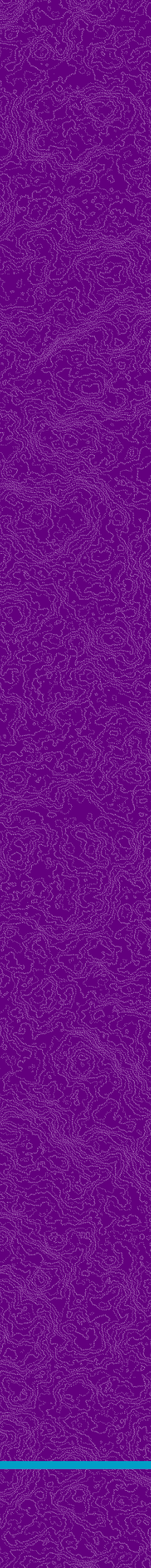


NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVE FAMILY READINESS STRATEGIC PLAN: 2000-2005

“Charting a comprehensive blueprint
for Total Force family support
in the 21st century”





INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the Cold War, members of the Guard and Reserve are being called to active duty to an unprecedented extent. Indeed, in recent years we have repeatedly called reservists to duty involuntarily for missions in Bosnia, Kosovo and Southwest Asia. Contingency operations like these have placed enormous strains on our service members and their families, and have helped demonstrate that mission readiness and family readiness are inextricably intertwined. We cannot continue to rely on our reservists, who now comprise half our Total Force, if their families are not ready to weather the stresses and strains of separations and long deployments.



The Department of Defense (DoD) is working tirelessly to enhance its efforts to support reserve families. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OASD(RA)) and the



Office of Family Policy (OFP) (within the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel Support, Families and Education) have formed a strategic partnership to develop a National Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan. This plan seeks to ensure that reservists and their families are prepared to cope with the strains associated with long or repeated deployments and are adequately served by military family care systems, networks and organizations.

BACKGROUND

The Guard and Reserve provide an important source of trained manpower and expertise for America's military. They are increasingly relied upon to balance our nation's commitments and mission requirements in the Department of Defense (DoD). They are an essential element of the Total Force.

When mobilized, reservists and their families face unique challenges and barriers. Reserve families are geographically dispersed and live and work in over four thousand communities across the Nation. Often, they do not live near military installations where family support services are most readily available, and they may not know what services are available. Even when they are aware of available services, they may encounter difficulties in accessing them.

The 1985 Military Family Act was the first legislation to address the importance of military families, and it created the Office of Family Policy, which has significantly enriched family programs. DoD guidance on Family Policy (DoD Instruction 1342.17

dated 1988) addresses quality of life issues for all DoD components, including the Guard and Reserve. It provides guidance on a comprehensive family support system that consists of a network of agencies, programs, services and individuals that support military readiness by assisting families in coping with stresses associated with military service.



Past initiatives targeting reserve family readiness include Family Readiness Workshops and the Joint Reserve Family Readiness Working Group, established in 1997, and the publication of "Family Readiness in the National Guard and Reserve Components" (DoD Instruction 1342.23 dated 1994). The Instruction directs the implementation of Guard and Reserve family programs and defines their relationship with

