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The California National Guard's Operation Ready Families Program offers a variety of programs to assist the guardmember and their family before, during and after deployment:

- Operation "We Care" Meetings
- Special Benevolence Offers
- Volunteer Education Courses
- Marriage Enrichment Seminars
- Youth Camp

We also offer educational articles on:

- Managing Combat Stress
- Understanding Military Benefits
- Coming Home

...And Much More!

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Mission First! Family Always!

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**Operation Ready Families Program
Family Assistance Network
California National Guard**

Your Family Care Plan



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Your Family Care Plan

One of the most important considerations of family readiness is to ensure that your family be taken care of properly in your absence; during drills, annual training, mobilization, and during unexpected circumstances.

A Family Care Plan is very important for all families, and is especially critical for single parents and dual military parents. Your unit may require a formal Family Care Plan. Taking care of these considerations now will help ensure that you fill out the Family Care Counseling List, and will help you and your family be prepared for any period of separation.

The three important questions to asked are:

1. **Does the unit have a copy of the plan?**
2. **Is the plan current?**
3. **Will the plan work?**

The last question is the most important. The guardian must fully understand and agree to fulfill his or her responsibilities. And you must be able to get the children and the pets to the guardian.

Personal Care Plan for Single or Dual Military Guardmembers

A Personal Care Plan is similar to a Family Care Plan, but for single or dual military service members. It is a plan to take care of the car, pets, household goods, etc., while away from the normal duty station.

The following checklist will help you prepare your plan. Have you done the following for your family members?

- Assigned a guardian in a special Power of Attorney and made sure that the guardian understands the responsibilities.
- Obtained ID cards, commissary cards, registered in DEERS, and checked to make sure the ID cards have not expired.
- Signed up for Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and updated the beneficiary information.
- Arranged for housing, food, transportation, and emergency needs.

- Informed your family or any caretakers about your financial matters.
- Arranged for the guardian to have access to necessary funds.
- Arranged for childcare, education, and medical care.
- Prepared a will, and designated a guardian in the will.
- Arranged for necessary travel and escort to transfer family members to their guardian.
- Discussed your plans with your older children

Your Will

A will is an important document for you and your family. It makes sure that your children have someone to take care of them and that your estate goes to the people you designate. If you die without a will, the state will make those decisions for you. The court will also collect a fee from your estate to pay for a court appointed representative and an annual bonding premium.

Letter of Instruction

A "Letter of Instruction" may be made to go along with your will to dictate how your assets will be distributed and to pass along any messages and directions you have about your estate and your funeral. It provides a current inventory of your assets (which your will does not do), describes your funeral arrangement, and outlines any other wishes you want to pass along. It also tells survivors where to find important papers and assets so that nothing will be overlooked in settling your estate.

In your "Letter of Instruction", provide for your survivors a list of things to do first: people to call (lawyer, boss, etc.), documents to retrieve, etc. Also provide information on the location of important papers, assets, real estate holdings, etc. Once you have filled out the work sheets in this chapter, they can serve as the large part of your "Letter of Instruction".

Your "Letter of Instruction" does not take the place of your will. It is not legally binding, but it will make the settling of your estate easier for your survivors. Make sure that the appropriate people know the location of your "Letter of Instruction", and be sure to keep it up to date by revising it frequently. Revise the letter a minimum of once a year, but preferably when any significant change occurs: when you

purchase a new car or when you have another child, for instance.

With your will filed and your "Letter of Instruction" completed, you can rest assured that your family is better prepared.

Power of Attorney

There are special times when service members may want to have powers of attorney drawn up. A power of attorney gives someone else – a spouse, a lawyer, a friend or other trust-worthy person – the legal power to carry out transactions in the service member's name without needing to obtain his or her signature or consent. Setting up a power of attorney, for instance, would enable you to grant a trusted friend the authority to sell a car, or to make everyday medical decisions while caring for your children in your absence. There are two types of powers of attorney: a general power of attorney and a special power of attorney.

A general power of attorney is very broad. It authorizes another person to sign any legal document in your name and, therefore, should be used with extreme caution. (for example, it could enable someone to deplete your savings account and sell all your property.)

A special power of attorney is limited. It authorizes another person to carry out a specific legal act in your name. Once the action is completed or a specific number of days have gone by, the power of attorney expires. Your personal lawyer or the military Legal Assistance Officer can help you decide if you or your spouse needs a power of attorney and can prepare one for you.

Guardianship

A very special power of attorney gives a person that you designate the power to assume guardianship of your dependents in your absence. A guardian acts "in locoparentis"; that is, he or she acts in your absence, providing care, discipline, and education for your family members. A guardian also has the power to authorize medical care, including emergency surgery. The guardian must fully understand and agree to fulfill his or her responsibilities. And you must be able to get the children and the pets to the guardian.

It is very important to designate a primary and alternate guardian. If something should happen to the primary guardian, then your alternate guardian can legally assume responsibility for the children's care. An illness, accident, deployment, or unemployment are just a few examples of what could happen to cause the primary guardian to be unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities. Regardless of what form you use, check with a Legal Assistance Officer or a civilian lawyer regarding your states laws before you sign a power of attorney designating a guardian for your children.

For more information please contact your Unit Personnel NCO or your serving JAG.