and continuity in establishing collaborative efforts between social work practice and military contexts. The initiative incorporates holistic strategies that cultivates physical, social, mental, and spiritual fitness (Air Force, 2016).

Some of the key concepts taught through CAF include Seligman's (2011) work, which asserts that optimism is correlated with gratitude. Service members are taught to establish a habit of counting blessings daily and to consistently notice positive aspects of life. Another CAF skill is based on the leading researcher and scientist, Jon Kabat-Zinn's (2016) work with mindfulness. Service members are guided through mindfulness strategies learning that maintaining focus helps disengage negative thoughts that interfere with goals and performance (AF, 2016). Lyubomirsky's (2008) concepts are taught, which assert that values are the internal compass that should drive establishing and accomplishing goals. Service members are instructed about the tenets of Hayes' (2004) acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). This therapy model asserts that psychological suffering is often caused by avoidance. However, choosing to be present and respond according to personal values decreases negative experiences as well as promotes cognitive fusion (AF, 2016; Hayes, 2004). Moreover, focusing on personal strengths is associated with positive outcomes, greater psychological well-being, less stress, and lower depression (AF, 2016; Seligman, 2011).

The four key resilience factors established within the CAF model include individual, family, unit, and community systems (Meredith et al., 2012). The factors align well with social work's foundational ecological systems perspective that encompasses micro, mezzo, and macro frameworks to understand systems of care. The CAF concepts align with the CSWE advanced practice standards as well as social work practice models; and so, provide a valuable foundation to establish competent practice frameworks in military environments.

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4.2. Air Force Resilience Research

Research examining CAF is limited; however, Bowen, Jensen, and Martin (2016) examined the efficacy of CAF using the Support and Resilience Inventory to study measures of mental fitness, physical fitness, social fitness, and spiritual fitness. The research study considered the construct validation and invariance of CAF examining the online assessment tool focused on biopsychosocial and spiritual fitness measures. They found that the tool was invariant across the various service components, and a positive association between resilience and total fitness.

Bowen et al. (2016) concluded that the tenets of CAF can be "conceptualized as a total fitness construct" within the Air Force (p. 7). The research provides valuable information related to CAF and points to the importance of ongoing evaluation and assessment as the resilience initiative continues.

Meadows et al. (2015) as part of the RAND Project Air Force conducted research aimed at providing the Air Force with the most recent and relevant information available to establish best practice standards that promote service member and family resilience. The study outlined several themes addressing resilience factors. The researchers concluded that resilience is understood through the context of stress or change. It is a dynamic process and not limited to specific behaviors or traits. Moreover, resilience can be developed and learned, as individuals do not have a limited set of resilience factors or abilities. The researchers identified that resilience traits encompass personality, biology/physiology, behaviors, and available resources. The themes identified by RAND are congruent with the CAF practice tenets and strategies. The literature related to CAF affirms the value of leveraging resources and building upon congruent practices between the resilience initiatives and advanced military social work standards.

5. Discussion

5.1 Complementary Themes between Comprehensive Airman Fitness and Social Work

Several themes emerge when examining the Air Force's CAF resilience initiative, the CSWE Advanced Social Work Practice in Military Social Work standards, and the profession of social work values and practice perspectives. The following sections will develop the unifying themes and the strong correlation between CAF, the Military Social Work standards, and the social work profession. The theoretical frameworks of interprofessionality and the ecological perspective will be considered as well as relevance for social work practice and social work education.

5.2 Holistic practice focused on prevention.

CAF is a cultural shift on how to view and maintain overall fitness in a holistic and comprehensive manner considering the complexity of needs apparent in modern military environments (AFI, 2014; Bowen, Jensen, & Martin, 2016; Wooten, 2015). The overarching approach seeks to build and sustain resilient attributes throughout military environments. The CAF model recognizes that the dimensional aspect of the whole person is divided into mental, physical, social, and spiritual domains (AFI, 2014). Both the CAF and the CSWE advanced practice standards align with the person-in-environment and holistic practice perspectives considering reciprocity and the transactional nature of individuals within community frameworks.

The CSWE advanced practice standards establish the treatment goals in military contexts that promote wellness, health, and resilience for all individuals, which include service members, veterans, families, and the communities where they reside (CSWE, 2010). This includes assessing military member's resilient traits and their ability to adapt to transitions and stressors within the environment. The standards outline the importance of considering the individual within their environment and engaging in holistic, preventative practice strategies (CSWE, 2010). Aligning with common tenets such as prevention helps to address the complex nature of military social work as a specialized field of practice with high personal demands (Wooten, 2015).

