



Backgrounder

Social, Economic and Workforce Programs Division
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State Programs to Facilitate the Reintegration of National Guard Troops Returning from Deployment

Introduction

Since the onset of the current military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, many of the country's National Guard units have been activated and deployed, often in combat zones far from home. During that time, more than 160,000 members of National Guard and Reserve units have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, with close to 100,000 yet to return. This marks the largest deployment of National Guard troops in the past half century. As such, it presents major challenges for families, employers and communities as they struggle both to cope with the absence of these men and women and to facilitate their reintegration following deactivation.

National Guard deployments are especially problematic because these military units are largely comprised of employed and married civilians for whom military service typically involves only one weekend a month of their time and two weeks a summer. During normal times, these men and women fill vital roles as breadwinners, skilled workers, parents, volunteers and civic leaders. Lengthy tours overseas therefore tend to place a severe strain on families, employers and communities as well as on the guard members themselves.

At the same time, the return home of guard units, especially from combat zones, can create equally great challenges of reintegration back into families and jobs. This NGA Center Backgrounder provides information on what governors are doing to meet these challenges and to facilitate the reintegration of National Guard and other armed services personnel returning from overseas.

The State Role

Given the financial benefits and health and employment services available through the U.S. military, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies, one key role for state governments is simply helping guard members and their

families understand and gain access to the many services already available to them. Yet states can do—and are doing—much more. The vast majority of states have created new initiatives and programs within the last few years to complement federal veterans services in a manner particularly suited to the situation of their own National Guard units.

Types of Services

The Appendix to this Backgrounder provides information by state on all the state reintegration programs and services that have been identified to date.¹ The remainder of this overview summarizes these programs by the five broad types of services involved: outreach activities and access simplification, financial assistance, mental health hotlines and screenings, and comprehensive programs.

Outreach Activities and Access Simplification

Several states have created or proposed statewide operations to increase public support and awareness to help returning soldiers. In the case of **Missouri**, Operation Outreach centralizes delivery of existing resources to veterans. Through Operation Outreach, soldiers and their families receive assistance on filing veterans' claims, referrals to the proper state or federal entity for employment or health questions and, in some cases, emergency financial support.

Alabama's Operation Grateful Heart provides new funding for specific programs (such as an employment and placement program run in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor), as well as for less formal outreach efforts that help veterans understand the traditional benefits available to them and coordinate emergency financial support.

In **Arizona, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Ohio** and **Oregon** state agencies and the National Guard have developed (or are in the process of developing) memoranda of understanding, which specify the services each agency can provide to returning troops and their families, when the National Guard will inform these agencies about deactivation schedules, and how the National Guard and the agencies will make returning soldiers and their families aware of the services available.

Financial Assistance

At least 18 states have created emergency funds to assist service members and their families pre- and post-deployment. These funds are usually designed to help families during deployment, but as units have begun to return home, states have continued making grants available to families experiencing unexpected financial hardship. In most states, these emergency funds use state-appropriated money and donations, although in **Nevada**, the funds rely on private donations.

States also offer financial assistance in the form of education benefits for guard members and their families and housing assistance. For example, **Maryland** has created a higher education scholarship specifically for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. In **Iowa**,

¹ We regret any gaps, welcome feedback on additional initiatives, and will publish appropriately revised and updated editions from time to time.

Governor Chet Culver's recent Operation Enduring Freedom Support program contains a number of measures to help returning soldiers find and afford suitable housing.

Mental Health Hotlines and Screenings

Connecticut, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina and **Illinois** have launched mental health hotlines for veterans and their families. Callers can receive counseling over the phone and set up in-person counseling sessions. The hotlines focus on helping diagnose and treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans.

Washington has a community-based program to identify and treat PTSD in returning soldiers. Through its program, veterans involved in the Global War on Terror and their families are eligible to receive counseling for PTSD or to learn how to live with someone suffering from PTSD. **Washington** also has a program that provides free counseling to teachers, educating them on how to help children with war-exposed parents.

Meanwhile, **Illinois** recently created a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) screening program for soldiers. Under the program, each guard member returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is required to receive a TBI screening. The screenings also are available to other service personnel, but are not required.

Comprehensive Reintegration Services

Comprehensive reintegration services entail state or Guard mandated redeployment services and training that begin soon after National Guard units return from active duty. In such cases, states establish specific activities and schedules for reintegrating both service members and their families. For example, **Minnesota** and **South Dakota** hold a structured series of deactivation sessions for returning guard members and their families, usually beginning 30 days after return from active duty. These sessions allow the soldiers and their families not only to receive immediate assistance and counseling in areas ranging from health to employment, but also to create stronger and longer-lasting relationships between veterans and the myriad services and community support resources available to them.

Minnesota's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program begins with a Family Reintegration Academy that prepares family members for the return of their loved one. Thirty days after returning from deployment, guard members are required to attend a mandatory training event that focuses on employment and health services and also emphasizes reconnecting soldiers with their families, who remain an active part of the training events. Soldiers also attend two additional all-day training sessions, held 60 and 90 days following return from Iraq or Afghanistan. These sessions involve thorough assessments of guard members for health and other potential obstacles to reintegration, anger management and substance abuse counseling, and other services helpful for reacclimating to civilian life. Beyond the Yellow Ribbon also includes Community Reintegration Training. This part of the program trains community leaders in the challenges of reintegration and the ways in which a community can facilitate that difficult transition. Finally, the state holds Monthly Individual Training for service members who return to

the state to ensure each one receives the required resources and training to facilitate a return home.

