

# Initial Report

Last Modified: 04/18/2016

1. Name of Nominee:

**Text Response**

Gabriela Nostro for Justice for Military Families

2. Nominee's position:

**Text Response**

Director of Justice For Military Families, Military Spouse JD Network

3. Email address and phone number:

**Text Response**

JMF@msjdn.org - (203) 912-0511

4. Mailing address of foundation:

**Text Response**

412 E Alexandria Ave, Alexandria VA

5. Executive Director or Senior staff person:

**Text Response**

Mary Reding Smith, MSJDN Founder and Board Member

6. Name of program:

**Text Response**

Justice for Military Families, Military Spouse JD Network

7. Please describe the program in 1-2 paragraphs:

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### Text Response

Justice for Military Families (JMF) launched in December 2013 as the pro bono initiative of the Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN). JMF is the first national program designed to connect military families to pro bono legal assistance, regardless of financial need, a factor that currently limits their access to many other legal service clinics. JMF works in partnership with TAPS, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, a nationally-recognized organization assisting families of fallen service members, to connect their families with legal assistance. JMF cases are initiated by the families of recently deceased service members. Their legal issues often involve probate questions, military benefits, or family law conflicts. TAPS refers eligible families to JMF, where volunteer military spouse attorneys provide legal assistance or help place the family's case with an attorney in their network on a pro bono or reduced fee basis. Additionally, JMF has begun to develop a library of legal information sheets that breaks down the law by subject area and jurisdiction. This library will be posted to the websites of both TAPS and MSJDN. By creating information sheets based on areas of law of interest to TAPS families, JMF will be able to help many more families understand their legal situation and the laws that are relevant to it. JMF provides attorney spouses of servicemembers with an opportunity to undertake meaningful legal work as volunteers despite the constant obstacles presented by the military lifestyle. Our members are licensed throughout the country and our combined work experience and subject matter expertise is significant. The work MSJDN members provide through JMF—either by directly taking cases, helping to place cases among our networks, or using our research skills to contribute to the newly created library of information—keeps our legal skills active and strengthens our future employment possibilities.

8. What is the program budget?

### Text Response

JMF operates solely through the hard work and dedication of MSJDN volunteers. Last year, the program spent \$1200 to pay for professional liability insurance to cover volunteer attorneys.

9. How is this program funded?

### Text Response

JMF is funded through the MSJDN Foundation. In 2013, MSJDN received a \$15,000 grant from the Newman's Own Foundation to develop a website for MSJDN membership management as well as a virtual legal tool to connect more families with free legal help. From that grant, \$15,000 has been spent.

10. How has the program made an impact on the justice system and/or the community?

### Text Response

JMF has worked with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) to place over 55 families of fallen service members with legal assistance on a pro bono or reduced fee basis. With the creation of the Grandparent Visitation Guide and the new initiative to create legal information sheets, the impact we are making is reflected not only in the number of families we have helped, but in the way we are growing to address the legal needs of these families.

11. If applicable, please share details regarding:

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Number of people who helped/influenced the program		1	100%

2	Number of volunteers involved in the program		1	100%
3	List of "partners" involved with the program		1	100%

Number of people who helped/influenced the program	Number of volunteers involved in the program	List of "partners" involved with the program
JMF has access to 700 military spouse attorneys who use their networks and resources to find solutions to legal problems for TAPS families	Seven military spouse attorneys volunteer with JMF's leadership team and ten additional military spouse attorneys volunteer on the JMF Committee. The leadership team has the following positions: Director, Pro Bono Coordinator, Committee Secretary, and four Intake Coordinators. In addition, numerous other MSJDN members frequently contribute by taking cases themselves or helping to place them. MSJDN currently has approximately 700 members.	Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) - <a href="http://www.taps.org">www.taps.org</a>

**12.** Can this program be replicated by other bar associations and foundations?

**Text Response**

As an association of attorneys who are also military spouses, MSJDN lawyers are uniquely positioned to help the families of fallen servicemembers during such an incredibly difficult time. Our understanding of the military community and ability to make a personal connection with these families, coupled with our unique skills and qualifications as attorneys, contributes tremendously to this program's continued success. We are part of the community we are serving, and that perspective cannot be easily replicated. That said, we welcome the opportunity to work with other bar associations and foundations to provide them with the resources that allow them to connect with this important population in a meaningful way.

**13.** Thank you for taking the time to submit your program for the NCBF/ LexisNexis Partnerships for Success Award! If you have any supplemental materials you'd like to attach to your submission, please do so here. For any questions regarding the award, please contact: Justina Lin, Program Assistant ABA Division for Bar Services (312) 988-5998 [Justina.Lin@americanbar.org](mailto:Justina.Lin@americanbar.org)

*This question was not answered by the respondent.*