

# THE ARMY FAMILY READINESS HANDBOOK



OPERATION  
**READY**  
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You



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# **The Army Family Readiness Handbook**

## **Family Deployment Readiness for the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve**

This handbook is a revised publication of the Operation READY (Resources for Educating about Deployment and You) curriculum developed under a contract with Headquarters, Department of the Army, Community and Family Support Center, and Texas Cooperative Extension of The Texas A&M University System.

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**Operation READY:  
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**

**Texas Cooperative Extension  
The Texas A&M University System  
in cooperation with  
The United States Army  
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## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

**T**oday's Army leadership recognizes that family readiness is inseparable from unit readiness. More soldiers have families than ever before, and these include increasing numbers of single-parent families and dual-military families. Soldiers who know that their families' needs are being met, perform better in the stress of deployment. And families whose needs are met during deployment will be in a better position to welcome and support their returning soldiers.

The materials in this book are not just for active Army installations, however. All of the information is designed to be equally useful for Army National Guard and Reserve units.

The handbook is organized into five chapters:

- ◆ Chapter 1 provides an overview of the role of family support activities in establishing and maintaining deployment readiness, and outlines a concept of the Army's "well-being" model for family assistance planning, as well as information on AFTB and Building Strong and Ready Families (BSRF). It is intended primarily for military units and their leaders, but it is useful background for everyone.
- ◆ Chapter 2 provides information for Army personnel who have responsibility for providing family support and assistance during deployment. The chapter includes suggestions for predeployment briefing content relevant to both emotional and practical preparation, and discusses the special roles of the Rear Detachment Commander and Family Readiness Liaison. The chapter closes with a final readiness review.
- ◆ Chapter 3 provides material on planning for and coping with family separations. Informative articles about the family dynamics of separation of mothers and fathers from children are key to understanding and coping with separation. Tips on making reunion less stressful are included.
- ◆ Chapter 4 explains how a volunteer-based Family Readiness Group (FRG) program—a key component of deployment-related family services—might be organized. Both military unit personnel and volunteer FRG family member leaders who are involved in FRG program development will find this chapter helpful.
- ◆ Chapter 5 includes resources and reference materials for volunteer leaders and Army facilitators of ongoing FRG programs. Materials are included on developing ideas for FRG activities, maintaining telephone contact with FRG members, publishing an FRG newsletter, and working with volunteers. Volunteer job descriptions are provided.

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The Army well-being information was provided by the Office of the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army.

The first edition of this document was largely edited from a handbook produced by the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

We are grateful to many reserve component soldiers and civilian staff who gave of their time to provide advice and counsel in the revision of this material.

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*Man has two supreme loyalties—to country and to family. . . So long as their families are safe, they will defend their country, believing that by their sacrifice they are safeguarding their families also. But even the bonds of patriotism, discipline, and comradeship are loosened when the family itself is threatened.*

*William Tecumseh Sherman  
General, United States Army, 1864*

*Army readiness is inextricably linked to the Well-Being of our People. Our success depends on the whole team—Soldiers, civilians, families—all of whom serve the Nation. Strategic responsiveness requires that our support structures provide soldiers and families the resources to be self-reliant, both when the force is deployed and when it is at home. When we deploy, Soldiers will know that their families are safe, housed, and have access to medical care, community services, and educational opportunities. We have a covenant with our Soldiers and families, and we will keep faith with them.*

*General Eric K. Shinseki  
Chief of Staff of the Army*

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## OPERATION READY MATERIALS

The Operation READY curriculum is a series of training modules, videotapes, and resource books published for the Army as a resource for Army Community Service (ACS), State Family Program Coordinators (SFPC), and Army Reserve Family Readiness Program (FRP) staff in training Army soldiers and families who are faced with deployments.

This revised curriculum includes the following training modules and reference materials:

- ◆ The Army Family Readiness Handbook
- ◆ The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness (new)
- ◆ The Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook (new)
- ◆ The Army FRG Leader's Handbook
- ◆ Family Assistance Center
- ◆ Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness
- ◆ Homecoming and Reunion

Videos developed for the Operation READY curriculum by University of California–Riverside Cooperative Extension, to supplement the above materials are:

- ◆ *Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Life, Think ACS* (new)
- ◆ *Introduction to Operation READY* (new)
- ◆ *Family Assistance Center*
- ◆ *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*
- ◆ *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles*
- ◆ *Coping with Stress*
- ◆ *Making Your Reunion Work*

Children's Workbooks for use by parents with their children.

These materials have been distributed to all U.S. Army installations throughout the world, as well as to U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard commands. The materials are distributed in hard copy form as well as stored on CD-ROM disks. They are also available through the virtual Army Community Service website, [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org). For copies of the above materials, check with your local Army Community Service, Mobilization and Deployment office, SFPC and FRP offices.



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## ARMY ACRONYMS

**W**hoever said the Army speaks an entirely different language wasn't kidding! In your daily interaction with "America's Army," you may hear words or phrases that are unfamiliar. Don't be intimidated. Ask what they mean. The following list provides some of the acronyms most commonly used by your soldier.

AAFES	Army and Air Force Exchange Service
AC	Active Component
ACAP	Army Career and Alumni Program
ACS	Army Community Service
AER	Army Emergency Relief
AFAP	Army Family Action Plan
AFTB	Army Family Team Building
APF	Appropriated Fund
APO	Army Post Office
AR	Army Regulation
ARC	American Red Cross
ARNG	Army National Guard
AUSA	Association of the United States Army
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BAQ	Basic Allowance for Quarters
BAS	Basic Allowance for Subsistence
BDE	Brigade
BDU	Battle Dress Uniform
BN	Battalion
BSRF	Building Strong and Ready Families
CDR	Commander
CDS	Child Development Services
CFS	Command Financial Specialist
CFSC	Community and Family Support Center
CFSP	Command and Financial Specialist Program
CG	Commanding General
CI	Command Information
CO	Commanding Officer/Company
CPO	Civilian Personnel Office
CSM	Command Sergeant Major
CYS	Children and Youth Services
DA	Department of the Army
DANTES	Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support
DCA	Director of Community Activities
DECA	Defense Commissary Agency

DEERS	<b>Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System</b>
DFAS	<b>Defense Finance and Accounting System</b>
DI	<b>Drill Instructor</b>
DoD	<b>Department of Defense</b>
DPCA	<b>Director of Personnel and Community Activities</b>
EDRE	<b>Emergency Deployment Reaction Exercise</b>
EDS	<b>Education Services</b>
ERP	<b>Employment Readiness Program</b>
ETS	<b>Estimated Time of Separation</b>
FAC	<b>Family Assistance Center</b>
FAO	<b>Finance and Accounting Office</b>
FAP	<b>Family Advocacy Program</b>
FCP	<b>Family Care Plan</b>
FORSCOM	<b>Forces Command</b>
FRC	<b>Family Readiness Center</b>
FRG	<b>Family Readiness Group</b>
FRL	<b>Family Readiness Liaison</b>
FRP	<b>Family Readiness Program</b>
FSRS	<b>Family and Soldier Readiness System</b>
FTX	<b>Field Training Exercise</b>
HQDA	<b>Headquarters Department of the Army</b>
HRSC	<b>Human Resource Service Center</b>
IFOR	<b>Implementation Force</b>
IG	<b>Office of Inspector General</b>
IVC	<b>Installation Volunteer Coordinator</b>
JAG	<b>Judge Advocate General</b>
JFTR	<b>Joint Federal Travel Regulation</b>
LES	<b>Leave and Earnings Statement</b>
MARS	<b>Military Affiliated Radio System</b>
MIA/POW	<b>Missing in Action/Prisoner of War</b>
MOS	<b>Military Occupational Specialty</b>
MRE	<b>Meals Ready to Eat</b>
MTF	<b>Military Treatment Facility</b>
MWR	<b>Morale, Welfare and Recreation</b>
NAF	<b>Non-Appropriated Funds</b>
NCO	<b>Noncommissioned Officer</b>
NCOPD	<b>Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development</b>
NG	<b>National Guard</b>
NLT	<b>Not Later Than</b>
OCAR	<b>Office of the Chief of Army Reserve</b>
OCONUS	<b>Outside Continental United States</b>
OIC	<b>Officer in Charge</b>
OTSG	<b>Office of the Surgeon General</b>

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PAC	<b>Personnel Administration Center</b>
PAO	<b>Public Affairs Officer</b>
POA	<b>Power of Attorney</b>
POC	<b>Point of Contact</b>
POV	<b>Privately Owned Vehicle</b>
PREP	<b>Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program</b>
PX	<b>Post Exchange</b>
QTRS	<b>Quarters (living area)</b>
RC	<b>Rear Component</b>
RD	<b>Rear Detachment</b>
RDC	<b>Rear Detachment Commander</b>
REG	<b>Regulation</b>
RSC	<b>Regional Support Command</b>
SBP	<b>Survivor Benefit Plan</b>
SDO	<b>Staff Duty Officer</b>
SFOR	<b>Stabilization Force</b>
SFPC	<b>State Family Program Coordinator</b>
SGLI	<b>Servicemen's Group Life Insurance</b>
SJA	<b>Staff Judge Advocate</b>
SOP	<b>Standard Operating Procedure</b>
SRP	<b>Soldier Readiness Processing</b>
STARC	<b>State Area Command</b>
TDY	<b>Temporary Duty</b>
TRADOC	<b>Training and Doctrine Command</b>
TRICARE	<b>Military Medical Health Plan</b>
UCMJ	<b>Uniform Code of Military Justice</b>
USAPA	<b>United States Army Publishing Agency</b>
USARC	<b>United States Army Reserve Command</b>
USO	<b>United Service Organization</b>
USR	<b>Unit Status Report</b>
VTC	<b>Video Teleconferencing</b>





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# 1

# Command Leadership and Family Readiness

*Information for commanders and other leaders on the Army's stake in family readiness and how command involvement can help ensure success*

- ◆ **Why Be Prepared?**
- ◆ **The Army's Stake in Family Health**
- ◆ **Army Well Being: A Framework for Taking Care of the Army**
- ◆ **AFTB and the Building Strong and Ready Families Program**
- ◆ **Summary**
- ◆ **Family Assistance Center**
- ◆ **Welcoming New Personnel**
- ◆ **Backgrounder: Caring Is Not Enough**
- ◆ **Roles in the Family Support System**
- ◆ **The Unit's Role in Family Readiness**



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## WHY BE PREPARED?

**A** vital part of maintaining combat readiness is maintaining individual readiness. The importance of family support and family preparedness to the overall goal of total readiness—and, ultimately, to the outcome of a mission—cannot be overemphasized.

Deployment exercises keep our military forces at the highest state of preparedness possible. Our military is faced with the ever-present challenge of updating and modifying existing weaponry and tactics to meet the always-changing nature of warfare. We need these exercises to find out just how well prepared we are, to maintain our readiness, and to exhibit to would-be aggressors our ability and willingness to counter any foreign incursions across our own or allied borders.

Deployment may be as short as an overnight alert or as long as an unaccompanied overseas tour. In between, there may be many field-training exercises or professional development and advancement training that can last for weeks or months. Deployments may be to undetermined locations and for undetermined periods of time.

The number of times an individual soldier is deployed varies with the nature of his or her unit. Certain types of support units, for example, may deploy 20 to 30 times within a year, while other units may take part in as few as two major deployments and a few additional training deployments during the same period.

Deployment is often announced, so soldiers may know that they will be going on deployment months in advance. They may also know the specific location and length of time. However, given the nature of our world today (with conflicts possible at any moment in the Persian Gulf, Central America, Europe, Asia, and other locations), the possibility for unannounced deployment does exist. Our way of life and the everyday freedoms we take for granted are ours only as long as we remain prepared militarily to resist those who would take them from us.

But today's Army is a married Army. Over 65 percent of our soldiers are married, and most have their families living with them.

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The unit commander must make sure that each soldier, along with packing his or her individual weapon and equipment, has left behind a family well prepared for separation.

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In an active-duty unit, the desire to lead a normal family life often comes into sharp conflict with the requirements of military service. Deployment is the best example of this conflict. Deployment means separation from the family. Single soldiers leave behind loved ones, and other soldiers are caretakers for aging parents. Stress due to family separation can prove harmful to the soldier and the unit.

Studies by the Walter Reed Institute and others have shown that family problems lead to troubled soldiers and poor military performance during deployment—whether for actual combat or field-training exercises. Needless to say, no commander wants his or her flank covered by a soldier who is worried about the family back home.

Furthermore, soldiers suffering from stress are more likely to suffer mental and emotional breakdowns during military conflicts. For every four soldiers wounded or killed in a conflict, there is one who suffers a breakdown. Studies also show that soldiers can cope with stress better if they know that their families are being cared for during their absence.

This means that a system of family support and assistance must be in place prior to deployment. It means that the unit commander must make sure that each soldier, along with packing his or her individual weapon and equipment, has left behind a family well prepared for separation.

Among the benefits to the unit of family support and assistance programs are these:

- ◆ soldiers who are mentally and emotionally present during combat and training, able to concentrate fully on the mission; and
- ◆ sustained manpower to accomplish the mission, with less likelihood of casualties and less chance that a soldier will have to leave the field to fill out a form or be sent back to post because a family task was neglected.

Following a deployment, the rear detachment commander (RDC), if one has been appointed, is perhaps the first to feel the effects of family readiness or its lack. If the family is not ready, the RDC is likely to spend a lot of time solving problems after the soldier

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leaves. Such crises can range from moving a family into new quarters to helping a spouse start a car that is past due for servicing. If families are as well prepared as they can be prior to deployment, the RDC can spend time and energy on emergencies and on activities that improve the quality of life for the family during the soldier's absence.