South Dakota has created a 7-phase Reunion and Reintegration plan for all returning National Guard members. As in **Minnesota**, the system begins with reintegration training for the families of returning guard members, providing day-long family training events at the first two drill meetings for the guard unit. In addition, before the drill weekend, guard members receive phone calls to determine whether in-person meetings are necessary to deal with reintegration issues prior to the mandatory training sessions.

Appendix: State Reintegration Services

This appendix focuses on state programs providing reintegration services for National Guardsmen and women returning from active duty, but it includes many programs designed to assist these individuals and their families during deployment.

Each year, the National Governors Association compiles a separate state-by-state compendium of all state services available to National Guard members. The 2007 edition of this survey can be found at www.nga.org/guardsurvey.

Alabama

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In June of 2004 Governor Riley created Operation Grateful Heart to assist returning military personnel in their transition back to civilian life. The program receives funds from the US Department of Labor so there is a heavy focus on employment training and placement. The program also includes an emergency financial assistance program where servicemen and their families can apply for funds to address unexpected financial difficulties. The program also is linked to the Wounded Warrior program that provides treatment for wounded servicemen and employment services for those completing their health treatment. For more information on Operation Grateful Heart visit: <http://www.governor.state.al.us/ogh/>

Alaska

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Alaska National Guard website has a Family Programs link that provides a message board for Guard members and their families to post requests for information and responses. Message threads include grief counseling resources, information on summer camps for children of guard members and family counseling and benefit assistance resources available.

Arizona

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The state has prioritized increasing the number of Veterans Benefits Counselors in the state.
- Governor Napolitano created a Veterans Task force to analyze the state services and benefits and called for substantial increases to those services statewide.

Arkansas

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The state has extended educational benefits available for Guard members and reservists.
- The state has emphasized community service programs to help returning soldiers find employment and to help prevent divorce. These have been the two main problems they have tried to address as far as reintegration.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- While the state does not have a specific program, it has worked with energy companies to waive, reduce, or work out reasonable payment plans for families for whom deployment has created a financial strain.

California

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- California has passed legislation giving National Guard members preference when applying for civil service jobs as well as legislation that allows for preference to be given to the family members of servicemen killed in action.
- The California National Guard runs several programs independent of state involvement that are designed to assist Guard members reintegrate:
 - The California National Guard makes available a brochure for National Guard families entitled Finding Your New Normal. The brochure briefly describes some of the challenges posed by reintegration and offers some advice for how families can ease the transition process. The brochure also includes contact information for resources that can help families in this situation.
 - Peer-to-Peer Support workshops are held to help Guard members receive the necessary support through personal and professional crises and to help anticipate problems brought about by combat stress.
 - Marriage enrichment seminars are offered to help couples, including those facing the challenges that can arise after returning from an extended period on active duty.
 - The state National Guard makes available Transition Assistance Advisors to help Guard members navigate the state and federal veterans benefit system.
 - The California National Guard has its own Mental Health Department to help with combat stress control, suicide prevention, and psychological evaluations. More information can be found at www.calguard.ca.gov/mhtf/.
- California's CalVet program provides below market mortgage interest rates to qualified veterans when purchasing a home. For information on CalVet, visit: <http://www.cdva.ca.gov/calvet/>.

- The California Department of Labor, through its Veterans Employment and Training Services program (VETS), provides approximately \$17 million in employment programs to help all veterans find and keep suitable employment. In 2006 and 2007 the Department of Labor awarded 5 grants to non-profits around the state to help recently separated veterans find employment. In total \$2 million was awarded to fund programs specifically targeted for new veterans.

Colorado

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- The Colorado National Guard has a Family Readiness Program designed to support the families of Guard members during deployment. The program offers events for National Guard families, as well as counseling and other services through the National Guard Chaplain's Office. More information can be found at: www.coloradoguard.army.mil/webpages/family_program.htm.
- The state has a Military Family Relief Fund designed to help families in times of financial distress during deployment.

Connecticut

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- The legislature has authorized a \$50 per month bonus (up to \$1000 total) to soldiers deployed in Southwest Asia.

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Connecticut has sponsored Heroes4Hire job fairs to help Iraq and Afghanistan veterans find employment. In order to maximize the number of employers attending, participants are charged no registration or admission fee.
- Connecticut has a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Veterans Administration that allows severely injured veterans to volunteer to have their medical information shared with their state (this program began as a pilot in Florida).
- Connecticut's Military Support Program offers a toll-free number to returning soldiers and their families to call for counseling support for issues that arise during deployment and redeployment. For more information on the Military Support Program visit www.ct.gov/msp/site/default.asp.
- The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs has an Operation Outreach page that provides links to helpful reintegration services at the state and federal level, including the Connecticut Military Support Program. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/ctva/cwp/view.asp?a=1992&q=383776.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs also has an active campaign to encourage wounded veterans in the state to contact the Department to make sure they are receiving all the services they need.