The CAF initiative promotes early help-seeking behaviors and mitigates mental health stigma by educating that resilience is about regulating and expressing emotions appropriately. The model teaches that a service member must rely on self and others, as well as understand that a resilient lifestyle can be developed and is a continuous process (AFI, 2014). This has significant application to social work practice within military contexts. Social workers can build upon this holistic framework by networking at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. There are small group resilience workshops, Yellow Ribbon events, Wingman Day, and other ways to participate and connect with the resilience efforts through CAF. Social workers can leverage efforts through connecting and collaborating with commanders and airmen that direct the resilience efforts at the wing. Social workers have professional knowledge and expertise regarding many of the CAF tenets through education and training, therefore aligning with the resilience framework is a natural fit and practice strategy.

Social work education should provide instruction about the various resilience military initiatives such as CAF. The resilience frameworks conceptually align with social work values, perspectives, knowledge, and skills. Social work students can engage and connect with CAF through both casework examples within the classroom and through military-based internships. The practice opportunities provide a valuable way to prepare and engage competent military social work professionals in military resilience strategies upon graduation.

5.3 Resilience and strength-based skills.

The CAF model is a strength-based approach that emphasizes how healthy individuals and communities live out a balanced, healthy lifestyle. Through educational workshops, CAF promotes overall fitness and performance by teaching adaptive skills (AFI, 2014; Bowen, Jensen, & Martin, 2016; Gonzalez, Singh, Schell, & Weinick, 2014). CAF promotes foundational life skills and competencies through the various resilience training and education strategies that meet the needs of service members (AFI, 2014; Bowen, Jensen & Martin; 2016). The foundational aspects of the strengths perspective and resilience initiatives within CAF and military social work establish an interprofessional alignment for practice.

The CSWE advanced practice standards engage diversity and difference in practice that recognize the risk and the protective factors among diverse military populations. The standards outline the importance of a social worker's responsibility to promote client self-efficacy and empowerment by valuing client's strengths, cultural norms, and resilient traits (CSWE, 2010).

Social workers within the profession are trained to recognize and value strengths with individuals, families, communities, and the environment (Newell, 2012). The alignment of CAF and the Advanced Practice standards focus on strengths and resilience provides a cohesive foundation for military social workers.

Military social workers can increase practice efficacy by engaging with various policies, strategies, and components incorporated within resilience initiatives such as CAF. Aligning with CAF allows social worker's efforts to capitalize on client strengths and adhere to the shared social work ideal of starting where the client is. This includes identifying the specific tenets, language, contexts with CAF, and develop shared practice opportunities. This knowledge and active collaborative practice will help develop effective tenets of interprofessionalism that cultivate interdisciplinary areas of strength. There are resilience-focused military personnel at each wing as well as the state and national level. Social workers that connect with the military resilience efforts will increase practice competence and promote health and wellness efforts with military members, their families, and the community.

Wooten (2015) outlined the value of social work education, preparing students in both resilience and strength-based approaches and how that will have a direct impact on services provided to military members, their families, and their communities. The resilience practice modalities provide a common language and framework for social work students to build upon. Social work education often utilizes a generalist social work practice framework, which prepares social work students to work with individuals, groups, organizations, and communities (Brand & Weiss, 2015). Through this holistic lens, social work students are taught the person-in-environment perspective, which views an individual as part of a larger system. Moreover, social work education charges faculty and students to engage in strength-based practices that foster client well-being and resilience (Brand & Weiss, 2015; CSWE, 2010; Forgey & Young, 2014; Nedegaard, 2012). Therefore, CAF and other resilience initiatives provide an excellent framework for social work education that fosters advanced practice strategies.

5.4 Critical thinking skills.

The CAF model equips service members and their families with necessary skills and tools that enable them to evaluate and adjust to maintain balance with complex environmental demands. Service members that maintain balance with cognitive skills, emotional stamina, physical endurance, and spiritual well-being are inclined to exhibit the core values of the Air Force which are "integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do" (AF, 1996, p. 1). Individuals serving in the Air Force are tasked to continually monitor balance in a complex, dynamic environment. This critical thinking process promotes a continued evaluation of wellness within the four domains of physical, mental, social, and spiritual health (Bowen, Jensen, & Martin, 2016).