Family readiness also means that the soldier can leave for deployment with the peace of mind that comes from knowing that he or she has done everything possible to provide for family needs during separation. It is the same peace of mind soldiers experience when they are certain that their duffel bags contain everything needed on deployment. This means less stress for both soldiers and family members and a better chance that the soldier will return from deployment in good health.

Finally, the level of family readiness at deployment has a direct effect on the quality of family life during the reunion period. Fitting back into the family after an extended deployment has its own stress factors. Coming back to an angry family or one that has suffered unnecessary hardship during separation will create even more family problems.

The chance of coming home to a loving family is increased if the family has been fully prepared prior to deployment. It is difficult to imagine a spouse looking forward to reunion with a soldier who deliberately confiscated his or her ID card (an illegal act) or who forgot to renew the ID card or to provide for financial needs.

Additionally, family readiness means that family members will suffer less stress due to deployment. They will be better prepared to cope with whatever stress does result from the soldier's absence. And life is likely to be less stressful if the spouse has all the information needed to take care of emergencies.

Family members will feel loved and cared for if they know that the soldier has done everything he or she could to ensure their welfare. This helps ensure the soldier's coming home to a warm welcome.

When family readiness is treated as a family affair and all those connected to the soldier are included in the process, it can also promote togetherness. Setting aside time periodically to update

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**Family readiness means less stress for both soldiers and family members and a better chance that the soldier will return from deployment in good health.**

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family records and to communicate about family goals can contribute to closeness.

If the family has worked together to maintain family readiness as an ongoing activity, they will have time when deployment is announced to psychologically prepare each other and their children for the separation. There will be time to talk about feelings, alleviate fears, and plan activities that will help maintain the soldier's presence in the family and help the spouse use the separation time constructively.

Family readiness is everybody's business—everyone benefits from the family being prepared. It follows that family support and family readiness should carry the full endorsement of the command, the soldier, and the family.

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## THE ARMY'S STAKE IN FAMILY HEALTH

The Army's relationship with the servicemember's family has evolved slowly for more than two centuries. Until the Vietnam conflict, the Army's philosophy toward the family could be summed up by the witticism, "If the Army wanted you to have a family, it would have issued you one." However, with the deployment of units to the Dominican Republic and to Vietnam, the Army recognized a greater responsibility to Army families.

The Army realized family problems in the United States seriously influenced the performance of soldiers in Vietnam, and the resultant Army Community Service program was the first of many Army responses to this challenge.

On August 15, 1983, the Army Chief of Staff specified a philosophy toward the family in the Army Family White Paper (shown on page 8).

The three critical elements in this philosophy are partnership, well being, and a sense of community.

**Partnership.** A partnership has to exist between the Army as an institution and the individuals who are part of it—soldiers, civilians, retirees, and family members. The partnership expresses the cohesion of the Army and members of Army families based on a mutual understanding of the mission and a commitment to each other. Partnership is a reciprocal relationship built on moral and ethical responsibilities.

**Well being.** The term well being highlights our concern for developing those strengths, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes that contribute to wholeness and health in body, mind, and spirit. In the past, most of our plans, programs, and policies focused on basic needs or on correcting dysfunctions. Our concentration now and in the future is to capitalize on what is working well by drawing on the characteristics of our many healthy families and transmitting these characteristics to those needing assistance.

**Sense of community.** A sense of community is the center of the partnership, which we call The Army Family, with all members offered the challenge and opportunity to work together for the common good. Thus, we move toward the creation of an

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. . . the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families.

*John A. Wickham, Jr.  
General, U.S. Army*

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A partnership exists between the Army and Army families. The Army's unique missions, concept of service and lifestyle of its members – all affect the nature of this partnership. Towards the goal of building a strong partnership, the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families.

The basis of this statement is the understanding that the Army is an institution, not an occupation. Members take an oath of service to the Nation and the Army, rather than simply accept a job. As an institution, the Army has moral and ethical obligations to those who serve and to their families; they, correspondingly, have responsibilities to the Army. This relationship creates a partnership based on the constants of human behavior and our American traditions that blend the responsibility of each individual for his/her own welfare and the obligations of the society to its members.

Our unique mission and lifestyle affect this partnership in ways rarely found in our society. Since we are in the readiness business, we are concerned not only with the number of people in the force, but also with their degree of commitment – their willingness to not only train, but also to deploy and, if necessary, to fight – their acceptance of the unlimited liability contract. The need for reciprocity of this commitment is the basis of the partnership between the Army and the Army Family.

As a result, adequacy of support must be based on this unique partnership. The Army will never have all the resources it needs. Therefore, we must balance our dollars spent for family programs with those spent to discharge our moral responsibilities to give our soldiers the equipment, training and leadership they need to have the best chance for survival (from a family perspective) and victory (from a societal perspective) on the battlefield; emotionally, mentally and physically. This is why we have targeted “Wellness” and “Sense of Community” as the major thrusts of our efforts.

In promoting family wellness, we must also find ways to transfer the skills, experiences, attitudes and ethical strengths of the many healthy Army families. Despite the pressures, the vast majority of families manage and grow through their involvement with Army life. We know that most Army families find military lifestyle exciting; enjoy the opportunities for travel and cultural interaction; and most importantly, have positive feelings about the Army and its place in our society. While the needs of families experiencing stress must be considered, we must promote the positive aspects of Army families as our primary goal.

The strength of a community lies in the contributions and talents of its members. If the right elements are together in the right environment, the end product is often greater than what would otherwise be expected from the elements functioning independently.

Our concept of the Army-Family community is such a relationship. The servicemember and those unit programs in which the family wishes to participate link the family to the unit. The family and unit are linked also by common community activities. Our goal is to increase the bond between the family unit and the Army community – create a sense of interdependence.

In fostering interdependence between the family and the Army, we are again looking at the Army as an institution. The Army has a responsibility to its members, and the members have a responsibility to the Army and each other. If for the greater good resources must be used now for modernization or other programs, Army families, communities and the chain of command must through their own efforts insure that the reciprocity of commitment remains. It is not a we/they situation; it is us—US as in U.S. Army.

John A. Wickham, Jr.  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff (1983)



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environment in which The Army Family—individually and as a unit—can become the finest force the world has yet known.

## **The Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The Army must move to the realization that *family readiness* is as important as *soldier readiness*. With the stress and strain put on families due to quick, no-notice deployments, the well being and readiness of both soldier and family are crucial to the mission. Encouraging the family to be self-sufficient and interdependent will not only improve soldier and family readiness, but it also will make the soldier the extension of a healthy family, and therefore better focused on his or her mission on a battlefield of the future.

The Army Family of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century consists of soldiers (Active Army, Army National Guard [ARNG], and U.S. Army Reserve [USAR]), civilian employees, retirees, and their family members. Each is a stakeholder in the Army of the future.

**The Family and Soldier Readiness System (FSRS)** is designed to address the state of preparedness of the Army family through proactive education and support programs that promote self-reliance and enhance family well being. These include those family assistance services and related programs that support well being, readiness, and retention, and meet the Army’s obligations to soldiers, civilian employees, and their families by ensuring the effective interface between family assistance and family support. FSRS includes Family Assistance Centers (FAC), Family Readiness Groups (FRG), rear detachment commanders where applicable, and the Family Readiness Liaison (FRL).

## **Some Definitions Used in the Family and Soldier Readiness System**

*Family Assistance* is the contractual or statutory obligation the Army has to provide assistance (e.g., ID cards, Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System [DEERS], TRICARE) to its soldiers, civilian employees, retirees, and their dependents. This obligation also extends to the programs and services commanders use to fulfill their morale, welfare, and quality-of-life responsibilities, such as Army Community Service (ACS); Child and Youth Services (CYS); and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs, etc.

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The Family and Soldier Readiness System (FSRS) is designed to address the state of preparedness of the Army family through proactive education and support programs that promote self-reliance and enhance family well being.

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*Family Support* is the mutual reinforcement provided to soldiers, civilian employees, retirees, and their family members—both immediate and extended. Examples include Family Readiness Groups, newsletters, telephone trees, and other volunteer programs and activities.

*Family Readiness* is the state of preparedness of soldiers and their families through proactive education and support programs that promote self reliance and enhance individual and family well being. This term is the most important for an effective Army with healthy soldiers. Commanders must pay as close attention to the readiness of their families as they do to the readiness of their equipment.

All these terms are important to understanding the emphasis given by Army leadership to Army families, and carrying out the plan for Army family readiness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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Family readiness is the state of preparedness of soldiers and their families through proactive education and support programs that promote self reliance and enhance individual and family well being.

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### **Reserve Component Considerations**

The National Guard (NG) Bureau and the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve (OCAR) also recognize and address family needs. A family program director serves at the NG Bureau, and a coordinator is assigned to every state or territorial headquarters. The Army Reserve employs a Family Readiness Officer in OCAR, a Family Readiness Program at each major command (U.S. Army Reserve Command [USARC]), and Family Program Directors in the Regional Support Commands (RSCs).

Most importantly, family members themselves are responding to the needs of the Army community in the true spirit of partnership. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the formation of Family Readiness Groups throughout the country. These groups emphasize self-help and mutual support to families and soldiers during and after deployment.

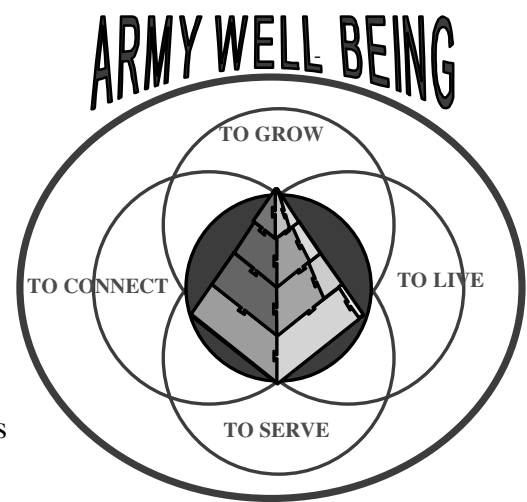
## ARMY WELL BEING: A FRAMEWORK FOR TAKING CARE OF THE ARMY

### What Is Well Being, Particularly As It Relates to Families?

Well being is “the personal—physical, material, mental, and spiritual—state of soldiers, civilians, and their families that contributes to their preparedness to perform the Army’s mission.”

### Who Benefits from Army Well Being?

- ◆ *Serving Soldiers*—active component, Guard and Reserve, single or married, officer or enlisted.
- ◆ *Retired Soldiers* who have served honorably in a career of military service and remain a vital part of the Army team, ready to be called upon to serve again should the need arise.
- ◆ *Veterans*—while served mainly through other agencies such as the Veteran’s Administration, they are still recognized as soldiers.
- ◆ *Civilians* are an invaluable part of the Army and contribute significantly to Army institutional strength.
- ◆ *Army Families* are an integral part of the Army team. They are directly linked to readiness. We recruit soldiers; we grow leaders, and we retain families. A healthy command climate and individuals who are confident in the Army’s commitment to their families during periods of deployment enhance mission preparedness. *A key aspect of this confidence centers on the well being of families who are prepared for the challenges associated with Army life (for example, deployment, separation, and reunion).* Well being is oriented to providing opportunities and support for individuals and families to empower them to meet these challenges through better information, training, and command support. *Soldiers who know that their families are fully equipped to handle deployments are more mission focused and combat ready.* It is just as critical for families to feel *connected* to the Army, whether their sponsors are at home station, on temporary duty, or deployed. Connecting families to the Army helps



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loved ones stay in touch, keeps families well informed, and increases their self reliance.

### **What Is the Army Trying to Achieve?**

We want to achieve an *integrated system* of well-being programs that:

- ◆ recognizes the *institutional needs* of the Army cannot be addressed without meeting the *personal needs* and aspirations of its people;
- ◆ is *designed* and *resourced* to successfully account for the dynamic nature of the Army's *operational challenges* and America's *societal changes*;
- ◆ *maximizes institutional outcomes* such as performance, readiness, retention, and recruiting; and
- ◆ *contributes to an institutional strength* that enables the Army to accomplish its mission.

Army well being is inextricably linked to four key institutional outcomes—performance, readiness, retention, and recruiting. Each of these is critical to the success of the Army, and each is vital to the readiness of families and soldiers.

Well being is the human dimension of Army transformation. As the Army changes, the needs of our soldiers, civilians, and families will also change. Well being represents the Army's resolute commitment to prepare now to meet the needs of the soldiers and families of the Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In a “values-based” Army, everything soldiers do is based on a foundation of service. This foundation of service is the bedrock upon which well being rests. This service ethic is often carried over into Army families as well. Cultivating the service value within soldiers and families through the family support structure in units at every level produces a framework through which this altruistic effort is managed, and Army well being is enhanced. This framework recognizes, however, that *not all individual needs should or can be met by the Army*.

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Well being represents the Army's resolute commitment to prepare now to meet the needs of the soldiers and families of the Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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## Army Well-Being Goals

- ◆ Implement a comprehensive strategy that integrates well-being initiatives, programs, and resources to meet the well being of the Army.
- ◆ Provide a competitive standard of living for all soldiers, civilians, and their families. (Essential)
- ◆ Provide a unique culture, sense of community, and a record of accomplishment that engenders intense pride and a sense of belonging amongst soldiers, civilians, and their families. (Defining)
- ◆ Provide an environment that allows soldiers, civilians, and their families to enrich their personal lives by achieving their individual aspirations. (Enhancing)
- ◆ Ensure leadership that maximizes the positive, combined effect of intangibles on the outcomes of well-being programs and the integrity of the institutional strength of the Army. (Intangible)

A comprehensive family support/assistance program that seeks to enhance the goals and objectives of the Army's well-being program will find support at every level of command, an openness on the part of soldiers and families, and resources to assist with every element. The well-being program will enhance the Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by building resilient and prepared families that produce strong and ready soldiers.