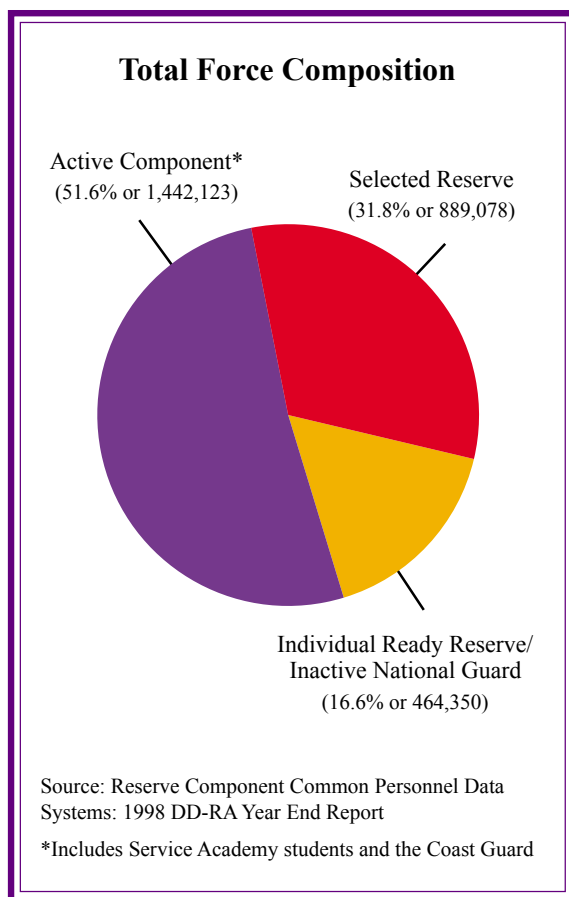


active component programs. Joint regional collaboration, information sharing about benefits and entitlements, points-of-contact, and training programs for family readiness are addressed in this instruction.

Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen's historic 1997 Total Force policy memorandum identified the goal of a seamless Total Force in which both the Reserve and Active components are fully integrated to address the full range of military requirements in the 21st century. That goal focused DoD attention on issues related to cultural and structural barriers to Total Force integration.

In October 1998, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs launched a partnership with OFP to develop a Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan. This strategic plan addresses the following issues:

- Using technology to provide more cost-effective support to families
- Increasing the availability of services to Reserve component families
- Enhancing employer support to reservists and improving job security
- Ensuring health care continuity
- Reducing costly duplication of services
- Assessing and reducing the impact of OPTEMPO on children
- Enhancing recruiting and retention through mutually supportive family readiness programs



GUARD & RESERVE FAMILY READINESS

In September 1999, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs hosted a Reserve component strategic planning conference to create a vision and develop a plan for Guard and Reserve family readiness in the new millennium. Stakeholders from all seven Guard and Reserve components participated and represented a diverse cross-section of constituencies that included active and reserve officers and enlisted members, spouses, the American Red Cross, the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, ombudsmen, key volunteers, and family program personnel. Their task was to develop a blueprint for Guard and Reserve family readiness with measurable goals and strategies.

During the conference, the participants identified a common framework for Guard and Reserve family readiness. Stakeholders recognized that they faced common challenges, such as easy access to and continuity of healthcare, employer support, and the need to better utilize technology as a family readiness tool to link family members with their military spouse. The participants identified many issues that impact family readiness and embraced a commitment to work together to address those issues through an action plan. This plan seeks to :

- Support mission readiness through Reserve component family readiness
- Standardize service and inter-service requirements for providing family support to the Total Force

- Provide Guard and Reserve members with equitable and accessible benefits and entitlements
- Develop family readiness programs and services that enhance recruiting, retention, and quality of life

These themes provided the strategic framework for addressing family readiness, while acknowledging the link between mission capability and recruiting and retention.

Strategic Planning Process

The conference participants began with an historical assessment of the past, then focused on the present state of family readiness to lead them to a common vision of the future and how to proceed.

Reviewing Trends

- The Department of Defense is more involved in peacekeeping missions, and Guard and Reserve members are playing a greater role in those missions.
- Family readiness and support, particularly in the Guard and Reserve, has not kept pace with cultural changes and increasing mission demands.
- Total Force restructuring and downsizing continues, while missions increase for the Reserve components.
- A change in strategy is needed.

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONFERENCE

Participants also identified the external forces impacting Guard and Reserve family readiness. They explored categories of external forces: global (outside of the United States), social, cultural, defense, economic and political. Within these categories, the group identified over sixty external forces and determined that four of these had exhibited trends with far-reaching impact on family readiness. The group felt that these four critical trends should guide the prioritization of available resources. These four trends were:

- OPTEMPO has increased. Active component end strength reductions have increased the demand for Reserve component units to help support operational missions. The future promises an increased frequency in global missions, peacekeeping duties and humanitarian missions.
- The increased frequency of deployments for global missions will continue to place greater demands on the breadth and accessibility of family support programs and services.
- Reserve families are becoming more mobile and are frequently isolated from relatives. In the past, there were more single members in the reserve. Today, most are married. There are more single parent families, dual career families and blended families. The “baby boomer” generation is aging and eldercare is becoming an important consideration for many families.
- The Guard and Reserve are being increasingly deployed and their role has changed and expanded. Today, they serve side by side with their active duty counterparts around the globe.