Delaware

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In November of 2006, Governor Minner established the Delaware National Guard and Reserve Emergency Assistance Fund to assist Guardsmen, Reservists and their families with unexpected financial hardships.
- The Delaware General Assembly approved a law that requires the State to reimburse Service Members' group Life Insurance premiums for Delaware National Guard members mobilized federally or by the State for more than thirty consecutive days.
- In September 2007, a formal Memorandum of Understanding was enacted between senior officials from the Delaware National Guard, Delaware Department of Labor, United States Department of Veterans Affairs and other support agencies. This MOU established clarity in communication and synchronization of support efforts between each agency and ensures that all returning veterans have transition assistance and guidance.
- In March 2006, the Delaware National Guard and Reserve Foundation was chartered as a 501(c)(3) public charity. This Foundation provided emergency financial assistance to all Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans from any Reserve Component unit (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard) based within the State.
- In August 2007, a newly constructed processing center for Soldier Readiness Processing was created at the Joint Force Headquarters in Wilmington. The facility was designed and built using state funds. This new center expedites individual readiness processing and provides state-of-the-art medical equipment and computer equipment to the staff.
- All Soldiers returning from deployment undergo reintegration activities at 30, 60, and 90 day intervals. Specific support programs ranging from psychological, medical, personnel, family, marriage enrichment, veteran's affairs, and employer support are covered in great detail.

Florida

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Governor Bush began a pilot program with the United States Veterans Administration to allow for better transfer of information from the federal government to the state government when wounded servicemen are returning to their home state. Servicemen have to volunteer to have their information shared, but it allows the state to provide a more seamless transition in care for disabled veterans. This pilot program was considered a great success and has since been expanded to other states.

- Florida has created a Family Readiness Program Assistance fund which provides need-based assistance to families during deployment. This program was expanded in 2007 to include grants for servicemen and their families to address financial hardships in the 120 days following combat deployment.
- The Florida National Guard also has an emergency relief fund to provide aid to Florida National Guard families in severe financial crisis.
- Florida has passed a law giving preference to veterans in applying for positions within state government.
- Florida has passed a law providing additional property tax relief to veterans with combat related disabilities.

Georgia

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Georgia offers a website for returning guardsmen, reservists, and their families. The website includes drop-down menus to direct users to websites for services in health, employment and education. The website can be found at www.gov.state.ga.us/veterans/.
- Governor Perdue has pledged that any serviceman returning to Georgia in need of employment can contact his office and get employment.
- In 2006, Georgia funded the GI Bill for Georgia which provides National Guard and Reserve members returning from combat zone service with educational grants of up to \$2000 per year for 4 years of study at a Georgia state school.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- Georgia offers many of the same benefits and protections for deployed soldiers and their families as New York and Ohio regarding state income tax exemptions, waivers for licensure, and educational assistance.

Hawaii

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Hawaii Department of Defense offers a Family Program to help Guard members and their families access benefits and prepare for troop deployments and reintegration.
- The Hawaii Office of Veterans Services offers temporary counseling services for Guard members who have returned from active duty.
- Hawaii National Guard has a Family Support coordinator on every island to help returning Guard members and their families understand the benefits and other services available to them.

Idaho

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Division of Veterans Services Office of Veterans Advocacy coordinates briefings for returning soldiers to make them aware of benefits.
- The Department of Employment employs someone dedicated to helping veterans find employment.

Illinois

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The state created a Veterans Care health care program. Veterans Care is designed to provide affordable, comprehensive health care to thousands of Illinois Veterans who do not qualify for coverage through the federal Veterans Administration.
- Governor Blagojevich and IDVA Director Tammy Duckworth recently announced a new program to expand healthcare benefits to Veterans suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs and Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services are scheduled to launch a 24-hour, toll-free hotline that provides psychological assistance to all Illinois Veterans. The toll-free number will be staffed by trained clinicians, nurses and at least one trained psychiatrist who are experts in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other psychological issues facing Veterans.
- All Illinois National Guard service members will be screened for TBI when they return from deployment.
- The state has launched a \$30M pilot program, called the *G-I Loan for Heroes* program, to help veterans and active duty personnel afford homes by offering them low interest mortgages and closing cost assistance.
- Illinois employers receive a tax credit of up to \$600 annually for each veteran of OEF, OIF or Desert Storm hired.
- Since 2005, the state has hired 25 new veteran service officers.
- The state is completing the construction on an 80 bed addition to the state's LaSalle Veterans' Home.
- The state has created a scratch-off lottery ticket game called Veterans Cash. 100% of the proceeds from this lottery ticket go to support Illinois Veterans through grants to fund additional services or fund research relating to PTSD, homelessness, health insurance costs, long term care and disability benefits.

Indiana

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- National Guardsmen who have served on active duty are entitled to priority for placement in an employment or training program administered by the Department of Workforce Development for up to one year after discharge as long as the member is otherwise eligible for the program.
- The Hoosier Veterans' Seamless Transition Program is designed to help National Guard members and reservist. 90 to 120 days after they return from deployment Guard members go to their armory and relevant state and federal agencies present information on their programs and set up tables to help them fill out all their necessary paperwork for veterans' claims, healthcare, etc. The program was started through an MOU between the relevant agencies and began in August of 2006.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- The spouse of a National Guard member on active duty is entitled to priority for placement in a Department of Workforce Development employment or training program if the spouse is otherwise eligible for the program.
- Indiana has created a Military Family Relief Fund which provides grants for families for needs such as housing, utilities, food, medical services, and transportation. Grants do not exceed \$2,000 annually.
- The Indiana Veterans' Trust Fund provides higher grants for those individuals and situations not covered by the Military Family Relief Fund.
- Indiana has passed laws exempting military pay while on orders to a combat zone from the state income tax. The Guardsman can take that deduction or elect to take up to a \$5,000 exemption, whichever they choose. Other laws expand tuition benefits for military personnel and allow for military exemptions from jury duty.
- The state's Military Family Leave law allows members of the families of Guardsmen on orders to active duty to take up to 10 days unpaid leave from their employment to visit the Guardsmen at key times during their activation.