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## AFTB AND THE BUILDING STRONG AND READY FAMILIES PROGRAM

### Army Family Team Building (AFTB) Program

The AFTB program curriculum consists of over 40 modules of instruction taught by family member instructors to other family members to provide them with the information, knowledge, and skills needed to gain self-reliance and to better utilize the community support programs provided to assist them throughout their spouses' career.

The AFTB curriculum is divided into three distinct levels of instruction:

- ◆ Level I is designed for new spouses entering the Army and helps them maneuver through the military maze.
- ◆ Level II is designed for emerging leaders and provides them with the tools and skills to take on leadership roles within their military community.
- ◆ Level III is designed to provide more senior spouses with the skills to advise and mentor volunteers and to serve in senior level leadership positions.

The Level I curriculum is the heart of the AFTB program, and it is highly recommended that all family members new to the military enroll in Level I. Level I curriculum consists of the following training modules:

- ◆ Military Terms, Acronyms, Customs, and Courtesies. Introduces the basic and unique words used routinely in the military.
- ◆ The Chain of Command and the Chain of Concern. Defines the military chain of command, emphasizing command structure, symbols, and explanation of the military grades and staff positions, to include the civilian employee equivalent.
- ◆ Introduction to Military and Civilian Community Resources. Provides an overview of the resources available within both the military and civilian communities, and how to access and utilize those resources.

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The AFTB program curriculum provides family members with the information, knowledge, and skills needed to gain self-reliance and to better utilize the community support programs provided to assist them throughout their spouses' career.

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- ◆ Introduction to the Army Family Action Planning (AFAP) Program. Provides an overview of the AFAP process.
  - ◆ Introduction to Operation READY. Provides an overview of the Operation READY resource training material.
  - ◆ Benefits, Entitlements, and Compensation. Introduces the basic benefits and entitlements received by military and civilian personnel.
  - ◆ Family and Military Expectations. Covers the expectations that soldiers, civilian employees, and their families have about the extent to which the military will take care of families and helps participants develop realistic expectations.
  - ◆ Impact of the Mission on Family Life. Discusses the Army's missions and their impact upon soldiers, civilian employees, and their families.
  - ◆ Basic Problem Solving. Teaches the basic skills necessary to successfully solve problems without outside intervention or assistance.
  - ◆ Supporting Your Child's Education. Introduces the importance of parental involvement in a child's education, especially during PCS moves, and provides an overview of the School Liaison Officer's role in enhancing the educational environment for school-age children of parents assigned to Army installations/ activities.

Enrollment in the AFTB program is voluntary and based on experience as an Army family member, not on the rank of the sponsor. Family members can enter the training program when and where they desire.

The premise of the AFTB program is a volunteer family member helping other family members, as the curriculum was developed for family members and is taught by family members.

The AFTB program has been implemented at all U. S. Army installations throughout the world, as well as the U. S. Army Reserve, Army National Guard, and U. S. Army Recruiting commands. Training material for instructors may be ordered on-line through the AFTB website: <http://www.aftb.org>.

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Family preparedness and self-reliance is important to readiness because it provides peace of mind to deployed soldiers who, having confidence their families can manage their lives successfully in their absence, are better able to focus on their tactical mission.

### **Building Strong and Ready Families Program**

Goal 3 of the Army Well-Being Strategic Plan affirms that Army well-being efforts must provide “a unique culture, sense of community, and record of accomplishment that engenders intense pride and sense of belonging amongst soldiers, civilians, and their families.” Recently, Army senior leadership resourced the Chief of Chaplains to conduct a pilot study to verify the potential benefits of Building Strong and Ready Families (BSRF) Army-wide.

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The BSRF program is designed to strengthen the young married couple so they can withstand the pressures they will face in the Army.

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The BSRF program targets first-term, married soldiers to assist in their transition into the military culture. The BSRF program is designed to strengthen the young married couple so they can withstand the pressures they will face in the Army.

BSRF is a three-level experience over two days, with an overnight retreat at the end. On day one, couples learn the traits needed for an effective marriage and complete a health risk assessment instrument. The second activity occurs during the duty day at the installation. Couples build marital skills using the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) materials. Health promotion staff then interview the couple and inform them of potential community helping agencies. The final activity is a chaplain-led overnight marriage enrichment retreat that focuses on family strengths.

The project involves 17 brigades initially: Fort Hood (3), Fort Bragg (3), Fort Drum (2), USARK (2), USAREUR (2), and Schofield Barracks (5). The mission of the pilot program is to conduct BSRF in 01-03, demonstrate its effectiveness, and implement it Army-wide.

For further information on the Building Strong and Ready Families program, contact your unit chaplain.



## SUMMARY

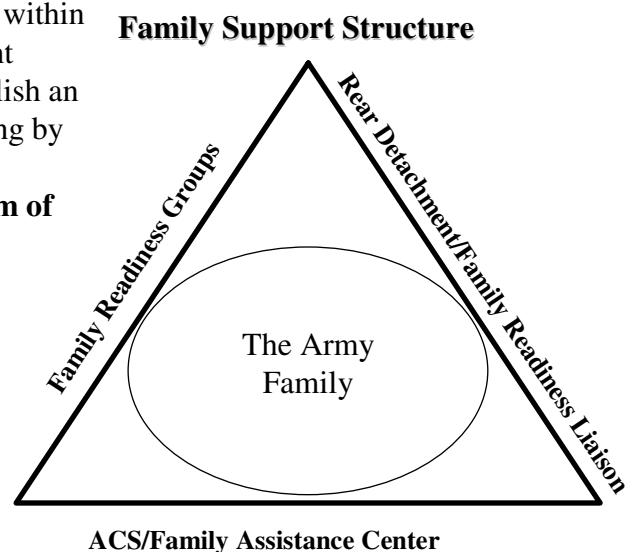
In no other profession is family separation faced so frequently as it is in military service. But no other institution, organization, or corporation takes such a deep and abiding interest in its employees' families. Separation is a way of life for the Army, and it is appropriate that Army leadership consider the impact of separation on their families.

These separations take many forms. They can range from a soldier going on a hardship tour, field-training exercise, or a professional development MOS course to a partial or full mobilization of our country's military resources. Separations can be individual or unit based. No matter which type of separation is involved, a stressful and at times traumatic situation is created for all members of the family unit.

The stress of separation can disrupt normal family functioning. Findings by the Walter Reed Army Institute and other behavioral scientists show that family problems lead to troubled soldiers. This can have serious adverse effects on military performance, resulting in reduced readiness to fight, psychological problems, or even physical injuries. The soldier performs better when he or she is confident that family members can cope with the stress of separation and have access to supportive resources.

The military chain of command is responsible for identifying and addressing the problems of soldiers and families within their command, especially those arising from frequent family separations. The chain of command can establish an atmosphere that encourages healthy family functioning by expressing and demonstrating care and concern.

**Promoting family member involvement in the form of an institutionalized FRG program is one method commanders can use to establish this atmosphere within their command.**



## FAMILY RESOURCE LINK

### TOPIC: The Need for FRGs

**Discussion:** Family separation creates psychological stress for both the deploying soldier and the family left behind. Soldiers who feel their families can manage without them are better able to concentrate on mission tasks. Commanders demonstrate compassionate concern for their soldiers when they actively participate in FRGs as part of unit predeployment readiness. During deployments, FRGs assist the rear detachment in sustaining families of deployed soldiers by exchanging support and communicating accurate information between families and the RDC.

**Key to success:** FRGs play a central role in sustaining families by providing social and emotional support before, during, and after family separations. FRGs need unit support before deployment and rear detachment support during deployment.

- ◆ FRGs give confidence to soldiers that their families will cope in their absence and reduce family feelings of isolation and anxiety.
- ◆ FRGs benefit the command by helping to sustain morale. During peacetime, FRGs will maintain high levels of deployment readiness for a family-based, married military organization. During wartime deployments, the FRG's emphasis shifts to maintaining the morale of soldiers and their will to fight.

### Materials in This Handbook and Other Operation READY Modules

- ◆ *Predeployment: Family Readiness Processing*—Chapter 2
- ◆ *Sustainment: Coping with Separation*—Chapter 3
- ◆ For extensive information on FRG formation and development, see Chapter 4, *Starting a Family Readiness Group Program*; and Chapter 5, *Resources for Successful Family Readiness Groups*.
- ◆ For an excellent resource for FRG leaders, see Operation READY, *The Army FRG Leader's Handbook*, available from your local Army Community Service representative, State Family Program Coordinators (SFPC), and Army Reserve Family Readiness Program (FRP) staff.

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## **The Family and Soldier Readiness System**

*Excerpts from AR 600-20 (Draft), section 5-10 (b) paragraph 7, Responsibilities of Unit Commanders at All Levels.*

Unit commanders at all levels are responsible for providing an effective family program and at a minimum will:

- a) appoint in writing an officer or non-commissioned officer (NCO) as a Family Readiness Liaison as an additional duty.
- b) receive a briefing from the ACS Director/Family Readiness Program Manager within 60 days upon assumption of command.
- c) provide predeployment briefings as required.
- d) ensure soldier and family member awareness of the Family and Soldier Readiness System.
- e) ensure soldier participation in mandatory training as identified in paragraph 5-10.b.(6)(d).
- f) ensure soldier and family member access to entitlements, family programs, and family service.
- g) ensure the proper documenting and monitoring of personal affairs readiness of soldiers, to include Family Care Plans (see paragraph 5-5).
- h) ensure inclusion of single personnel in well-being programs and initiatives.
- i) ensure the Family Readiness Group is established and operates in accordance with this regulation.
- j) ensure adequate funding is provided for in the unit's operating budget for authorized Family Readiness Group expenditures.

## **Center for Army Lessons Learned**

See this handbook, Chapter 4, *Successful FRGs in the Army Today*, for a discussion of lessons learned from recent deployments to Kuwait and Bosnia. This chapter is reprinted from the Center for Army Lessons Learned, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and is available from their website: <http://call.army.mil>.

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***The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness (Operation READY Module)***

See *The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness* for information on FRGs and other family support considerations. Available from Army Community Service.

See AR 600-20 (Draft), for *Army Command Policy*, for Management of Family Readiness Groups.

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## FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

The Family Assistance Center (FAC) furnishes information, assistance, guidance, and referral to units and families of soldiers in the event of an emergency deployment, mobilization, or at times, in response to a major disaster resulting from a deployment. An example of the latter was the activation of a FAC in response to the 101st Airborne plane crash in Gander, Newfoundland. FACs were operational in Washington, D.C., and in New York City during the 2001 terrorist attack on America. FACs may also be activated in the event of natural disasters or training accidents involving mass casualties.

The FAC may not be activated for all deployments and extended field exercises. When activated, it serves as a liaison with all resource agencies; services from a wide variety of military and civilian agencies are sometimes made available on a 24-hour basis. Personnel often include ACS paid and volunteer staff, legal assistance officers, chaplains, health benefits advisors, mental health professionals, Red Cross personnel, the Provost Marshal, and housing, transportation and finance specialists. A FAC director is designated to coordinate the activities. This is usually the ACS officer on active Army installations.

The Army National Guard is the lead agency to establish FACs during all levels of contingency and mobilization for those military families who do not live near installations. These FACs will link families with information and available services. The Army National Guard FACs will provide services to any family of deployed military personnel, regardless of service or component, who live in the vicinity. For the Army National Guard, the FAC will also fulfill rear detachment requirements. Army reservists may also access either the active Army installation FACs or those operated by the State Area Command (STARC).

### Rear Detachment Commander

An RDC is usually designated when an active Army unit deploys or goes on extended exercises as a primary point of contact for family members who have questions or need assistance prior to and during the separation. Reserve Component organizations may not be able to appoint an RDC, so that role might be established within the FAC. The needs of the family during this stressful period of

### Resources

See the Operation READY resource, *The Family Assistance Center*.

separation require that the RDC be more than an authority figure. It is best if the RDC is someone who is compassionate and sympathetic to the needs of family members. This means that thought should go into the selection of the RDC.

It is important that the FRG closely coordinate its efforts with those of military family assistance personnel. Coordinated efforts are essential to:

- ◆ ensure FRG integration into the unit's deployment family assistance plan;
- ◆ clarify the roles and responsibilities of FRG volunteers, the RDC, FAC staff, and the FRL; and
- ◆ set an early precedent for the importance of all family support components working together.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Purpose and Composition of the FAC**

**Discussion:** During extended deployments, the need for assistance for family members increases dramatically. For this reason, the installation must be prepared for an increase in the use of family support services. Types of agencies that should be located at the FAC include ACS, Red Cross, TRICARE, Finance, Adjutant General, Family Advocacy, DENTAC, MEDDAC, Provost Marshal Office, Chaplain, Inspector General, Staff Judge Advocate, Public Affairs Officer, Directorate of Engineering and Housing, and Director of Logistics. These agencies are the suggested composition of a FAC. This is not an all-inclusive list.

**Lessons:** Installations and reserve component organizations must tailor the composition of their FACs to the special needs of the installations or units.

