



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

2026 FEB CCSS: Operational Medicine: Preparing the Force for Mission Readiness

2026 FEB CCSS S04: A Mission-Ready Force: The Strategic Imperative of Measuring Readiness in the Military Health System

Resource List

[Strengthening Military Medical Provider Readiness: A Comprehensive Examination of VHA-MHS Partnerships](#)

(2025) examines how Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Military Health System (MHS) partnerships can mitigate the predictable peacetime effect by expanding access to high-acuity, mission-relevant clinical exposure. In military medicine, the predictable peacetime effect refers to a well-recognized pattern where medical readiness and combat-relevant clinical skills decline during extended periods without war or large-scale deployments. It describes mechanisms such as resource-sharing agreements, joint staffing models, and incentive funding that allow military clinicians to maintain complex skills in civilian and Veterans Affairs settings. Attention is also given to governance, credentialing, and data-sharing challenges, emphasizing that partnerships must be intentionally structured to translate clinical volume into measurable readiness gains.

[Advancing Combat-Relevant Nursing Skills and Readiness Through Military-Civilian Partnerships](#) (2025) synthesizes evidence showing that military-civilian partnerships provide richer, more frequent exposure to high-acuity clinical cases than typical military treatment facilities, particularly for nursing personnel. It highlights that structured, rotational model, whether embedded or frequent short rotations, provide critical combat-like clinical exposure that sustains both skills and confidence. The review also identifies supporting factors for readiness success, such as leadership engagement, readiness-aligned skill trackers, and deliberate clinical objectives. A proactive approach to enhance nursing readiness is through the prioritization of quality clinical exposure in addition to an adequate quantity of experiences.

[Military Readiness: Improvement in Some Areas, but Sustainment and Other Challenges Persist](#) (2023) assesses U.S. military readiness across the ground, sea, air, and space domains, finding that readiness improved in the ground domain from fiscal years 2017 through 2021 but declined in the sea domain, with mixed results in air and space. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) identifies persistent sustainment and operational challenges such as maintenance backlogs, supply constraints, and aging equipment that continue to hinder overall readiness. The report underscores that these readiness trends reflect long-standing issues exacerbated by nearly two decades of conflict, requiring the Department of Defense (DOD) to balance efforts to rebuild current capabilities with modernization priorities. GAO also notes that many recommendations it previously made to address these challenges remain unimplemented, limiting progress in sustaining and improving force readiness.

[Military Readiness: DOD Assessment and Reporting Requirements](#) (2022) explains how the DOD is required by law to assess and report on the readiness of U.S. military forces, including personnel and materiel, to support national defense objectives; however, the concept of “readiness” varies in definition across the department, which can lead to ambiguity in how it is understood and applied. It outlines statutory mandates for DOD to use systems like the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) and to regularly submit readiness reports and briefings to Congress, covering training, resourcing, infrastructure, and operational capability. The Congressional Research Service notes that DOD’s multiple reporting requirements aim to provide useful information to lawmakers but that issues such as inconsistent terminology and challenges in meeting some measurement objectives have prompted discussion about potential improvements in reporting quality and utility.



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References

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- Cortes, D. R. (2025). Advancing Combat-Relevant Nursing Skills and Readiness Through Military-Civilian Partnerships: A Literature Review. *Military Medicine*, usaf582.
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https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF12240/IF12240.1.pdf
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2023). *Military Readiness: Improvement in Some Areas, but Sustainment and Other Challenges Persist*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-106673.pdf>