Iowa

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In his 2007 State of the State Address, Governor Culver proposed a \$6.5M Operation Enduring Freedom Support Program. The program would provide health assistance for the severely injured, housing and other financial assistance for newly returning veterans.

Kentucky

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- In July of 2007 Kentucky created a Military Assistance Trust Fund which provides up to \$5,000 in any 12-month period for financial problems directly related to the deployment outside the United States of a service member.

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Kentucky Wounded or Disabled Veterans Program was created in 2007 to help ease the transition from active service for wounded and disabled veterans. The program ensures that these veterans access all the state and federal veterans benefits to which they are entitled.
- The Kentucky National Guard's Transition Assistance Advisor contacts the state's Department of Veterans Affairs to arrange veteran benefit briefings at National Guard Homecoming events.

Kansas

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Lieutenant Governor Mark Parkinson's website contains a comprehensive list of all benefits available to veterans and their families. The site does not specify which of these programs have been initiated since the start of the Iraqi War and which have existed for longer. The Lieutenant Governor's website can be found at www.governor.ks.gov/LtGov/veterans.htm. Programs of interest include:
 - Tuition assistance is provided to the dependents of anyone killed in action.
 - The FY08 budget has provided \$250,000 to allow any Kansas citizen returning from at least 90 days of active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan up to 10 semester of free tuition at any Kansas public college or university
 - An Emergency Relief program is available to members of the Kansas National Guard and Reserves and their families to help them meet financial obligations during periods of crisis.
 - State tax credits are given to businesses which employ a member of the Kansas National Guard or United States reserves who was unemployed when they were deployed.
 - Professional licenses are considered valid for at least 6 months after returning from deployment.
- Kansas has created 2 instant lottery games whose profits go to educational scholarships for national guardsmen and for the Kansas Veterans Home and Veteran Cemetery
- Governor Sebelius' FY07 budget proposed the expansion of veteran representative positions around the state as part of a 24% increase in funding for the state's veterans services.

Louisiana

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The state briefs returning Guard members and reservists about the benefits available to them and to inform them as to the process for filing veterans claims.
- The state has created a state tuition exemption for the dependents of severely injured personnel.

Maine

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Maine offers family and soldiers a briefing one month after re-deployment which includes the opportunity for one-on-one counseling with behavioral health professionals, a social event and other resource training.

Maryland

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The 2006 legislative session in Maryland included a number of pieces of legislation for veterans and their families:
 - The establishment of the Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship.
 - The expansion of eligibility for the Edward T. Conroy Memorial Scholarship to include the children and/or spouse of servicemen with 25 percent total disability who have exhausted other means of financial aid.
 - The establishment of a death benefit for Maryland.
 - The establishment of an Outreach and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans Affairs to help veterans and their dependents access specified benefits.
 - The establishment of a Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans.

Massachusetts

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Using some federal funding, the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services offers the Veterans' Outreach Initiative for Competitive Employment (VOICE). This program was created in 2005 to create an information bridge for veterans and employers to help link veterans with jobs, licensing and career training. The VOICE career services network can be found at:
db.state.ma.us/dvs/voice/default.asp.

- A regional vocational school in Massachusetts recently partnered with two high tech firms to offer a job training program for soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan one night a week at the school.
- The Department of Revenue offers filing extensions for state taxes for those serving in combat zones.
- The Veterans Center in Worcester, Massachusetts has partnered with a local yoga institute to offer free yoga for veterans suffering from PTSD.

Michigan

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In October of 2004, Michigan created a Military Family Relief Fund which provides emergency grants to National guard members and their families who are experiencing financial difficulty.
- The Michigan National Guard's Family Support Program offers resources for families of Guard members during and after deployment. Services include community support networks, family events and benefit assistance.
- The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth offers employment services for Veterans through their Career, Education and Workforce Programs division. Services include career fairs, employment training and online job databases.

Minnesota

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Minnesota has launched the LinkVet customer service line to help veterans locate services and benefits available to them, receive immediate crisis intervention as well as psychological counseling. The line is staffed 24 hours a day seven days a week.
- Minnesota has created the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program. The program, www.minnesotanationalguard.org/returning_troops/btyr_overview.php, entails:
 - The Family Reintegration Academy which prepares family members for the homecoming of their loved ones, gives them information as to the reintegration process and informs them of resources available to them as they go through the steps toward reintegration;
 - Initial integration training where every soldier is enrolled in the Veterans Administration, informed of their benefits and provided with the 10 Commandments of Reintegration Wallet Card;
 - A training event 30 days after redeployment that uses workshops to reconnect soldiers and their families. This includes a relationship workshop, a parenting

workshop, access to service providers to explain health benefits, and a job fair;

- A training event 60 days after return that is unit focused and includes a Post Deployment Re-Assessment and a TB test. Events include anger management training, and information on gambling and substance abuse counseling. At this forum the state police give a briefing on how laws have changed since deployment;
- A website run through the state National Guard which gives overviews of benefits and services available to returning troops as well as upcoming reintegration events;
- A training event after 90 days at which all returning combat veterans are given a thorough Post-Deployment Health Reassessment;
- The program includes Community Reintegration Training where community leaders are educated as to the challenges of reintegration and what a community can do to ease that transition; and
- Free marriage enrichment workshops
- Governor Pawlenty has called for a revision of the current federal Hands-Off policy that prevents Guard members from having mandatory guard activities for at least 60 days after they have returned from combat. Governor Pawlenty believes that this prevents some soldiers in need of assistance from receiving it in a timely manner.