- ◆ All agencies on post should be prepared to assign personnel to the FAC once it is placed into operation.
- ◆ Since many of the agencies' services will be required 24 hours a day, contingencies should be made to have a representative available on call around the clock.
- ◆ The FAC should have phone numbers for the rear detachments and FRGs.

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## WELCOMING NEW PERSONNEL

**M**aintaining family well being through a program of family support begins by seeing to it that new personnel and their families are integrated into the community as smoothly as possible. Joining a new unit represents a critical transition period for individual soldiers and their families. Creation of a receptive atmosphere and establishment of a sense of belonging are paramount for newly assigned personnel and their immediate families. This section describes a battalion-level sponsorship program in which assigned sponsors assist new members (officers, NCOs, and enlisted soldiers) in acclimating to the new work and community environment, easing the stress and anxiety normally associated with these moves.

An active, well-planned sponsorship program covering all aspects of joining a new battalion and a new community can contribute greatly to a healthy command climate and, in turn, to mission preparedness. Sponsorship is more than transmitting needed information. A properly managed program can reveal—and more importantly, resolve—potential problems that otherwise may cause unnecessary hardships to new arrivals.

A well-administered program will assist commanders and supervisors to ensure that newly assigned soldiers understand standards of performance, conduct, and appearance in anticipation of any conflict with the arrival's perceptions and expectations. Conversely, a poorly managed program only creates the impression of command apathy toward new arrivals.

Soldiers must never feel unwanted, for they are the sole reason why leaders exist! Soldiers, sponsors, commanders, and supervisors must realize that sponsorship is a program we all have an obligation to support.

### Sponsorship

Policies and procedures for a typical *active* Army battalion sponsorship program follow. These can be modified for adoption by other levels of command or to suit local conditions. Reserve component units will find it necessary to significantly modify these procedures; however, the principles remain the same.

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An active, well-planned sponsorship program covering all aspects of joining a new battalion and a new community can contribute greatly to a healthy command climate and, in turn, to mission preparedness.

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All officers, warrant officers, and enlisted members in grades E-5 and above should have sponsors appointed upon notification of their assignment. Married personnel, regardless of rank, should also have an appointed sponsor at this time.

The **battalion commander** should personally welcome all officers, warrant officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel on arrival. Officers, warrant officers, and NCOs (E-5 and above) should be scheduled for an introductory interview by the battalion S-1. All E-4s and below should be welcomed by the battalion commander within five working days of arrival at a weekly Welcome Briefing. The commander may also add a personal note to each welcome letter to be sent to incoming officer and warrant officer personnel.

The **battalion command sergeant major** (CSM) should personally welcome all NCOs and enlisted personnel on arrival. NCOs (E-5 and above) should be scheduled for an entrance call with the CSM. All E-4s and below should be welcomed by the CSM within five working days of arrival in conjunction with the battalion commander's welcome.

The CSM can also ensure that all NCOs and enlisted personnel are briefed on necessary areas, such as:

- ◆ unit mission and operational requirements;
- ◆ use of the chain of command;
- ◆ standards of conduct;
- ◆ standards of appearance (including uniform and haircut standards);
- ◆ weight control program;
- ◆ promotion policy;
- ◆ schools program;
- ◆ battalion pass/leave policy;
- ◆ responsibilities of NCOs;
- ◆ NCO professional development program (NCOPD);
- ◆ personnel and equipment accountability, maintenance and training; and
- ◆ Family Readiness Group program.



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The **battalion S-1** should monitor the overall battalion sponsorship program and maintain all related records. Other duties may include:

- ◆ providing welcome packets to sponsors;
- ◆ scheduling all E-5 and above personnel to meet with the battalion commander;
- ◆ monitoring the requirement for Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System processing;
- ◆ monitoring the requirement for Family Care Plans;
- ◆ appointing officer or warrant officer sponsors within three working days of receipt of notification of assignment;
- ◆ requesting original command welcome letters from officer sponsors prior to dispatching to the battalion commander to add a personal note; and
- ◆ guaranteeing attendance of all newly assigned personnel in grades E-4 and below at the weekly Welcome Briefing conducted by the battalion commander and the CSM, informing companies if rescheduling is necessary.

**Unit commanders** should initiate programs to guarantee sponsors who are responsible, enthusiastic, and adequately trained to perform to the highest standards as representatives of the command. They should seek volunteers who have potential in the above areas to be trained as sponsors on a recurring basis. Their other sponsorship duties may include:

- ◆ appointing an NCO or enlisted sponsor in writing within three working days after receiving notification of a new arrival;
- ◆ ensuring that the sponsor is in the same grade or higher than the incoming member, in the same marital status and military specialty (when possible), familiar with the local military/civilian area, and not in receipt of reassignment instructions nor scheduled for temporary duty or leave during the time it takes the newly arrived member to be processed;
- ◆ forwarding completed sponsor appointment forms to the battalion S-1; and
- ◆ counseling the sponsor on the joint responsibility to the commander and to the incoming individual.

## LIMIT

Sponsors must understand that promise of payment of financial obligation in the newly assigned servicemember's name or expenditures of personal funds are not to be made unless a Power of Attorney specifying what actions the sponsor is authorized to undertake has been provided.

The **unit commander** should send a command welcome letter to all incoming personnel within five working days after receiving the assignment notification alert. For NCOs and enlisted personnel, it is recommended the command welcome letter be prepared by unit executive officers. The command welcome letter may include:

- ◆ a brief history of the battalion,
- ◆ the unit's location and telephone number,
- ◆ the individual's tentative duty assignment, and
- ◆ the name and address of the appointed sponsor.

Assigned sponsors must be given ample time during duty hours to accomplish their sponsorship tasks, and progress made by the sponsor in settling the new soldier must be monitored.

All newly assigned personnel should be briefed within five duty days after their arrival on areas such as:

- ◆ unit mission, history, and organization;
- ◆ chain of command and open-door policy;
- ◆ unit policies and performance expectations;
- ◆ training program;
- ◆ standards of conduct, appearance, military courtesy, good order, and discipline;
- ◆ uniform regulations;
- ◆ work schedule;
- ◆ promotion policies/rating schemes;
- ◆ EO program;
- ◆ leave policies;
- ◆ Family Readiness Group program;
- ◆ community and chaplaincy programs; and
- ◆ predeployment readiness.

In cases involving sole or in-service parents, the servicemember should be counseled on his or her obligation to prepare a Family Care Plan, regardless of rank. Unannounced arrivals should be handled as expeditiously as possible within the general program

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guidelines. Arrangements for courtesy calls and Welcome Briefings by the battalion commander and CSM for all newly arrived personnel should be coordinated with the battalion S-1 and CSM.

The responsibility of the sponsor can be summarized in a form letter over the signature of the commander. This sponsor assignment form should include the name, rank, and SSN of the incoming person and the name of the unit to which he or she is currently assigned. Specific sponsor duties that should be listed may include:

- ◆ forwarding a welcome letter to the sponsored person within five days of receipt of the sponsor assignment and providing the battalion Personnel and Administration Center (PAC) with a copy;
- ◆ assisting the individual in every way possible to prepare for the reassignment, including promptly responding to any requests for information;
- ◆ getting the individual on arrival at the airport and escorting him or her to their temporary accommodations (be sure the sponsor has the flight number and arrival time);
- ◆ accompanying the individual during in-processing;
- ◆ acquainting the individual with the surrounding area and commonly used facilities;
- ◆ introducing the individual to members of his or her new organization;
- ◆ giving all personnel with families a copy of relevant dependent travel regulations; and
- ◆ sponsoring the individual as the sponsor would want to be sponsored.

The sponsor should understand that his or her primary responsibility is to ensure that the transition of the newly assigned individual is as smooth and problem free as possible. The sponsor's responsibilities should take precedence over all other duties unless the sponsor has been released. The sponsor should be urged to remember that his or her role is part of the key to the success of the Army Sponsorship Program.

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The sponsor should be sure to mention specific laws peculiar to the geographic area and the military community and any other pertinent information that might help. It is better to give too much information than too little. The sponsor is the first contact the soldier and his or her family will have in their new location, and every effort to extend a warm welcome should be made.

The sponsor should notify the battalion PAC when contact has been made with the person being sponsored. If contact has not been established within a reasonable period of time, he or she should contact the battalion PAC for assistance.

Semiannual chain-of-command visits to family residences are another excellent opportunity to show soldiers and their families that Army leadership is concerned about their welfare and make sure they are aware of the services and programs available to them. Visits should be scheduled with the soldier at a time advantageous to the family. Consideration should be given to commanders' being accompanied by their spouses. Visits might be limited to 15 minutes, unless the soldier or family members identify questions or problems. Chain-of-command visits are a logical extension of the initial welcome of the sponsorship program.

The following two pages provide tips for effective sponsorship and may be duplicated for distribution to sponsors at the time sponsorship assignments are made.

The sponsor should be urged to remember that his or her role is part of the key to the success of the Army Sponsorship Program.

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## Tips for Sponsors

by Linda Powell

*Don't write a long, detailed letter.*

- ◆ Be brief! Even though you possess a wealth of knowledge, keep it simple.
- ◆ Include telephone numbers: work, home, and DSN, as well as your e-mail address.
- ◆ Send brochures, literature, maps, a welcome pamphlet from Army Community Service (ACS), and information from the local Chamber of Commerce.
- ◆ Save time and energy; use a tape recorder. Write or call to make certain your newcomer has one. You may want to send successive recordings, which add a warm, personal touch to sponsorship.

*Find out if you are sponsoring someone with a family.*

- ◆ Do they have children? What are their ages? Send information on schools, including preschools and day cares.
- ◆ Are there any pets? Inform them about any special quarantine requirements and the cost.
- ◆ Are there any special needs involving family, such as disabilities, special education needs, special requirements for the spouse?
- ◆ Make temporary living arrangements for them so they will have a place to stay upon arrival.

*Don't paint an entirely rosy picture.*

- ◆ List inconveniences and problems they may encounter, such as traffic problems, lines at the commissary, cost of living, housing, and so on.
- ◆ Give good advice on how to handle problems and inconveniences. List the best times for commissary and PX shopping; mention the number of other service exchange stores and commissaries available.
- ◆ Be sure to remind them to submit a change of address early.

*Greet them personally.*

- ◆ Meet them at the airport.
- ◆ Help with baggage pickup (arrange for a duty vehicle).
- ◆ Drive them to their temporary residence.
- ◆ Plan to pick them up, especially the soldier, to assist with in-processing.
- ◆ Show them that you care, but when your help is no longer needed, leave them alone to enjoy their first day in their new location.
- ◆ Give them your phone number in case they need your assistance.

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- ◆ Leave a list of unit and emergency numbers with them.
  - ◆ If there are children involved, offer to sit with them or arrange for a sitter while the parents take care of the numerous tasks associated with settling in.
  - ◆ Often, the spouse must sit in the car while the soldier in-processes. Make arrangements for the spouse to stay in your house or in the temporary quarters, whichever would be more convenient.

It's always nice if the spouse of the sponsor can write to the spouse of the person being sponsored. Subjects such as children, schools, shopping, churches, quarters, childcare, activities on post, and so on can be addressed. This also adds a personal touch and makes the incoming spouse feel like a part of the battalion.

#### *Involve the family.*

- ◆ The soldier will become acclimated quickly to his or her unit. It's also important for spouses of other unit soldiers to become aware of and acquainted with the newly arrived spouse. Children can also gain new friends quickly from among unit families, which will help them settle into their new environment.
- ◆ Consider having some families from your unit gather in your home with the newcomers as the honored guests.
- ◆ The spouses of other soldiers in the unit may want to sponsor a get-together, which will help the newly arrived spouse to get acquainted.
- ◆ Introduce the family to the Family Readiness Group (FRG). Suggest that the FRG contact person visit the family to explain the benefits of the group.

Finally, be a good sponsor. It will help everyone in the long run.

### **Additional Relocation Resources**

Resources for relocation can be found at Virtual ACS website: [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org). After arriving at the website, click on Relocation Readiness, and find the SITES link to information on installations worldwide.

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## BACKGROUND: CARING IS NOT ENOUGH

by Larry H. Ingraham, LTC, MSC

Over the past six years, my colleagues and I at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research have interviewed thousands of soldiers in more than a hundred companies and batteries as part of our evaluation of the Unit Manning System. The data is clear: The chief influence of cohort potential is leader behavior. Units in which leaders behave like they value people and express concern for their welfare score high on measures of cohesion; conversely, units with leaders who are relatively unconcerned about people score low on the cohesion measures. A leader who lacks concern easily wreaks havoc on the unit.

When we talk to leaders, however, none admit to being unfeeling or uncaring. All know the importance of taking care of their people. We have no reason to doubt their sincerity; they genuinely feel that they care. Unfortunately they, too, often assume their intentions and heartfelt personal concerns are enough and obvious to other members of the unit. Too often they are not. Too often the perceptions of troops in the unit are the opposite of what the leader says and feels. This paper is a speech I will never be invited to give to Army leaders – officers and NCOs – who say they care but then bring misery to their subordinates.

Ladies and gentlemen: Rank and position are conferred from above, but leadership is confirmed from below. Your selection as an Army leader is evidence the Army has confidence in you, but this is the easy vote. In combat, a silent vote of confidence is taken on every order. The same holds for training, but the returns take longer to count. Now you win the second, more difficult and really important vote of confidence. You say you do not wish to be liked, only respected, but too often you confuse respect with fear. You often appear

uncertain of your authority and fearful you will not be respected. Therefore you set out to prove who is in charge.