The conference stakeholders discussed the present state of Guard and Reserve family readiness in terms of strengths, areas of concern, and opportunities.

GUARD & RESERVE FAMILY READINESS

Strengths:

- Recognition of the need for family readiness programs support at the DoD level
- Existing support structure
- Command support
- Volunteerism and dedicated personnel
- Community based Reserve components
- Better educated Guardsmen, Reservists and family consumers
- More highly skilled and trained military members
- Flexibility for structure of reserve family programs within the services
- Commanders familiarity with family programs

Areas of concern:

- Lack of inter- and intra-service access to family support services
- Geographic dispersion
- Civilian employment conflicts
- Lack of focus on family support before deployment and the need for standardization between services' family programs
- Communication between reservists and civilian employers and between family members and the military
- Retention
- Increased mobilization

- Pay and benefits
- Family readiness and support programs dependency on volunteers
- Lack of chain of command support
- Need for full-time family readiness positions

Opportunities:

- Utilize technology: Internet, video-conferencing and electronic mail
- Work together to share resources with Reserve and Active component programs
- Develop a Total Force approach for access to family readiness programs across services



STRATEGIC PLANNING CONFERENCE

- Emphasize the link between family readiness and mission readiness
- Give more attention to child and youth programs
- Partner with existing programs and agencies (i.e. American Red Cross, United Services Organization, Armed Services YMCA, etc.)
- Increase chain of command communication on family readiness
- Increase community outreach resources: market family readiness to the community and employers
- Educate employers and provide incentives for them to support employee participation in the Guard and Reserve
- Regionalize the family readiness programs across the United States, where feasible

In summary, participants recognized that there are numerous opportunities to enhance Guard and Reserve family readiness programs. Despite the differences among the services, there is a common need to address family readiness issues and a desire for enhanced family readiness programs. The participants recommended using the best practices and models and uniting the efforts of all seven Reserve components to establish viable family readiness programs.



The Case for Change

Twelve collective themes emerged through the group's acknowledgment of the present state of Guard and Reserve family readiness programs. The participants assessed their willingness to build the future of family readiness and determined the areas that need change and the degree of change needed.

GUARD & RESERVE FAMILY READINESS

THEMES

Commitment: action, command support, training and staffing. Includes resources and funding: personnel, equipment, facilities, dedicated resources and procurement of information technology

National Joint/Total Force Approach: collective effort starting at the top

Communications and Marketing: between Guard and Reserve members, commanders, employers, families, and the community. Use of technology; helpful member and family publications; congressional awareness; Veterans Affairs and service organizations

Employer Support of Guard and Reserve (ESGR) issues: employer understanding of the changed role of the Guard and Reserve

Full-time Family Readiness Staff: the impact of personnel and manpower reductions on the ability to support family readiness programs while sustaining mission and training requirements

Direction from the Top: policy provided by leadership

Standardize Outcome Measurements (pre, during, and post deployment): services have different standards and processes for family readiness and family support

Accessibility, Availability, and Continuity of Total Force Services: resources, training, continuity of medical treatment, Quality of Life services available to geographically separated personnel and publications

Organizational Structure: OASD, Reserve Affairs executive agent for change

Total Force Concept: action not words; command support, availability, inter-service cooperation

Predictability of Reserve OPTEMPO: increased demand for U.S. presence

Understanding Between Active and Reserve Component: communication, mutual acceptance and confidence