Mississippi

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Mississippi provides all veterans with an annual publication describing state and federal veterans benefits and eligibility criteria.

Missouri

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Operation Outreach is a program focused on the delivery of resources, financial and otherwise to the service members active in the Global War on Terror and their families. The staff works to keep service members and their families up to date on evolving federal, state and local initiatives designed to make the transition back into communities and the home front as smooth as possible. The program's website can be found at: www.mvc.dps.mo.gov/OO/Info/Info.html. Information about the program:
 - The program was started in 2004.
 - It has coordinated the delivery of over \$900,000 in services and financial assistance to servicemen and their families. This has included keeping 21

homes out of foreclosure, advocating for appropriate care for PTSD and helping those with potential Traumatic Brain Injuries receive treatment.

- The program provides transition assistance and referrals for Service members and their families.
- Operation Outreach helps servicemen and their families receive appropriate legal services.
- The program was codified in statute and receives state appropriations.

Montana

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Montana National Guard has adopted portions of the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program to help returning Guard members locate the resources they need to assist with the reintegration process. The program offers a website which includes information on how to undertake different aspects of the reintegration process, such as health issues, legal issues, etc. Through this program, returning Guard members are given mandatory reintegration briefings after their return. More information on the program can be found at: www.montanaguard.com/byr/index.cfm
- At the request of the Governor, a Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) Task Force was recently convened to evaluate the adequacy of the Montana National Guard PDHRA program. The Governor and state Adjutant General are currently in the process of reviewing the Task Force recommendations and are developing a Campaign Plan to address each Task Force finding as well as developing additional services for service members and their families.
- The state's Department of labor and Industry has a designated Veterans Services office to help transition from redeployment to employment when necessary.
- The Governor introduced legislation that resulted in the enactment of a Military Family Relief Act. This new program, effective July 1, 2007 and administered by the State Department of Military Affairs, creates a three-tiered grant program for Montana Reserve Component Service Members.
- The Montana Legislature continues to fund the state-sponsored National Guard Scholarship Program. This program extends \$500,000 to the National Guard to offset the education costs of Soldiers and Airmen attending Montana Colleges and Universities. The scholarship greatly assists those returning Guard members who elect to further or complete their civilian education.

Nebraska

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Nebraska has created a 53-page guide for Guard members, reservists and their families which provides information and tips on deployment and redeployment. The guide can be found at www.neguard.com/FAMILYASSISTANCE/mobs/MOBdeMOB.pdf.
- The state Military Department holds demobilization briefings that include counseling and connecting returning soldiers with a Veterans reemployment officer.

Nevada

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Nevada has created a Patriot fund, which is run through a non-profit in the state. The fund goes to help the families of soldiers who are deployed or recently redeployed to help them meet unexpected financial needs.

New Hampshire

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- New Hampshire is starting a new pilot program with the state's Department of Health and Human Services and an Easter Seals organization to develop a Joint Family Support Assistance Program. The goal is to develop mobile, high quality, effective and efficient assistance to service members and their family. The emphasis will be on those people geographically dispersed from military installations. Through an analysis of services already available gaps in current service were found that state leaders hope to address through the pilot. The analysis is expected to yield:
 - Increased case management and service coordination;
 - More of a reliance on community-based solutions;
 - Greater access to emergency financial assistance for veterans and family;
 - Enhanced risk assessment and service planning prior to deployment; and
 - Increased inclusion of non-profit and philanthropic organizations.
- New Hampshire offers a Reunion and Reentry from Combat Program for all returning National Guard members and reservists. The program works as follows:
 - Prior to redeployment, families and guardsmen receive briefings on PTSD, suicide awareness and managing expectations.
 - Children receive age appropriate counseling/support.
 - Within 36 hours of returning to NH, the soldiers receive 3 days of processing which the families are invited to attend. Day 1 addresses key personnel and administrative issues; Day 2 includes mandatory counseling from the Vet Center and introduction to services at the Manchester VA and Vet Center;

Day 3 facilitated sessions are given to get new veterans to talk with other veterans about their experiences.

- In June of 2006 Governor Lynch signed into law a bill that retains National Guardsmen and reserves as state employees with partial pay and continuing benefits when called to active duty.
- Soldiers serving in the either Iraq and Afghanistan are eligible for a \$100 pay bonus.

New Jersey

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Governor Corzine has signed legislation directing the state's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to evaluate the resources, costs and benefits of providing home health care aides to injured veterans.
- New Jersey passed a law extending eligibility for higher education tuition assistance to members of the National Guard.
- New Jersey created a state-run counseling hotline that offers mental health counseling. The hotline is run through a partnership between the Commission for Veteran Affairs and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The mental health professionals working the 24/7 hotline specialize in Post-Traumatic Stress disorder. The most recent state budget included an additional \$500,000 to expand the hotline and ensure that a backlog of callers does not develop.
- Governor Corzine and the New Jersey State Legislature appropriated an additional \$1M to help veterans returning from the War on Terror. A task force was convened to determine how this money could most effectively be spent. The task force will release its recommendation in September.
- The state has a transitional housing program for veterans – this program has existed for a while, but has received additional funds in the most recent budget.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and their families while deployed:

- New Jersey has awarded approximately \$300,000 in grants to benefit families of deployed soldiers through their Deployed Military Spouses Program. The money goes to help families facing costs in areas of child care, transportation, or job training.