In combat especially, but in training as well, you are totally dependent upon your subordinates. You can succeed only to the degree you are willing to join them first, and then lead them by their consent – because they trust you and believe in you. You talk about “my outfit,” be it a battalion, company, battery, platoon, or squad, but it is not just yours. It is their unit, too. They were there before you and will remain after you. You are only on loan to the unit. You have been appointed and given the charge of helping them make it the most effective Army unit possible.

Communications are always problematic in organizations. You listen for what you want to hear and can never know enough. Again, your success depends on your subordinates. If you are any good at all, your subordinates will not shield you from the unpleasant.

When they do, it is because they are fearful. They have tested your courage to hear the truth and found you wanting. Also, they want to please; they want to handle problems themselves and not bother you with “trivial” details. Too often, however, what they see as trivial will be crucially important to your understanding. Unless you have worked extremely hard to gain their trust, unless they share your vision of what is really important, you will not have the information you need in a form you can use.

On the subject of communications, let me note that few know how to talk to soldiers. You substitute the “general officer shuffle” for meaningful

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communication. I am sure you recognize the shuffle: “Hi-there-where-ya-from?” (to be friendly); “How’s-the-training?” (professional interest); “How’s-the-chow-you-married-got-any-personal-problems?” (personal concern); “Good talkin’ to ya.” Sadly, you probably learned this patter from watching general officers work the crowd, who in turn probably learned it from politicians or the movies.

If you really understand that you are totally dependent on the troops, I commend to you the examples of Generals Bradley and Ridgeway who knew they did not know, and knew that the troops had knowledge they needed. Bradley, even as a corps commander, had no problem joining soldiers in their foxholes; Ridgeway always asked in so many words from each private, “What do you know that I need to know, right now?” Instead of the shuffle, let me suggest some alternate questions:

- ◆ How much of your training time have we wasted today?
- ◆ Are your leaders teaching you anything new?
- ◆ How often do you stand around doing nothing until late afternoon, and then have to work after chow?
- ◆ Do you know what you are expected to accomplish today? To what standard? By when?
- ◆ When will you know what you have to do tomorrow?
- ◆ Who deserves an award in this outfit?
- ◆ Is discipline fair in this unit?
- ◆ What is your wife’s biggest gripe about your work?
- ◆ If you could make one change in this outfit to make life better for the troops, what would it be?

When the troops get nervous at your questions and begin looking out the corners of their eyes for their sergeant or officer, or when the NCOs start grumbling that you’re butting into “Sergeants’ Business,” then you know you do not yet have sufficient trust built up to bear the truth. This is called negative feedback. When your subordinate leaders pester you to come visit their outfit to see their latest innovation or to ask some more tough questions, it is called positive feedback. The quality of feedback you receive is completely in your hands.

My next point is that coaching is not mentoring. You coach one level below, but mentor two levels down. That means colonels mentor captains, and lieutenant colonels mentor lieutenants, and first sergeants and captains mentor squad leaders. The purpose of mentoring is to provide the junior with a glimpse of the context in which the superior makes decisions. This is crucial if, as our doctrine proposes, leaders at all levels grasp and implement the intent of those two levels removed.

Mentoring is not instruction from the platform, briefings or SOPs. It is not shooting the bull like one of the guys. It is talking quietly and informally about the Army, about important professional concerns – the essence of our profession. It might involve suggested readings or even a written report, but the tone is always informal, the critique always gentle and the result always affirming. We talk a lot about mentoring, but few of us manage it at all because we confuse mentoring (setting context) with coaching (giving instructions).

You have repeatedly heard that families are important. They are, but we are often unclear as to why. Yes, common decency requires we attend to families; happy families make happy soldiers, and all that. Yes, we recruit soldiers, but retain families; therefore, families are important. All these reasons are true. The real reason families are



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important, however, is that healthy families keep soldiers alive on the battlefield. My scientific colleagues have established that stress is cumulative. Soldiers who go into battle stressed with personal and family problems are at greater risk for panic, poor judgment, despair and apathy in combat. Soldiers with family problems who break in battle also have lower odds for recovery.

We have known for a long time that troubled families produce troubled soldiers who create troubles in their units. However, the evidence is now clear that troubled units produce troubled soldiers who then create troubles in their families.

The causal chain is really a circle. We can pretty accurately assess the morale in our units in two ways: We can ask soldiers, or we can ask their families. They mirror each other.

I suggest, therefore, that you attend carefully to families in assessing your combat readiness. If you dare, judge your units by the degree of informal family participation. Families, especially wives, participate in group activities because they want to, not because they are ordered or “tasked” to attend. I close with a golden rule of command. Consider how you would feel if you were bound by the same rules you impose on your soldiers. When you see barracks organized like basic training with tape on the floor for each piece of furniture, how would you feel if somebody were to organize your living

room? How would you feel if your next commander changed the tapes? Then the next commander comes along and changes them back? We do this to soldiers in the barracks all the time, for no better reason than to prove to them (and ourselves) who is in charge.

In the name of pride, you sweat our troops to get increasing percentages of maximum scores on the PT test, or make them buff floors until they shine like shaving mirrors. Whose pride? You intend to improve morale, but the troops hate it. They do it in the hopes you will someday catch on and join the unit. You confuse what you do with the result you intend. Your soldiers really do want you to succeed because they want the unit to succeed. Their lives depend on the unit. So does yours. As their appointed leader you have great power to create misery and little power to reduce it, for you will be blind to its existence – unless you vigorously seek it out. What you intend is too often quite opposite of what you get. Your soldiers can only see what you do. They cannot know how you feel, or even your intentions to do good on their behalf. Your only hope is to concentrate on trust, communication, feedback, mentoring and families. Use your power wisely; the troops are watching and silently voting every day.

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## ROLES IN THE FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEM

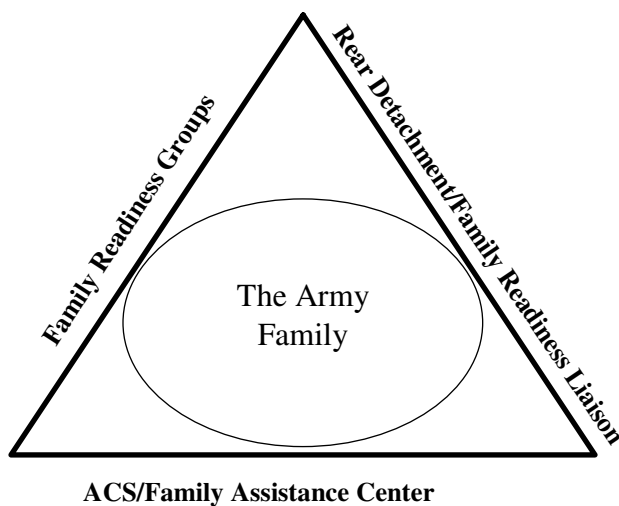
**Commanders** are responsible for planning and implementing programs to support military family members. They develop appropriate procedures for the operation of family assistance services, both while soldiers are at home and during deployment.

**Rear detachment commanders** are responsible for ensuring that the families of deployed soldiers are properly cared for and receive needed services through the family assistance program.

**FRG leaders** work closely with FRLs to maintain contact with family members, identify needs and problems that cannot be met through FRG resources, and make certain that appropriate referrals are made.

**FRG volunteers** will sometimes be faced with crisis situations that they may not be fully trained to manage; the importance of FRL guidance and support under these circumstances cannot be overestimated. In many cases, the FRL will be able to rely on the FRG to provide assistance in such areas as family member transportation or emergency childcare. FRG volunteers and the phonetree structure are the FRL's link to the families of the unit's soldiers and the key means of providing outreach to

**Family Support Structure** family members with special needs.



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## THE UNIT'S ROLE IN FAMILY READINESS

*The following material is taken from the newsletter of the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) No. 01-3 JAN 01 Family Readiness; Techniques and Procedures on Family Support Initiatives. Website: <http://call.army.mil>*

### *Mailing Address:*

*Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL)  
U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350*

Commanders and staff personnel have important responsibilities before, during, and after a deployment that determine the likely success of the unit's family readiness efforts. This chapter focuses on those responsibilities by examining the operations of successful Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) and rear detachment personnel from units participating in Operation JOINT GUARD, Operation JOINT FORGE, and Operation INTRINSIC ACTION.

### **Unit Predeployment Family Readiness Responsibilities**

Studies of leadership have shown that possibly the most important responsibility a commander has is to clearly articulate his intent. In one very successful unit, the commander stated his commitment to family readiness and rear detachment operations well in advance of the unit's deployment to Bosnia. His plan was to "allow soldiers to focus on the mission by enabling their families to be self sufficient." He laid out seven supporting objectives to support this plan:

- ◆ Educate and orient families before deployment.
- ◆ Enhance communication flow and rumor control.
- ◆ Execute professional assistance and crisis action referral.

- ◆ Provide emotional and spiritual support.
- ◆ Continue sponsorship for new soldiers and families.
- ◆ Keep single-soldier families informed.
- ◆ Maintain facility, equipment, and personnel readiness.

The commander sought to achieve these objectives by first preparing a thorough review of U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) research on the subject, including the USAREUR rear detachment commander and Family Support Liaison Course, the USAREUR Crisis Communication Handbook, and the USAREUR and 7th ATC Family Redeployment Readiness Plan. He further instructed his staff to compare the techniques employed in USAREUR to those in place at Home Station. He then had rear detachment commanders (RDCs), family readiness liaisons, and referral personnel from various installation agencies trained and certified in family readiness tasks and procedures. The commander found that the following topics should be addressed during preparations for deployment or, as a best course of action, routinely:

- ◆ training,
- ◆ resourcing,
- ◆ command awareness,

- ◆ predeployment briefing,
- ◆ monitoring activities and caring,
- ◆ Family Care Plans,
- ◆ soldier finances, and
- ◆ social activities.

## **Training and Preparation**

Commanders should be aware of two important and different areas of training: the training and preparation of soldiers and their families, and the training and preparation of Family Readiness Groups and rear detachment personnel.

Prior to a major deployment, personnel in Europe conducted situational training exercises designed to prepare them to effectively react to a variety of likely scenarios. The scenarios included spouses arriving at Home Station after soldiers had already deployed, children having difficulty adjusting to the soldier's absence, and a spouse not having food for themselves or their children. The deploying unit clearly identified a chain of command within the rear detachment. The commander specified the rank structure and composition for the brigade and battalion-level rear detachments, with a captain in charge at brigade level and a lieutenant in charge at battalion level. In each battalion-level rear detachment, the commander specified that the various staff sections be represented and include a variety of military specialists, such as a finance person, an armorer, and a mail clerk. The commander also identified FRG steering committees.

### *Resourcing of Family Readiness Centers*

In one division-sized unit observed during Operation JOINT GUARD/FORGE, the commander directed that DSN lines be installed in the homes of the brigade and battalion

commanders deploying to the stabilization force (SFOR) to facilitate communication between the field and rear. The division also constructed a Family Readiness Center (FRC) where Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) tasks and family support tasks could be carried out. The FRC provided family members with e-mail access, copy machines, printers, on-site childcare, office space, and meeting areas. The commander directed that a Deputy Chief of Staff for Family Readiness be designated and that the FRC be staffed 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Finally, the commander established a Crisis Action Team, headed by the division rear chief of staff, which included the family readiness officer, the staff judge advocate, public affairs personnel, provost marshal personnel, and a chaplain. Family readiness training events were programmed into the training schedule.

Overall, there was no question among personnel in Task Force Eagle that the command cared about their families and was taking significant steps to ensure their families were well cared for during the deployment. Through careful family readiness planning, this commander was able to significantly improve his unit's effectiveness in the field during a lengthy deployment. His preparation for deployment, from the perspective of family support, was meticulously thought out, and his guidance was carefully and consistently implemented with excellent results.

It was noted in other units that had good family readiness programs that commanders enhanced unit family readiness activities by also making provisions for office space and other support for FRG personnel during a deployment. By providing workspace, copier access, telephones, and computer and printer access for the FRG during the period of deployment, commanders enhanced the quality of the FRG effort. Additionally, access to these resources encouraged FRG personnel to be

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a visible presence within the unit area. These actions increased the likelihood of personal contact between the FRG and family members, and facilitated coordination between FRG leaders and rear detachment personnel.

### *Command Awareness*

Senior commanders must maintain a careful watch over their subordinate commands' family support activities. When interviewed, some soldiers (both active and reserve component) assigned to Task Force Eagle in Bosnia indicated that unit-level family support operations in their particular units were either mediocre or dysfunctional.

In most cases, soldiers identified two common causes that led to FRG problems. Lack of command influence was a major problem. Frequently, the unit commander appeared to have little interest in the family support portion of the operation. The second problem involved companies where the unit leadership had significant personnel issues that seriously impacted family support operations. In these cases, corrective action required vigilance on the part of battalion and higher-level commanders. Higher level commanders should be aware that disinterest on the part of a subordinate commander or personnel turmoil within the leadership of a subordinate command will invariably have a detrimental effect on the unit's family support operations. In those cases, it may be necessary to step in and manage the unit's FRG operations to facilitate success.

### *Predeployment Briefing*

Another method to show support for the family readiness program is for the commander to personally conduct predeployment briefings to both soldiers and family members. This sets the tone for family readiness and demonstrates the

commander's commitment to soldiers and family members. The most effective commanders were those who took personal responsibility for the preparation, scheduling, and execution of predeployment briefings. One commander used a format in which he offered the "Top Ten List of Most Frequently Asked Questions" (number one question was, "When are they coming home?") as a means of engaging his audience and assuring them that their concerns were also his concerns. Another commander outlined the unit's schedule of activities upon arrival, showing pictures of the area of operations, and giving an unclassified analysis of the upcoming mission. Most briefings included brief participation by various installation support agencies, whose representatives outlined the resources and assistance available to soldiers and their families prior to and during the deployment.