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONFERENCE

Discovering Common Ground

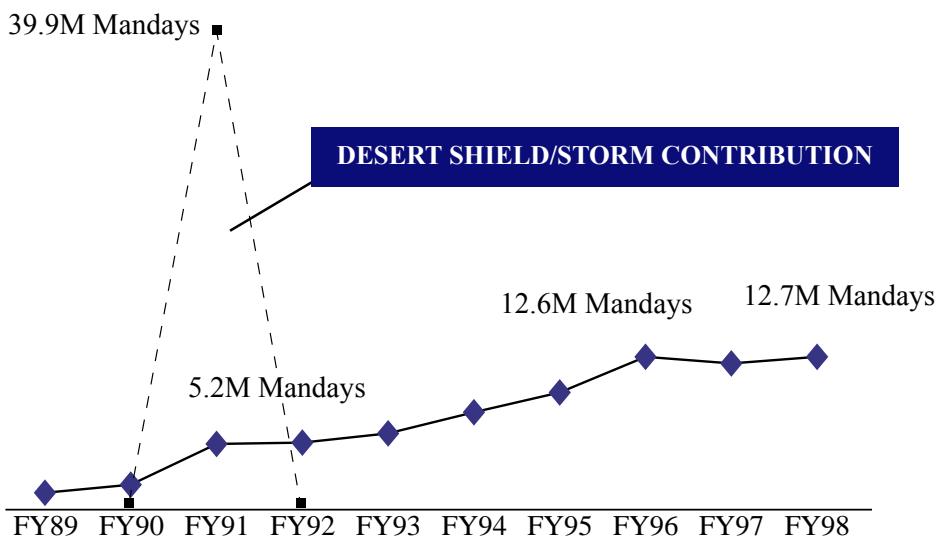
The September 1999 National Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Planning Conference developed a vision of Guard and Reserve family readiness programs for the future. Those programs addressed options to build strategic partnerships and provide appropriate levels of staffing, resources and standardization. The conference also concluded that family readiness programs must identify obtainable goals that help meet challenges and overcome barriers, and capitalize on opportunities for improvement. The resulting plan established a base for the strategic direction of Guard and Reserve family readiness that builds on common ground, making implementation more certain and more successful. Consensus emerged to develop a vision, mission and long-range goals for the future of Guard and Reserve family readiness programs. Those elements are outlined in the following section.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Vision statement:
**"Reserve Component families ~
always ready."**

Mission statement:
**"Ensure Total Force family
readiness."**



Over the past 3 years, the Guard and Reserve have contributed over 13 million mandays of support annually to Total Force missions; the equivalent of two Army divisions (35,000 personnel).

Source: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OASD/RA)

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. READINESS

Goal:

Support mission readiness through Reserve component family readiness.

Background:

- There is a direct relationship between family readiness and individual or unit readiness.
- Family attitudes affect retention and low retention affects Reserve component unit readiness.
- A reserve member's satisfaction with reserve service is directly related to the attitude of his or her family toward the member's participation in the Reserve components.
- Retention is strongly affected by the degree to which family members perceive that military leaders care about and provide support to reserve families.
- A survey of reserve members indicated that a majority considered the burden placed on their spouse as the principal family problem related to a mobilization or call to active duty.
- Members who are worried about their families because the family is having difficulty do not perform well on the job. In deployment situations, such distraction can result in inefficiencies and increase the risk of serious injury.
- Crises affecting family members of reservists can affect individual readiness if support mechanisms aren't available.

- Assisting with family preparations for mobilization and ensuring family support is available to address the stresses associated with military service will provide reservists and family members with peace of mind.
- It is clear that family readiness can directly affect mission readiness.

Strategies:

- Define the elements of family readiness that support unit and individual readiness in clear and compelling terms.
- Publish a Department-wide policy statement that communicates senior leadership commitment to family readiness.
- Involve all levels of leadership in family support, family readiness and quality of life activities.
- Establish and enforce command responsibilities for family readiness as a part of achieving unit readiness.
- Establish a Total Force family readiness office responsible for Reserve component, service and joint programs.

Performance Measures

- Signed policy statements that establish the linkage between family readiness and mission readiness.
- Command and unit level programs that establish family readiness as an element of unit readiness.
- Establishment of a DoD-level Total Force family readiness office.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

2. DEVELOP PROGRAMS

Goal:

Develop family readiness programs and services that improve quality of life and support recruiting and retention.