New Mexico

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services makes available a white paper put together by a private consulting group called Helping Veterans Return: Community, Family and Job. However, this report is not specific to the returning veteran population in New Mexico.

- New Mexico has created a program giving all National Guard members in Iraq a \$250,000 life insurance policy.
- Governor Richardson has proposed the creation of a state Military Family Fund. To date, it does not appear that this fund has been created.
- The state's Division of Veterans Affairs has hosted a conference for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to talk about available benefits.

New York

Initiatives designed for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Vets:

- The Patriot Plan: Since the beginning of the Iraq War, New York has passed into law four Patriot Plans. These pieces of legislation have been designed to offer employment and financial protection for guardsmen and reservists. Information on New York's Patriot Plan can be found at www.dmna.state.ny.us/members/patriot2.htm. Benefits and protections include:
 - Prohibition against soliciting a New York resident in active duty to waive a right granted under the State Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act;
 - Prevention of life insurance lapsing for two years from the end of active duty due to unpaid premiums;
 - Protects servicemen from having a storage lien placed on household goods;
 - Extends state tuition scholarship assistance to servicemen active in the Persian Gulf since September 11th ;
 - Creates a MERIT Scholarship program for disabled veterans and/or the families of disabled veterans or veterans killed on active duty;
 - Exempts military pay from the state income tax;
 - Places a maximum 6 percent interest rate on debt incurred prior to entering active duty;
 - Provides supplemental military leave to state employees; and
 - Waives various licensing requirements for servicemen for 12 months after returning from active duty.
- In 2007, Governor Spitzer announced the creation of the Homes for Veterans program designed to help veterans buy homes by offering a below market mortgage interest rate.
- In May of 2007, Governor Spitzer made funds available to increase family support and counseling services in the Fort Drum area for the families of deployed servicemen.
- Governor Spitzer gave priority to returning military personnel for admissions to the St. Lawrence Addiction Treatment Center.
- New York has formed an Inter-Agency Task Force to examine how services for servicemen and their families can be improved.

North Carolina

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- North Carolina has created the Returning Support for Veterans Program operated through the state's Department of Health and Human Services. This program acts as an information and referral resource to inform veterans and their families of the benefits available to them in terms of health, education and employment. The program operates a toll-free care line from 8-5 Monday through Friday, but has recently received additional funding from the state's General Assembly to extend the hours to 24 hours a day seven days a week. The program sends a letter to each returning veteran from the Governor informing them of the resources available to them. Additional information on the program can be found at: www.dhhs.state.nc.us/veterans.htm.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- Governor Easley recently appropriated \$100,000 to help military families with child care costs.

North Dakota

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- The state National Guard manages an Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee. This committee is designed to help families with various issues during deployment.

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In 2007, the state expanded its National Guard Tuition Assistance Program to include trade schools.
- The state also amended child custody statutory language to prevent soldiers from losing custody when called to serve.
- The state has increased its death benefit for the families of soldiers killed in action.
- The state participates in the information sharing program with the VA first started in Florida that allows severely injured servicemen to approve the transfer of their medical information from their federal treatment facilities to their home state.

Ohio

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Ohio Cares program is a joint effort between the Ohio National Guard and the Ohio Department of Drug and Alcohol Services that attempts to raise

awareness among civilian counselors of the mental health and substance abuse issues soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan might have. Information on the Ohio Cares program can be found at

www.ohionationalguard.com/ohiocares/

- The Ohio National Guard and the regional office of the Department of Veterans Affairs are negotiating an MOU to provide comprehensive informational sessions are available for Guardsmen and their families during different stages of deployment.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and their families while deployed:

- Ohio also has a Patriot Plan similar to New York's. The Ohio Patriot Plan offers nine protections for servicemen and their families while on active duty:
 - Children whose parents are deployed overseas are allowed to remain in the same school without disruption for the period of deployment.
 - Family members are protected from eviction during deployment provided the active service member is included on the lease.
 - Military personnel deployed overseas may terminate a cellular telephone contract without penalty.
 - Utility companies are prohibited from disconnecting the residence of a financially dependent family member while the service member is on active duty.
 - Military personnel are allowed to terminate a care lease without penalty if they are called up to active duty.
 - Interest on installment loans is limited to six percent while a service member is on active duty.
 - The Insurance Department is required to protect the rights of military personnel's ability to continue, suspend or convert health insurance while on active duty.
 - Life Insurance policies: Cannot lapse during active deployment or 2 years after end of insured's active duty.
 - Colleges are required to grant leaves of absence for service members called up to active duty. Upon reenrollment, students must be allowed to return to their previous level without loss of credit, scholarships or grants.

Oklahoma

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In 2005 Governor Henry established the state's Operation Homefront. The program's website can be found at www.ok.ngb.army.mil/HomeFront/index.htm. The program:
 - Provides a tax exemption for military pension income for all veterans;

- Purchases a \$250,000 life insurance policy for every National Guard member; and
- Creates a Military Family Relief Fund that provides funding for Oklahoma Guard members, reservists and their families in financial distress. Under the plan, a check-off box will be included on the state tax form to allow people to voluntarily donate to the fund.