Commanders at all levels are accustomed to individualized (unit) servicing by installation support agencies prior to deployment; however, most of these support agencies have experienced budget cuts and concurrent personnel reductions. At the same time, the pace and changes inherent in even routinely scheduled deployments have meant that commanders need some flexibility in their predeployment activities. As such, it has been the case that many units made last-minute changes to their Family Readiness Group briefing schedules. Because some family members often have to miss work or make childcare arrangements to attend FRG briefings, many were unable to attend the meetings due to the change. Some installation support agency briefers missed the meetings as well, which led to adverse consequences for the unit's family readiness efforts. One remedy is for commanders to consider very carefully the impact on personnel before scheduling changes to predeployment briefings. When the situation allows, briefings should be scheduled well in advance with strict adherence to the timetable if

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possible. Additionally, if changes to scheduled briefings cannot be avoided, commanders should use the division G1 for installation agency scheduling, rather than contacting the support agencies directly. This helps prevent conflicts with other units over available resources.

### *Monitoring Activities and Caring*

Another method a unit may use to enhance its Family Readiness Program is for the unit commander to track activities on the monthly Unit Status Report (USR) and include family readiness operations in the command information (CI) program. In addition to providing clear command guidance, the unit commander can demonstrate his commitment to family readiness through the inclusion of family readiness indicators in these activities. The commander can also track the viability of the FRGs through a detailed “Family Readiness Group Checklist” and a “Risk Reduction Program Checklist” as part of the unit CI program.

The Family Readiness Group Checklist requires that each unit provide the soldier with a current phone tree, a copy of the unit FRG SOP, and a unit predeployment book. The checklist also identifies FRG office space, equipment access, Internet access requirements, and outlines various command-directed FRG support requirements as specified in locally produced FRG regulations. Additionally, it sets forth requirements for leader training, routine exercising standards, and funds accountability. The Risk Reduction Program Checklist includes family advocacy briefing standards, child and spouse abuse briefing requirements, and other safety information.

Task force commanders in Operation INTRINSIC ACTION units and the SFOR established clear-cut and well-publicized guidelines for the redeployment of soldiers from the theater of

operations. The commanders enhanced unit morale and better prepared families for the difficulties of separation. In many cases, commanders adopted policies that allowed for the return of a soldier to Home Station just prior to the birth of a first child, or authorized those soldiers whose wives were in the midst of complicated pregnancies to remain in the rear. Additionally, many commanders, upon receipt of a Red Cross message, authorized soldiers to redeploy when there was a serious illness or death in the soldier’s immediate family (usually including a brother, sister, mother, or father). Commanders also generally authorized a return to Home Station for any soldier whose grandfather or grandmother was in a similarly serious situation if that grandparent had raised the soldier.

While these standards were fairly common, some problems arose (from the soldiers’ perspectives) from the uneven application of those standards. By formulating and stating policies up front prior to deployment, commanders avoided later questions of fairness or morale problems that might have resulted from any perception of inequity. Soldiers benefit from having adequate time to plan when the operational situation permits passes or leaves for them. At various times during implementation force (IFOR) and stabilization force operations, the threat situation allowed commanders to grant passes to task force soldiers. In some cases, soldiers and civilians on extended duty in theater (generally 270 days or more) were granted two-week leaves at approximately the midpoint of their tour of duty. Most personnel, however, did not receive notice of approval until about two weeks or less prior to the pass or leave dates. With this late notice, they were generally forced to pay higher fares if they traveled to the United States. Similarly, those personnel hoping to meet with their families in Germany were also forced to pay higher fares, assuming flights and hotel accommodations were available at the late date.



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Given that the SFOR deployment took place over Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, the inability to meet with family members during approved leave periods caused additional morale problems for the soldiers and civilians.

### *Family Care Plans*

One of the most visible actions a unit conducts that impacts the family support aspect of deployments is to place command emphasis on the creation of feasible and effective Family Care Plans (FCPs) prior to deployment. This will greatly reduce the number of personnel problems associated with single-parent and dual-military couple soldiers. Operation INTRINSIC ACTION commanders who emphasized the careful preparation of feasible FCPs well before deployment notification were rewarded for their efforts during deployment. Single parents and dual-military couples had few problems that required the soldier's presence at Home Station. FCP information was given to FRG leaders, thus enabling those personnel to facilitate the care of children separated from their parents during a unit deployment. These units identified the need for FCPs as part of soldier in-processing, but they also periodically reviewed the plans with soldiers.

### *Soldier Finances*

Installation support agency leaders and FRG leaders consistently identify financial problems as the most prevalent type of problem when soldiers deploy for lengthy periods of time. In one unit that deployed to Bosnia, the division commander developed the Command and Financial Specialist Program (CFSP) to help remedy recurring financial problems and to improve mission readiness and soldier quality of life. The program involved training by a CFSP NCO to improve soldiers' and spouses' consumer and financial management skills. The CFSP NCO remained in

the rear detachment during the unit's deployment to provide counseling and assistance to families that found themselves in financial hardship during the period of separation. A local regulation (24th IN Div [Mech] & FS PAM 608-1, *Family Support Group [FSG] System*, March 1994) set forth the specific terms for implementation of the program, including responsibilities, installation agency support tasks, qualifications and personnel requirements, and the CFSP job description. The course involved three days of training for a soldier in the rank of staff sergeant or above. Referrals for the program came from unit leadership and from Army Emergency Relief and other support agencies.

### *Social Activities*

To protect unit morale, commanders must maintain a careful balance between predeployment programs directed toward single soldiers and those toward soldiers with families. A variety of soldiers from Task Force Eagle were concerned about the scope and balance of single soldier and married soldier unit activities in the predeployment phase of the operation. While the soldiers uniformly appreciated the efforts made by the chain of command to provide interesting and relevant unit activities prior to deploying to Bosnia, comments varied from unit to unit in the assessment of how well these activities were thought out and scheduled. In some cases, soldiers felt that their commanders had focused squarely on family support while ignoring single soldiers. Other soldiers felt that commanders had focused primarily on activities for the single soldiers, leaving the soldiers with family members to navigate the command's emphasis on family readiness on their own. Some soldiers, both married and single, noted that some activities set up by the units prior to deployment were not only expensive, but also took personal time away from their families or from other pursuits. Junior leaders

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felt they had to attend unit-sponsored predeployment activities to demonstrate their commitment to the unit whether they wanted to participate or not. Obviously, a carefully thought-out balance of events is necessary.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- ◆ Commanders must clearly articulate their intent in the area of providing family support.
- ◆ Training is necessary, not only for soldiers and their families, but also for FRG and RDC personnel.
- ◆ FRCs need to be properly resourced with people and equipment.
- ◆ A commander conducting the predeployment briefing gives the impression to those attending that he is wholeheartedly behind the FRG program.
- ◆ FRG briefings should be scheduled once, and any effort to change the briefing should be received with strong resistance.
- ◆ Redeployment plans must be well thought out in advance, published with RDC personnel, and part of the training for all FRG and RDC personnel.
- ◆ Family Care Plans must be enforced and reviewed annually.
- ◆ Financial issues will be the first and last concerns to surface during a lengthy deployment. Educating spouses can help alleviate this problem.
- ◆ Do not forget single soldiers in the FRG program. They have needs also.

### **Unit Responsibilities for Family Readiness While Deployed**

Every Army unit has certain inherent responsibilities to the FRG while the unit is deployed. One of these responsibilities is in the area of disseminating information. Rumors will harm a unit; the quickest way for a unit to begin rumors is to create a void of information. People tend to fill the void with any information they can reasonably come up with. To prevent this situation, every commander has the responsibility to disseminate correct and relevant information in the quickest and broadest methods possible. The use of newsletters and the Internet are two of those methods.

### *Support from the Theater of Operations*

Support from the theater of operations is very important to the health of any Family Readiness Program. To prove to families that the program will be successful, information must be disseminated quickly. A message should be sent from the unit to Home Station as soon as the unit arrives in country. As an example, due to local contracting problems in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO), establishing routine communication between the deployed Operation INTRINSIC ACTION units and their Family Readiness Groups took 13 days, which was much longer than the task force had been told to expect and longer than was promised to the FRGs prior to deployment. As arriving soldiers immediately moved to desert training areas after signing for their equipment, opportunities for them to call home were limited. The delay in the establishment of communications meant that it was some time before soldiers could contact their families or the FRGs could put their information-dissemination plans into practice. In light of these problems, deploying unit commanders and soldiers should caution family members that there may be



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unforeseen delays in establishing routine communication between deploying units, FRG leaders, and individual family members. Additionally, many uncertainties can be avoided through a thorough and detailed predeployment briefing in which unit commanders lay out soldiers' work schedules and initial requirements on arrival in the theater of operations.

### *Command Information Program*

Disseminating command information in support of unit family readiness initiatives is one very important aspect of family readiness. One Task Force Eagle commander used a wide variety of innovative techniques to disseminate information to Family Readiness Groups and to the family members of deployed soldiers. The task force commander effectively used e-mail, video teleconferencing (VTC), town hall meetings, an Internet site, a command information newspaper, and various other media to spread information about the command's family support, predeployment, and deployment activities. To capture the widest possible audience while allowing the flow of information both to and from the deployed unit, the commander used a variety of information media resources. First, soldiers were authorized to use and were supplied with e-mail capability, thus enabling them to communicate with family members on a routine and inexpensive basis. Family members without a computer or Internet capability at home used computers at the FRC to send e-mails. Also, soldiers were given personal access to the VTC at various base camps, and family members participated in conferences from the FRC. The commander and key staff members held weekly VTC sessions with FRG personnel to answer any questions family members had asked over the preceding week and to disseminate information on upcoming command activities. In similar fashion, prior to deployment to the theater of operations, the commander

conducted weekly town hall meetings in which he addressed questions from family members regarding the deployment and other issues. The commander also used the *Talon* (a command information newspaper) and the unit's own family readiness website as an additional format to disseminate family support, deployment, and redeployment information. With the toll-free family readiness telephone number and Internet site available, even family members away from the unit's Home Station could stay in contact with the unit. Units that produced an FRG newsletter on the Internet effectively reinforced the message that the unit cared about its soldiers and their families, and that the most current FRG information would be available to everyone.

One Task Force Eagle commander directed that his staff produce a family readiness website that could be accessed by any soldier or family member in the task force. The family readiness website provided information about family counseling, how to communicate with family members, and information about the FRC and various other programs available to soldiers and their families. The site was frequently updated to keep information current. The website also included the task force's toll-free family readiness telephone number so that any family member with a problem could easily call for assistance. Additionally, some units and staff sections created their own unclassified websites to allow their families the opportunity to see what they were doing on the mission. A family support website can be a significant part of the campaign to get out the word about family readiness operations. When updated periodically, it can serve as an effective medium through which to pass along changes and points of access to the family readiness effort.

During Operation INTRINSIC ACTION, some units were visited by a variety of upper-echelon leaders, among them the Secretary of Defense and

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the Chief of Staff of the Army. Soldiers identified these visits as valuable morale boosters while they were deployed. Moreover, the visits enhanced the command's information dissemination efforts. Specifically, soldiers noted that national-level leaders who took the time and made the effort to visit the theater of operations and acknowledge family separations, personal sacrifices, and importance of unit efforts had a positive impact on unit morale.

### *Task Organization and Family Readiness*

During some deployments, units are attached to the higher headquarters for a variety of reasons. When this is the case, the higher headquarters should make every effort to incorporate these units into their Family Readiness Program. This consolidates many repetitive actions, primarily in the area of communications. Operation INTRINSIC ACTION task force commanders integrated the Family Readiness Groups of attached units into their family readiness operations to take care of those soldiers and to enhance the task force's effectiveness in the field. This effort included the apportionment of e-mail accounts and other scarce communications resources. The commanders also included the attached unit FRG leaders in routine dissemination of information to Home Station. As such, attached units had two effective avenues through which to seek assistance for assigned soldiers with personnel services and family care problems, since they could contact the task force headquarters or their own parent headquarters in the rear. Additionally, since the task organization for routinely recurring deployments, such as the National Training Center (NTC) or Kuwait rotations, is generally known well ahead of the actual deployment, task force commanders were able to perform this integration of effort well before deployment notification. This afforded FRG leaders the opportunity to become familiar with

each other prior to the actual deployment event, which enhanced their overall efforts.

### *Communicating with Home Station*

Communicating with the home front is very important for soldiers and their families. The most obvious method is, of course, the telephone. Although the soldier may be located in another country, the telephone has the potential to link families together and to ease some of the stresses back home. One Task Force Eagle commander directed that DSN lines be installed in the homes of the brigade and battalion commanders deploying to the SFOR to facilitate communication between the field and rear. He authorized soldiers to use DSN lines for MWR calls home twice per week (15 minutes per call) to talk to family members. For those soldiers whose families had departed Home Station or for those soldiers who did not originate from an active duty Army post, a DSN directory was available, which enabled soldiers (in most cases) to locate a post near their family's location. This enabled them to either place a local call or greatly reduce the cost of the call.