Background:

- With the Guard and Reserve performing more peacetime missions, family readiness is important every day, not just for large-scale mobilizations.
- The stresses of military life on the family are as important to Reserve component quality of life as they are to Active component quality of life.
- Reserve component members need access to quality of life services and information just as Active component members do.
- For a typical reservist with a family and a full-time civilian job, hours spent on the reserve job mean less time available to spend with the family.
- Recruiting and retention in the Reserve components can be directly affected by the level of support and commitment that leadership is perceived to have toward family support and family readiness.
- There is reluctance at various levels of command to commit resources to family support as a Reserve component quality of life issue.
- Funding for such efforts can pay significant dividends and is essential to Reserve component quality of life.

- The Guard and Reserve are community-based across the nation, providing opportunities to develop effective and cost-efficient programs to support Reserve component family readiness through the use of volunteers.
- Quality of life, as measured by an individual and family members' satisfaction with the Reserve components, directly affects the member's decision to join and remain in part-time military service.



Strategies:

- Leverage technology, education and partnerships to communicate to all levels of command the importance of family support and family readiness to quality of life for Reserve component members.
- Consistent with DoD guidelines for a seamless Total Force, integrate family care programs, promote family readiness centers, support programs and assistance training that serve all services and all components.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- Define the elements of family readiness and Reserve component quality of life that impact recruiting and retention in clear and compelling terms.
- Establish inter-service and inter-community quality of life committees at state and regional levels.
- Ensure unit commanders address family readiness and support as a quality of life initiative both internal and external to unit activities. Provide information to facilitate access to and continuity of health care. Dedicate manpower and other unit resources as required to ensure family support and readiness goals are achieved.
- Routinely schedule family support activities and family readiness training for unit members and their families.
- Partner with recruiting stations, Veterans' Service Organizations, community organizations (churches, schools, etc.), Department of Veterans Affairs offices and others to provide maximum coverage to extend services in remote and geographically separated areas.



Performance Measures:

- Reduced attrition in the Selected Reserve that can be attributed to family support initiatives.
- Partnerships established with organizations and agencies to provide enhanced family services and family support to Reserve component families.
- Decline in deployment-related problems for Reserve component families.
- State and regional quality of life committees established.
- Increase in family support activities and training events, in family access to information and service, and in command or leadership involvement in family activities.
- Effectiveness of joint service family readiness centers in providing support to Reserve component families.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

3. BENEFITS AND ENTITLEMENTS

Goal:

Provide Guard and Reserve members equitable and accessible benefits and entitlements.

Background:

- Guard and Reserve units and individuals are being assigned more and more missions in direct support of combatant Commanders-in-Chief and service commands to assist in accomplishing peacetime operations and reducing Active component OPTEMPO.
- Reserve component training and operational deployments have increased resulting in more frequent family separations.
- Deployments disrupt family routine and often adversely affect quality of life for members and their families.
- Military training, professional development and other requirements to enhance individual military qualifications also increase the frequency of family separations and civilian job conflicts.
- The geographic dispersion of Guardsmen and Reservists across the nation means that many reserve families are not located near military installations or family readiness centers.
- The limited availability of Reserve component members for training and other duty further reduces their opportunities for the most direct access to family support programs or services.
- There is a need to inform members and families of their benefits and entitlements. It cannot be assumed that the member's family will always be ready when the member deploys.
- Child care can be a major challenge for some members and their families.
- The drawdown has resulted in units being disestablished and missions shifted as the force structure has been reshaped and realigned. This has resulted in many Guard and Reserve members traveling greater distances from home in order to continue their participation in the Reserve components and maintain their part-time military careers. This has created additional strains on relationships with the family and civilian employer.
- The proximity of available services is critical when problems arise.

Strategies:

- Establish education programs that teach families about (a) available benefits and services; (b) how to prepare for family separation during periods of activation; (c) how to serve as a volunteer supporter; and (d) understanding the military chain of command and how to communicate effectively with the military command structure.
- Ensure leaders provide training for family members and family support group members, develop family readiness packets and encourage family members to serve as volunteers, and ensure that family members stay involved and communicate with the chain of command.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- Ensure that leadership establishes and maintains a plan for frequent communication to provide families with updated telephone-trees, newsletters, web pages and other media that effectively share information.
- Provide information to families during unit mobilizations, deployments, and training, which should include any important command information (that can be released) concerning the type of unit, the mission and duration of deployments.
- Provide inter-service access for family readiness programs and services to Reserve component members and their families, regardless of service.
- Reimburse expenses for family members and volunteers attending family program and support training.
- Leaders and support groups should understand unit child care requirements and communicate resources that are available. Commanders should be aware that child care for volunteers is reimbursable.
- Seek alternatives for assisting the families of Reserve component members who suffer significant income loss as a result of activation (e.g. small business owners, medical, legal and other professionals).
- Provide viable dental and health care program options for Reserve component families.