Oregon

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs has a webpage devoted to soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The site offers a welcome message from the Commissioner of the department and offers links to the federal and state Department of Veterans Affairs, a list of veteran benefits, information on the home-loan program, educational assistance, and re-employment rights. The website can be found at www.odva.state.or.us/ODVA/WelcomeHome.shtml.
- The Oregon National Guard has a reintegration website which has a wealth of information for returning guardsmen and their families. The website can be found at oregonarmyguard.or.ngb.army.mil/reinteg/index.html. Information on the website includes:
 - A downloadable reintegration resource manual;
 - The state's reintegration MOU between state and federal agencies;
 - The Army's Wounded Warrior hotline number;
 - Contact information for each of the state's Vet Centers; and
 - Links to information on education, employment and other benefits.
- Oregon has launched the Voyage Program to assist any Guard members who have been on active duty since September 11th with educational costs.
- Oregon's National Guard has a Career Transition Assistance program that offers job listings, career counseling and training to guardsmen in search of a new job.

Pennsylvania

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Governor Rendell has signed legislation extending eligibility for educational assistance grants for National Guardsmen who serve on active duty in a combat zone.
- Governor Rendell has also signed legislation allowing Guardsmen and reservist who are students and receive health care through their parents to retain coverage for a period as long as their service in active duty provided they remain a fulltime student.

- Pennsylvania's Military Family Relief Assistance Program provides limited financial assistance to servicemen and their families while they are on active duty.
- Pennsylvania has a Memorandum of Understanding between the state's Division of Military Affairs, the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Employment so that each agency is notified when Guardsmen and reservists are returning home so that the agency can offer appropriate services to them at that time.

Puerto Rico

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Puerto Rico recently enacted new legislation that expands benefits for military personnel. The new law provides employment protection for Guard members who have been away due to active duty call-ups and gives military personnel priority in accessing a state program to help first time homebuyers.

Rhode Island

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Rhode Island has a Military Family Relief fund which awards grants to Guard members and their families in times of financial difficulty.
- Governor Carcieri created the Every Company Counts initiative through Executive Order in 2005. Through this program, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation is charged with:
 - Providing management training, strategic training and customer networking services to returning Guard members who own small businesses;
 - Providing necessary training and support services to Guard members who would like to start their own business;
 - Providing all returning guard members with access to job skill training and access to existing employment opportunities; and
 - Reaching out to Rhode Island businesses to hire returning National Guard members.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and their families while deployed:

- The Rhode Island National Guard's Family Program publishes a quarterly newsletter to make the families of Guard members aware of events and programs around the state to help them adapt to the deployment of a loved one and prepare

for their return. An example of the newsletter can be found at riguard.com/downloads/family/2qtrnews2007.pdf.

- In 2005, an Executive granted Guard members and their spouses an automatic extension for filing state income taxes as well as a prohibition on income tax collection efforts for six months upon their return from active duty.

South Carolina

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- South Carolina has partnered with the United States Veterans Administration to offer job/health fairs for returning service men. The fairs involve a health screening and employment services.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- South Carolina has created a Military Family Relief Fund. Deployed military members (Guardsmen and reservists) can apply for financial assistance if they sustain a substantial drop in salary when becoming active military.

South Dakota

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- South Dakota has created a state Reintegration Plan that spells out a 7-phase Reunion and Reintegration plan for all returning National Guard members. The plan:
 - Phase 1: Family Combat Stress Briefing. This briefing occurs 2 weeks before demobilization. Families receive presentations from veterans and mental health professionals, discuss signs of PTSD, and discuss the book *Down Range: To Iraq and Back*.
 - Phase 2: Soldier/Airmen Pre-redeployment Briefings. This is a health survey of returning personnel, including mental health questions.
 - Phase 3: Deactivation Ceremony. Stress management resources are made available to service members and their families at this ceremony.
 - Phase 4: WE CARE contacts. Two weeks following deactivation returning personnel are given follow-up phone calls, with personal visits as necessary.
 - Phase 5: Welcome Home Letter to all veterans. This “Welcome Home” letter is a resource packet that provides information on Troop and Family Counseling Services, veterans benefits, information on the Vet Center and the federal One Source system. This letter arrives 4-6 weeks after deactivation or discharge.
 - Phase 6: Combat Stress Brief. At the first drill weekend, which is within 30 days of redeployment, soldiers and families are given another briefing to raise awareness and identify signs of PTSD.
 - Phase 7: Post-Deployment Health Redeployment. This occurs at the second drill weekend. At this briefing, every soldier receives a physical and mental

screening and survey with DOD medical contract professionals. Soldiers have a private meeting with the chaplain and receive a further briefing on Tricare, veterans and educational benefits.

- South Dakota National Guard provides married couples with the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program.
- The state's National Guard and Veterans Affairs Department hold joint annual Veterans summits in each of the state's 4 largest cities. These summits focus on health and wellness issues, Tricare, and benefits.

Texas

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Texas A&M has created a scholarship program for the families of veterans.
- The state has a housing program for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. The program provides rental subsidies as well as down payment assistance. Information on the housing program can be found at www.tdhca.state.tx.us/home-division/htf/docs/07-VetsNOFA.pdf.
- The Texas Military Forces State Family Program offers a number of services to the families of deployed and redeployed troops. Programs include:
 - Emergency Relief for unexpected financial hardship for Guard members and their families;
 - Free preschool for the children of activated Texas Soldiers and Airmen;
 - Marriage enrichment retreats;
 - A transition website that provides job information for returning Guard members; and
 - Family Reintegration briefings for the families of Guard members prior to the return of their loved one.