Another method of communication is the use of the video teleconference. A Task Force Eagle commander used the VTC in a variety of innovative ways to assist the unit's FRG operations and to bolster his command information program. He conducted weekly VTC conferences with FRG personnel at Home Station. He also resourced his subordinate units to enable their soldiers to use the VTC as a means of contacting their families. Soldier use of the VTC was managed by blocks of time, with each unit authorized a window of electronic pipeline commensurate with their assigned strength. Each unit then managed the allocation of the VTC time in accordance with its own unit policies. While the VTC made major demands on the information highway capacity, the results were clearly worth the technological

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challenge and cost. At the beginning, commanders had to deal with the usual soldier rumors about “this person getting extra access” and “that unit having more than its fair share”; however, soldier morale was improved overall with the use of the VTC. In some cases, soldiers became very emotional after seeing and talking to their family members; unit leaders had to be prepared to deal with that possibility. It should be noted that this capability is theater-dependent, given the great electronic resources the system requires.

One very creative Task Force Eagle commander devised a way to communicate with families at Home Station while concurrently affecting a community awareness program by using the VTC. The commander organized an initiative in which the deployed unit participated in a teaching partnership with local school districts to provide a learning experience for students, enhance the command information program, and promote positive relations with the local community. The commander and his staff briefed the children and their teachers on the unit’s mission and location and other aspects of the tour of duty in Bosnia. By working with local school districts, the commander was able to accomplish several objectives. First, he enhanced the unit’s command information program by using the briefings as one more way of disseminating information about the specifics of the unit’s mission in Bosnia. He also used the forum to foster a better understanding of the military among the civilian population in and around Home Station. Furthermore, he supported the school districts’ teaching efforts by providing interesting information that the schools could incorporate into their social studies curriculum. Lastly, he supported Family Readiness Group efforts by giving the deployed soldiers’ children in those schools a sense of pride in the service of their parents.

### *Theater Maturity and Task Organization*

Theater maturity and task organization also impact greatly upon the type and likely effectiveness of FRG operations. Without question, the relative maturity of the theater of operations and the task organization of a deployed unit can affect efforts to execute FRG operations. In the case of the SFOR4, Task Force Eagle benefited significantly from the maturity of the theater of operations. However, the unit was simultaneously at a disadvantage due to the task organization of elements throughout the various camps. While the maturity of the theater allowed innovations such as soldier use of DSN lines, VTC, and e-mail, the division of units among different base camps presented challenges to leaders seeking to achieve FRG objectives and remain aware of FRG issues. Additionally, the common assignment of individual reserve component (RC) and active component (AC) augmentees throughout all of the camps meant that, in general, there were small units and individuals who were either isolated from their higher headquarters or poorly informed about available resources. Some units overcame this problem by consolidating the various FRG supporting hardware and personnel into what they called “morale tents,” which were then available to all soldiers assigned to the camp regardless of unit assignment. Nonetheless, some soldiers in various camps did not receive information regarding available resources.

Finally, units preparing to deploy must tailor their FRG activities to the theater’s capabilities. By conducting a thorough reconnaissance of the theater of operations, units can ensure that they do not promise a capability they cannot deliver. It should not be assumed that because one unit was able to provide a particular level of support, subsequent units will be able to do the same. Similarly, units should carefully think through how they will continue and monitor FRG operations for

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all soldiers once the inevitable task organization takes effect within the theater of operations.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- ◆ Spouses view using the Internet to distribute information as a positive sign that the command cares about them.
- ◆ A commander should strive to provide up-to-date information to families as quickly as possible.
- ◆ Families should understand that a soldier's first duty is to get to his position in theatre as soon as possible. Consequently, there may not be sufficient time for the soldier to call home as quickly as the family may wish.
- ◆ Family Readiness Group newsletters are an effective avenue to get information to families and to notify them of upcoming events.
- ◆ Family Readiness Plan websites are the latest method to inform families about what the soldiers are doing and when they should be returning home.
- ◆ The video teleconference is a method to allow families to see and feel close to the soldier even though they are thousands of miles away.
- ◆ Higher headquarters should incorporate attached units into their family readiness plans for economy of effort.

## **Post Deployment Family Readiness Unit**

### *Redeployment Considerations*

There are certain issues that a commander must consider when the unit is returning from a lengthy deployment. Commanders should provide redeploying soldiers an opportunity to “decompress.” Several task force commanders in Operation INTRINSIC ACTION scheduled a variety of activities intended to both bring their units back to a satisfactory state of readiness and to afford soldiers a short period of decompression prior to releasing them for leaves. Activities included Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) updates (i.e., Servicemen's Group Life Insurance [SGLI] revisions and DEERS corrections), privately owned vehicle (POV) inspections, and finance briefs, all of which took place after 48 hours of administrative downtime. Units then scheduled block leave for two weeks. Coupled with redeployment briefings administered by unit chaplains, commanders, and Family Readiness Group personnel, these activities allowed soldiers to ease back into the family setting rather than being thrust back after such a long absence.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- ◆ Decompression time is necessary to allow soldiers time to relax from the usual OPTEMPO of a deployment.
- ◆ Redeployment briefings from the chaplain and FRG leaders are very important to prepare not only the families to accept the soldier back home, but to prepare soldiers after a lengthy deployment.

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# 2

## Predeployment: Family Readiness Processing

*Good preparation and judicious use of resources can reduce stress and family problems during predeployment and family readiness processing.*

- ◆ Preventive Maintenance
- ◆ Predeployment Briefings
- ◆ Emotional Preparation
- ◆ Practical Preparation
- ◆ Briefing Outline
- ◆ Family Support during Deployment
- ◆ Family Readiness Groups' Role in Unannounced Deployments
- ◆ Roles and Responsibilities
- ◆ Deployment 101



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## PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

**M**ission readiness and effectiveness are high-priority items for Army commands. Army leaders recognize that well-constructed family readiness programs that are sensitive to “people needs” are important factors in achieving mission readiness.

Family readiness programs are not built in a day but require time and effort from a number of sources. Especially critical are family member predeployment briefings, which contribute to mission effectiveness, readiness, and training by teaching families to manage time apart.

Family-member predeployment briefings cannot achieve this purpose if they are isolated events. They must be an integrated part of the commander’s family readiness plan, including FRGs, the rear detachment commander, and ACS assistance.

This section contains predeployment briefing guidelines and resources to help both soldier and family cope with separation. Some of the material is appropriate for handouts or inclusion in welcome and briefing packets. The family readiness materials from Chapter 3 of this handbook can also be used in family-member predeployment briefings; they may already have been covered in FRG meetings.

In most cases, a short notice or no notice alert will find the soldier and family unprepared for deployment, unless a special effort has been made to prepare in advance. Unit commanders must take an active role in ensuring that their soldiers are ready for deployment at all times. This tells the soldier that family deployment readiness is a command priority. It says, “I care.”

At regular intervals, the unit commander (or his designee) might sign off on a checklist for each soldier; an incentive might be offered for families who are most ready for deployment. Perhaps a workshop at the unit level would give soldiers and family members time to establish what needs to be done and what assistance they need to get it done, especially if the unit FRG has not sponsored such a program.

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Family member predeployment briefings contribute to mission effectiveness, readiness, and training by teaching families to manage time apart.

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**Soldiers and family members must understand that maintaining family readiness is a mutual responsibility.**

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Taking care of family affairs in advance gives the soldier and family more time to spend together prior to deployment. It might also leave more time at predeployment briefings for essential briefings about the deployment destination, when such information does not breach security.

To assist families in preparing for the practical aspects of deployment, they should be briefed and offered assistance in the areas of finance, family record-keeping, bank accounts, insurance, wills, Powers of Attorney (POA), emergency assistance, crime prevention and safety, nutritional health, and household and automobile maintenance.

Soldiers and family members must understand that maintaining family readiness is a mutual responsibility. The spouse must have enough information to enable him or her to know what to expect from the soldier. One suggestion is for the family to set aside a specific time each month to go over family records—a “togetherness” activity for which they could reward themselves by doing something special.



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## PREDEPLOYMENT BRIEFINGS

**P**redeployment briefings for soldiers and family members help equip them to cope with an upcoming separation by acquainting them with unit plans and making available handbooks and information on spouse contacts and post and community resources.

The following guidance refers to briefings that will be conducted on the battalion level when the battalion deploys as part of a task force. Units are encouraged to conduct similar briefings when they deploy as smaller elements. These milestones should be kept in mind, as advance planning is important:

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Responsibility of</b>
Six weeks prior to deployment	Schedule briefing to include facility, speakers equipment, refreshments.	S-1, S-3
Five weeks prior to deployment	Send out personal invitations from battalion commander.	S-1
Three weeks prior to deployment	Conduct briefing.	Battalion commander

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The battalion should publish procedures for the conduct of battalion predeployment briefings, reserve the facility to be used, and ensure adequate equipment is available.

The S-1 should schedule briefing presentations, send out invitations, designate an officer in charge (OIC) for the briefing, provide for refreshments, and arrange for childcare. In addition, he/she should ensure that pertinent information is prepared and distributed at the briefing—including information from the American Red Cross (ARC), Army Community Service, and other family-helping agencies.

The briefings can be built on a schedule similar to the following:

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<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presented by</b>	<b>Time</b>
Welcome	Battalion commander	15 min
Personnel issues	Battalion S-1	15 min
Predeployment information	ACS staff	10 min
Security	Provost Marshal Office	05 min
Break		15 min
Rear detachment concerns	RDC	10 min
Financial assistance	Financial Readiness/CFSNCO	10 min
Religious support	Unit Chaplain	10 min
Legal issues	Staff Judge Advocate Ofc	15 min

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Other optional briefers may be the Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator or key FRG personnel. A Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) officer might make a presentation on Powers of Attorney and wills. Following the formal briefing, units may want to hold FRG meetings to elaborate on issues specific to their group.

A great deal of planning must go into a successful briefing, and there is no shortage of good material. The remainder of this section outlines things to be taken into consideration in planning predeployment briefings and areas of concern that might be discussed. There will be more material here than a single briefing can address; the content should be tailored to local needs and might be varied from one deployment to the next. Some topics may already have been covered in FRG workshops.

A group planning session for the briefing could include the major installation family readiness personnel, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator, and representatives of the unit to be supported, such as:

- ◆ the unit commander and senior NCO (with FRG leadership, as appropriate);
- ◆ an ACS representative; and
- ◆ the unit chaplain, TRICARE representative, a representative from the legal office or other representatives, as appropriate.

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Whenever possible, it might be a good idea to have speakers from the civilian community to present ways the spouse can become involved in the larger community.

In choosing an appropriate date, consider the deployment needs of the unit. Time selection is a difficult task as many families have both spouses working. When large numbers are deploying, consider both a daytime and an evening briefing. If only one briefing is decided upon, most likely an evening time would reach the greatest number.

The length of the briefing will depend upon choices made in content, but a good rule of thumb is not to exceed two hours. Shown below are some options to be coordinated with deployment processing agencies.

- ◆ Weekday afternoon at approximately 1300. Provide childcare for children not in school. Soldiers who attend should leave work (if not in the duty section) at the end of the briefing.
- ◆ Weekday morning at approximately 0930 to ensure that children are in school. Release soldiers from duty to transport family members, if needed, and to attend the briefing.
- ◆ Weekday evening at approximately 1900 or 1930. Provide childcare.

The location and meeting area are crucial. Ensure that the space available can accommodate the anticipated number of attendees and that there is adequate parking nearby. Consider the briefing an opportunity to develop a sense of “family” within the unit.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Predeployment Briefings**

One battalion commander arranged for the NCO Club and brought more than 400 persons to a briefing to send off two batteries to Bosnia. Ninety-two donated pizzas were served at 6:00 p.m. The briefing began at 6:30 p.m. to a quiet and attentive audience, with many children. The briefers spoke for 10 minutes max. At 8:00 p.m., the commander told the soldiers and families that he would care for these families remaining “as if they were our very own.” After taking three questions from the floor, he adjourned the group. The briefers remained for a short time to answer other questions.

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Two types of issues should be covered. Some material should deal with the emotions associated with family separation, such as stress, communicating feelings, and helping children cope. There should also be information on practical aspects of deployment. This includes a mission statement, standard procedures, readiness checklists, and so on.

Included in these guidelines are suggestions for developing content. These ideas are not all-inclusive; those conducting briefings are encouraged to supplement these suggestions when necessary. Creativity in both content and method of presentation are critical to full participation. Attendees should be actively involved in the briefing; they may have coping skills to share with others present.

Be sensitive to the needs of the entire unit and all family members. From the list below, choose speakers who are dynamic and have been determined to be most appropriate. Add others as desired. Active participation by the commanding officer and the sergeant major is essential, but consider these as well:

- ◆ ACS representative or Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator;
- ◆ Staff Judge Advocate;
- ◆ Army Emergency Relief (AER) representative;
- ◆ ARC representative;
- ◆ Unit Chaplain;
- ◆ Provost Marshal;
- ◆ Medical treatment facility or TRICARE representative;
- ◆ Finance and accounting representative;
- ◆ FRG chairperson and other well-known, articulate family members; and
- ◆ RDC and CFS (Command Financial Specialist) personnel.

Provide good publicity through as many sources as possible. Some ways of getting the word out include personal letters mailed from the commanding officer to each spouse (strongly recommended; should be addressed to the spouse by name, not to “Dear Spouse”)

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or publication in the unit newsletter, post newspaper, or daily bulletin.

Attendees appreciate receiving an agenda of briefing events. It is important to provide information in the form of a handout that includes these items:

- ◆ mailing address of the deployed soldier;
- ◆ name and telephone number of the RDC and location of the unit RDC office;
- ◆ speakers' names, agencies, and telephone numbers;
- ◆ locally developed deployment guides or family assistance materials;
- ◆ standard procedures for dealing with emergencies;
- ◆ information on FRGs; and
- ◆ Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator brochures or leaflets.