Performance Measures:

- Alternatives for meeting family dental and health care needs.
- Process for management, application and receipt of funds has been simplified.
- Use of invitational travel orders is standardized across all services.
- Commanders at all levels are encouraged and empowered to use funds to support family readiness.
- Alternatives are identified that provide constructive means of assisting Reserve component members to maintain their family members' quality of life during periods of mobilization, deployment and extended training.
- Family satisfaction has increased by eliminating barriers that inhibit access to family support services.
- Higher recruitment and retention levels in all ranks.
- Customer satisfaction increased as measured in periodic surveys.
- Fewer congressional inquiries.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

4. STANDARDIZATION

Goal:

Standardize family readiness programs to ensure Reserve component families are seamlessly integrated into the Total Force and that mission requirements for each service and Reserve component provide family support to the Total Force.

Background:

- Reserve component members are provided access to active duty family support programs and services only as resources permit.
- The remote location of many reserve families complicates the conduct of family briefings and information dissemination so essential to family readiness planning and to understanding the benefits and services available in the event of a mobilization and periods of frequent or extended military service.
- Total Force family readiness planning and implementation must focus on interfacing Active and Reserve component plans.
- Surveys indicate that more than one-half of reserve spouses are concerned about the need to make financial arrangements or prepare emergency documents, such as a will or power of attorney, prior to an activation, mobilization or deployment.
- Roughly 60 percent of the spouses of Reserve component members mobilized during Desert Storm reported that family support groups either did not exist, were

not effective, or that they were not sure support groups existed.

- There is a lack of emphasis on joint service, Total Force family readiness training.
- While terminology and acronyms often differ, all Services essentially have similar requirements and standards for addressing the unique family support needs of the Reserve components. In the past, words have not always led to actions. As a result, reserve families have been left in need.
- Today, Reserve components are employed more and more in Total Force operations. Accessibility of the Guard and Reserve for continued operational support depends upon achieving a certain standard of family readiness.



Strategies:

- Establish inter-Service and community-based committees to address family support programs and initiatives.
- Create standardized pre-deployment and mobilization checklists that better inform and prepare family members for separation when the service member is called away to perform military duty.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- Establish objectives and milestones for consistent training of all commanders, command staffs, unit members, family members, family support groups and volunteers.
- Require family program staff to attend Joint Family Service Center Director's training.
- Establish standardized family readiness measures that eliminate redundancies.
- Establish a comprehensive tool kit or handbook that is consistent among the Services and that provides useful information to commanders, members, families and care providers.
- Implement a sponsorship program at the command and unit level for families of new unit members.
- Provide a full-time staff position at each regional family service center.
- Establish consistent DoD-wide terminology and data tracking requirements. Develop common links between computerized databases for tracking family readiness data. Establish a joint service website. Update DoD policies and procedures for family readiness in the Guard and Reserve components.

Performance Measures:

- Inter-service and community-based committees established.
- Consistent pre-deployment checklist measures established for all Reserve components.
- Consistent training programs established for commanders, staffs, unit members.
- Joint/inter-service website for Service families created.
- Dissemination of a comprehensive tool kit or handbook that is consistent for all Reserve components.
- Update DoD Instructions.
- Full-time regional staff positions established.
- Policy and procedures established for reimbursement of volunteer expenses.
- Completion of Joint Family Service Center Director's training by all family program staff.
- Sponsorship programs established and functioning.
- Determine satisfaction rate from all returned surveys.

Conclusion

This plan provides a vision for Reserve family readiness in the 21st century. It lays out goals that will be used to monitor and guide our preparations for enhanced family readiness within the Reserve components and the Total Force. In adopting this plan, the Department of Defense further demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that our people—and their families—remain our most precious resource.