Utah

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Returning service men and women receive briefings outlining the benefits and assistance available to them emphasizing employment and training.
- The state holds workshops for veterans on how to start your own business and how to apply for a federal job.
- The state has established a statewide counseling program for service members and their immediate family. Counseling is available to family members starting 60 days prior to redeployment and is available until one year following redeployment.

Tennessee

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Tennessee National Guard offers a Family Program that assists the families of Guard Members receive the support they need both during and after deployment.
- The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities contains on its website a paper highlighting the seriousness of PTSD as a result of service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The paper can be found at tennessee.gov/mental/omd/PTSDIraq.pdf.

Vermont

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Vermont National Guard and state Department of Veterans Affairs offers the Military, Family and Community Network which is intended to develop a network between the military, state and federal government and the private sector to create awareness as to the programs available for returning soldiers. Any state resident can join the network in their area to help raise awareness as to the veterans services available and to advocate locally for current gaps in services to be addressed.

Virgin Islands

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- The Family Program in Virgin Islands' National Guard includes Operation Ready which provides:
- Practical readiness training to help Guard families prepare for deployment and return;
- An introduction to the Guard's Family Assistance Center resources and Family Readiness Group activity; and
- Training classes to help Guard families cope with stress and make reunions from overseas deployments work.
- The Virgin Islands has a specific reintegration plan for returning soldiers that includes four phases:
 - In Phase I, which takes place 3 days post-deployment, soldiers attend debriefing sessions, learn about and register for benefits and services, and attend family life sessions with their families.

- Phases II – IV take place 7-60 days, 60-120 days, and 180-plus days post deployment and include marriage enrichment programs, follow-up group workshops, and follow-on mental health counseling and long term care and support.

Virginia

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Virginia holds expositions to notify veterans (especially guardsmen) of benefits for which they may be eligible.
- Virginia has staged a pilot program enabling veterans to file claims at Wal-Mart.
- Governor Kaine has signed an Executive Order directing the state Department of Veterans Affairs to look at ways to improve services for veterans.

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- Virginia has created a program to increase benefits for the surviving spouses of service members killed as a result of military service.

Washington

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Washington hosts Family Activity days within three to six months of Guard Members and Reservists returning home. The workshops offer a wide variety of resources in one location providing on-site assistance in applying for education benefits, mental health readjustment counseling, veterans disability compensation benefits, employment training and opportunities as well as health screening options.
- Washington actively conducts outreach programs in rural areas of the state so that returning personnel are aware of services available to them.
- Washington has passed legislation giving veterans preference when applying for state jobs.
- Washington has passed a law waiving tuition and fees for the children and spouses of military veterans or National Guard members who are killed, as well as disabled POW/MIAs.
- Washington has a PTSD program that is designed to create community-based avenues to counseling service that are less formal. The program is open to any honorably discharged veteran as well as state National Guard members, active duty personnel, reservists and their families who were deployed in support of a war or peacekeeping mission. Information on the PTSD program can be found at www.dva.wa.gov/ptsd_counseling.html.
- Free counseling is also available to educate teachers and school counselors of the potential needs of school-aged children of war exposed parents.

New programs specific to Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan:

- A one-time grant of up to \$1000 is available to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are experiencing financial hardships to the significant period of time spent in service.
- Washington offers grants to innovative initiatives that provide crisis and emergency relief, education, training and employment assistance to veterans and their families in their communities.
- The Veterans Compensation Corp assists veterans, particularly those recovering from war trauma or PTSD, by providing volunteer opportunities on projects that help protect and restore Washington's rivers, streams, lakes, marine waters and open lands.
- Washington partners with the Madigan Army Medical Center Warrior Transition Battalion to assist active duty, National Guard or Reservists with job transition. Efforts include analyzing the effectiveness of transition assistance efforts, serving as a transition resource hub, providing access to benefits and services in other states for soldiers who are relocating; and working directly with injured soldiers and families to provide access to benefits prior to military discharge.

West Virginia

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- National Guard members are eligible for a bonus if they serve in either Iraq or Afghanistan for six months.

Wisconsin

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- In 2004 the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs launched Mission Welcome Home which is designed to help service members' transition from active duty to everyday life. The program's website can be found at dva.state.wi.us/Welcomehome.asp. The program consists of two main components:
 - An Ambassador Program to give each veteran the active community support they need. This program entails connecting soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with older veterans who are experienced in utilizing the veteran benefit system and can speak with newer veterans about their experiences and the challenges they face.
 - Welcome Home Packets to inform returning soldiers of the state and federal benefits available to eligible veterans.

- Wisconsin offers home loans, personal loans and retraining grants to qualifying veterans.
- Wisconsin supports the Troops to Teachers Program which offers eligible Guard and Reserve members a stipend to cover costs of licensure as they work toward certification and placement.
- In 2005, Wisconsin greatly expanded educational benefits available to veterans with the Wisconsin GI bill. Benefits include:
 - Veterans receive a 100% remission of tuition and fees for 128 credits at any University of Wisconsin System or Wisconsin Technical College System institution.
 - Dependents are also given 100% remission if the veteran has a service connected disability rated at 30% or greater or died in the line of duty or as a result of a service connected disability.

Wyoming

Initiatives designed for soldiers and families while deployed:

- The state has strengthened laws dealing with Guard members retaining pay, and health insurance benefits while deployed.

Initiatives designed for soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families:

- Wyoming has a Military Assistance Trust fund to provide financial relief to service members and their families during times of emergency.
- The state's Veterans Commission conducts outreach visits to all veterans and their families.