The social work profession affirms critical thinking as a foundational practice and value within diverse practice contexts. The CSWE advanced practice standards articulate the importance of utilizing critical thinking that informs and communicates information in a professional manner responding to changing demands within complex systems (CSWE, 2014). A military social worker is tasked with analyzing the appropriate assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation models to utilize with service members, their families, and their communities (Wooten, 2015). When social workers value and attend to critical thinking strategies within practice, it models the skill for military clients and fosters multidisciplinary practice strategies congruent with interprofessionalism and ecological frameworks.

In social work education, the CAF tenets provide a common framework to foster critical thinking skills and practical application of casework in military contexts. The resilience initiatives align with the competencies reflected within the CSWE advanced military practice standards. CAF and other resilience initiatives equip students to utilize critical thinking in advanced practice military contexts. Educating military social work students about the specific aspects of the resilience frameworks, as well as the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings will advance practice efficacy.

5.5 Integrated framework.

The CAF initiative provides an integrated structure that is comprised of many cross-functional training and education efforts, programs, and activities that promote and foster a healthy, resilient, and ready force (AFI, 2014). The efforts to promote resilience encompass strategies working with individuals, families, groups, and community systems (Bowen, Jensen & Martin, 2016). The CSWE advanced practice standards apply social work principles to guide professional practice that are congruent with the CAF tenets and principles. The standards outline the importance of service delivery at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels attending to the military's cultural emphasis on mission readiness, support of service, honor, and cohesion (CSWE, 2010).

The integrated framework in CAF and the CSWE advanced practice standards reflect social worker's person-in-environment perspective, which recognizes that individuals must be understood within a broader context. Competent military social workers possess an awareness of the unique challenges inherent within military contexts and recognize the integrated relationships in military culture. Military social workers that value reciprocity, as well as the contributions of others, practice within an ecological and interprofessional framework. The holistic framework of CAF aligns well with social worker's integrated system approach. Social work educators should provide students with both information and practice experience working with CAF and other resilience frameworks preparing them for future competent practice. Through an integrated practice model, various systems are recognized, valued, and viewed as integral parts of a whole system of care.

5.6 Research-informed practice, assessment, and evaluation.

The CAF initiative is an evidence-based practice model that is assessed and evaluated through both military and civilian contracted entities (AFI, 2014; Meadows et al., 2015). The CAF framework utilizes research-informed practice strategies considering unique lifestyle challenges within military environments (AFI, 2014; Seligman, 2011). The CAF initiative provides tools for leaders to create and sustain comprehensive fitness and optimizes performance at work, home, and in the community (Meadows et al., 2015). The CAF practice strategies are congruent to social work best practice models and provide a shared foundation for collaboration.

The CSWE advanced practice standards advocates for research-informed practice that sustains ongoing analysis of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation models utilized in military social work contexts (CSWE, 2010). The CSWE advanced practice standards assert that modalities should be consistent with multisystem approaches congruent with the diversity of systems inherent within military environments (CSWE, 2010). The attention to research informed practice models and evaluation is consistent with both the CAF model and the CSWE advanced practice standards. It also aligns with social worker's value of evidence-based practice, ongoing assessment, and evaluation strategies. Social workers working within military environments can optimize their connection with research informed models appropriate in military contexts by actively participating with CAF and other established resiliency-based initiatives.

Social work education should engage in practice, evaluation, and research of the military resilience initiatives such as CAF. Educating and providing practical learning opportunities for social work students about the resilience evidence-based practice strategies will establish a ready social work force, prepared to provide competent practice in various military capacities. Current research related to CAF and other resilience initiatives is limited. Future research and evaluation efforts will provide valuable information and have implications for advancing military social standards.

6. Conclusion

Social work practice with military communities is inherently diverse and complex. Social workers are astute at working within complicated contexts and focusing on strengths and areas of commonality to build collaborative working relationships. Resilience initiatives are aligned with social work professional values and standards; therefore, connecting with the various integrated resilience strategies in CAF is a natural response and provides a congruent foundation. The CAF model is rooted in well-established modalities and theories such as positive psychology, acceptance and commitment therapy, and the ecological and strengths perspectives, to name a few (AF, 2016). CAF and other DoD resilience initiatives provide a common platform to bridge efforts through collaboration and interprofessional frameworks. The resilience approaches within the DoD, the CSWE advanced practice military social work standards, and social work education are compatible and complementary. Each endorses strength-based strategies based on empowerment, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Moreover, they address the diversity and multifarious complexities implicit within military contexts.

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