Some of the following items will be useful as well:

- ◆ printed program/agenda,
- ◆ will forms,
- ◆ Power of Attorney forms,
- ◆ allotment forms,
- ◆ release forms for privacy act disclosure,
- ◆ family member predeployment checklist,
- ◆ ACS brochures indicating classes offered to family members, and
- ◆ FRG information and training.

Some additional recommended items include:

- ◆ list of suggested activities for family members,
- ◆ reading list,
- ◆ list of ways to deal with stress and handouts pertinent to stress,
- ◆ material on family relations,

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- ◆ information on child-rearing practices,
  - ◆ list of planned get-togethers for families, and
  - ◆ *The Army Family Readiness Handbook* (Chapter 3).

Contact your ACS representative for copies of these and similar items.

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## EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

Separation of family members due to deployment is stressful. Individual family members are subjected to different worries, fears, and anxieties before, during, and after these separations. Role changes during separation cause significant stress for both spouse and children.

The four basic stages in the departure-return cycle are:

- ◆ protest against loss or departure,
- ◆ despair,
- ◆ detachment, and
- ◆ return adjustment.

These may be discussed as they relate to the stages of predeployment, deployment, and postdeployment. The following descriptions may be helpful.

### Emotions Run High Prior to Deployment

Two to four weeks before leaving, a mixture of emotions such as anger, sorrow, and fear surfaces in families. These feelings are expressed through psychological distancing, clinging, or crying. The soldier withdraws from the family and spends more time at work or with friends, or engages in other activities that exclude the family. Grouchy and quick-tempered behavior is sometimes evident. Spouses become “too busy” for shared time or to go anywhere. One or both may try to protect themselves from the hurt of parting by gradual physical withdrawal. He or she may talk to other family members about feelings of hurt or rejection.

What’s needed at this time is understanding. It helps if family members can understand that the soldier has a need to behave in this manner; it is not a personal rejection of them. The soldier is trying to prepare for the separation.

Honest and open communication between family members is very important, especially so when emotional needs exist. Soldiers can reassure family members by telling them, “I’m going to miss you.” The words “I love you” are the most important words said before separation.

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Honest and open communication between family members is very important, especially so when emotional needs exist.

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The soldier must reassure family members by letting them know that he or she understands their fears.

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## **Understand the Children**

Families must be taught not to be unnecessarily hard on children. If parents learn to acknowledge their own feelings, they will easily see how the children, too, are reacting to the coming separation. Temper tantrums, whining, and other similar behaviors are reactions to tension that children pick up from the soldier and spouse during this stressful period; children are not being deliberately naughty.

The soldier may demand attention and constantly be underfoot. Or the spouse may become clinging and needy. The soldier is likely to hear, "How will I live without you? I'll never be able to get along." Children may show an increased need for attention through positive and negative behaviors. They may demonstrate fear of the unknown (or known), of inadequacy, of an inability to cope, or of a loss of love. Family members may feel annoyed or strangled by this behavior. This may lead to a feeling of guilt.

The soldier must reassure family members by letting them know that he or she understands their fears. One way of acknowledging this is by saying, "I know it is going to be hard for you. I don't want to leave you either, but I'm confident you can manage. You've done it before."

## **Communication Is a Stress Reliever**

Communication is the key to dealing with predeployment stress. How much stress family members suffer will depend on how well they communicate during this two to four week predeployment period. Before the soldier leaves, the entire family needs to sit down and talk about their feelings concerning the separation. The discussion should include what will happen when dad or mom is gone, how they will keep in touch, fun things the remaining family members can do while the soldier is away, and what will be different upon return.

## **Getting Adjusted**

Deployment generates a new set of responses. During the first two weeks of separation, the spouse experiences feelings of loss, anger, and mild depression. Loss of appetite or constant eating, weight loss or gain, stomach pains, sleeplessness, and waking up early



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prevail. The spouse may be short with the children. After about a month, most spouses are into a fairly workable routine, which continues—with highs and lows—for the remainder of the separation.

For the first few days, the soldier may be too busy, excited, and challenged to feel the pangs of separation. When the routine becomes stabilized, the soldier may be moody, forgetful, and quick to anger. Most of this will pass in two to three weeks and will not reoccur until two to three weeks before return. Depending on workload and pressure, a mild depression may occur in the middle of separation.

### **Children's Behavior**

The kids may have sleep disturbances, nightmares, appetite problems, or behavior problems (temper tantrums), and they may test new limits. Bedwetting in recently trained children may occur. Older children may pick fights and resist authority. They may be inattentive at school, and grades may slip. Discipline can be a problem; the usual pattern of discipline should be continued.

Children should not necessarily be allowed to sleep with a parent; however, cuddling, hugging, and special one-on-one time is important. Limits must be set immediately—the children should know from the start what is and what is not permissible. This is especially important if the departing soldier is the disciplinarian in the family.

The main influence on how well the children cope with family separation is the attitude displayed by the parent who is present. One of the main factors that influences parental attitude is the quality of the social environment. Parents need to be supported in their efforts to parent effectively.

This is where a successful family readiness system and the FRG network come in handy. Remaining family members are likely to feel less isolated and will get support from others if they are encouraged to be a part of this network.

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The main influence on how well the children cope with family separation is the attitude displayed by the present and absent parent.

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## Reunion Dynamics

The postdeployment period has its own stresses. Tension emerges approximately two weeks before and two weeks after return. Various kinds of expectations are set. The soldier may feel confident that everything and everyone will be just as they were when he or she left, and that the soldier will be welcomed with open arms immediately into old places and roles. On the other hand, he or she may fear that everything will be changed; the family will not take him or her back. Roles may have been taken over by other family members; he or she is no longer needed.

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Effective family communication during deployment may help reduce the reentry stress.

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The spouse may fear that the soldier will not like the new competence gained during the separation or that newfound freedom and confidence will be taken away when old roles are resumed. Conflicting emotional reactions surface: anger; resentment of intrusion; fear of loss of freedom, self-esteem, love or acceptance; and blaming the spouse for whatever went wrong or for changes that have taken place.

The children may fear that the soldier will return and express anger for a long list of misdeeds that the other parent has saved up for him or her. All of those “wait ‘til Dad gets home” situations will now become reality.

Effective family communication during deployment may help reduce the reentry stress. Most families work out reintegration problems and arrive at a fairly stable routine within two to three weeks after the soldier returns. (Additional information on meeting reunion challenges is provided later in this chapter.)

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## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Family Care Plans**

**Discussion:** With thousands of single-parent Army families and families in which both parents serve in the Armed Forces, there is a considerable need Army-wide for workable Family Care Plans that can be immediately administered in short-notice deployments. Unit commanders and RDCs must expect that some Family Care Plans may fail, especially during long deployments.

**Lessons:** The adequacy of Family Care Plans over time is the responsibility of the servicemember. However, unit commanders are responsible for critically reviewing Family Care Plans and judging their adequacy.

Family Care Plans must be carefully screened by unit commanders and hard questions asked about the guardian's capacity, willingness, and availability.

RDCs should monitor Family Care Plans, include guardians in the distribution of information, and provide support as appropriate.

If a Family Care Plan fails after deployment, the RDC must coordinate with the deployed soldier and his or her unit on actions to resolve the situation. Deployed soldiers whose Family Care Plans fail are not able to concentrate on their duties until the situation is rectified.

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## PRACTICAL PREPARATION

### Financial Preparation

**P**rior to leaving, there is an immediate need for the family to plan finances. Questions about how much money is available and how much money should be left for the family should be addressed. As a minimum, family members must be left with enough money to cover monthly expenses.

The best way to ensure family financial security is through the monthly allotment. Soldiers should be encouraged to set up an allotment in the spouse's name, not only to cover basic needs (rent, utilities, food, clothing, and transportation) but also for some pleasures such as entertainment. The need to make a proper adjustment to the family's requirements and income should be emphasized. So, too, should the need to reach an understanding with creditors or combine and refinance debts.

Often, neither soldier nor spouse knows where important family papers are kept. A family crisis that would make locating these papers necessary can occur at any time. Family documents should be grouped together and put in a single box in a secure and permanent place. Share these suggestions during the briefing:

- ◆ Use a bank for savings and checking accounts.
- ◆ Maintain a bank account during your entire military career, either in your hometown or in each permanent station, in order to get checks cashed.
- ◆ Ensure that accounts are also in the spouse's name, that he or she has the passbook to savings accounts, and that he or she knows how much money is deposited to accounts and when.
- ◆ Consider a second checking account for the soldier to use during deployment so he or she will know exactly what funds are available to spend. Otherwise, the regular account that the spouse will be using during the absence may be overdrawn.
- ◆ Make certain that beneficiary designations and premiums for life insurance policies are up to date.
- ◆ If property and automobile insurance will expire during the tour, make arrangements for renewal.

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The best way to ensure family financial security is through the monthly allotment.

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- ◆ An up-to-date will is urgently needed to safeguard hard-to-come-by family belongings in the event of death. The individual gets to choose who he or she wants to take possession of the belongings.
  - ◆ Legal assistance in preparing a will is available to every soldier.

### **Powers of Attorney—Be Careful in Using These**

A Power of Attorney authorizes someone to act in the soldier's behalf during his or her absence. A General Power of Attorney is a very broad and sweeping grant of authority. Although useful in conducting personal business in the soldier's absence, it should not be made without prior consultation with a legal assistance officer or other attorney. General Powers of Attorney are not always sufficient for some legal transactions. It is wise to anticipate major needs that might occur during deployment, such as buying a house or a car, and then check to determine if a Special Power of Attorney is needed. A Special Power of Attorney also designates another individual to act in the soldier's behalf, but only for specific matters or actions.

### **Special Needs Assistance**

Types of assistance available, such as loans through AER and the handling of emergency messages by ARC, should be discussed, including those services available to family members with special needs. In some cases, soldiers may need help understanding the special needs of their spouses. For example, others may not easily understand the isolation felt by a non-English speaker.

### **Crime Prevention, Safety, and Security**

Safety and security should be special concerns for husbands and wives during deployment. Soldiers will feel more comfortable about leaving if they have done all that they can to ensure their families' well being. A complete residential security survey from the local provost marshal or nonmilitary policeman is advisable. The following precautions should be emphasized to the FRG members:

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**Soldiers will feel more comfortable about leaving if they have done all that they can to ensure their families' well being.**

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- ◆ If the apartment or house does not have a peephole in the door, install one.
  - ◆ If outside doors do not have deadbolt locks, install them.
  - ◆ If windows are not secured, they should have good locks or should be drilled and pinned to prevent opening from the outside.
  - ◆ Sliding doors should have adequate locks or anti-jimmie devices to prevent entry by prying the door open or removing it from its tracks.
  - ◆ A phone is a necessity for security and communication. Ask that rank not be listed in the phone book. This helps to avoid harassment. Some families list only the soldier's first initial.
  - ◆ Post emergency phone numbers and procedures beside the phone, or actually taped to it, so they can be readily found.
  - ◆ If obscene or nuisance calls are a problem, avoid answering the phone using your name. If the caller remains silent or makes obscene remarks, quietly hang up. Keep a whistle near the phone and use it. If calls are repeated, take the phone off the hook temporarily. If the calls continue, report them to the phone company representative and follow his or her advice.
  - ◆ If a phone chain (a list of unit spouses and phone numbers) is provided, protect this information.
  - ◆ Plan escape routes in case of fire, burglary, or other emergency, and be sure all family members can use them.
  - ◆ Leave an extra key with trusted neighbors for emergencies.
  - ◆ Carry an extra car key in your wallet, or wear it on a chain.
  - ◆ In case the neighbor is not home when needed, bury a front door key in a jar in the yard near some easily remembered spot.
  - ◆ When traveling, avoid putting your address on outside tags. Pin that information inside the luggage in case of loss.
  - ◆ Do not list your name on the mailbox unless it is required by the post office.
  - ◆ Report any door-to-door soliciting in military housing.
  - ◆ Carpool to evening functions during deployment with at least one other spouse.

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- ◆ Know some neighbors well, so if you are followed coming home you can go to their door.
  - ◆ Cellular telephones are a great source of emergency assistance.
  - ◆ Some communities recommend that front and/or back door lights be left on all night. Consider investing in several timers for lights and appliances. Whatever is done with lights, use a consistent pattern so they do not signal absence or the soldier's deployment.

For personal security when away from home, follow these guidelines:

- ◆ When driving, stay on busy, well-lighted streets as much as possible, and avoid driving in the curb lane at night. Keep your doors locked.
- ◆ Walk with a companion when possible, and stay away from dark alleys and bushes.
- ◆ Do not pick up any hitchhikers under any circumstances.
- ◆ If the car breaks down in an isolated area, raise the hood. Sit inside your car until help comes. Do not open the windows or unlock the doors to talk to strangers offering assistance. Instead, if you do not have a cell phone, ask permission to use their cell phone to call police for assistance. If no one has a cell phone, ask them to go to the nearest pay phone and summon police.
- ◆ Never carry large sums of cash. Flashing a lot of bills sets you up to be held up.
- ◆ Don't resist an armed robber. Hand over your wallet or purse quickly and quietly. Make mental notes of the description of the robber, weapons, and vehicle, and identify any witnesses.
- ◆ Lock your car when you leave it. Roll up the windows, and take your keys with you. If you must leave anything of value in the car, lock it in the trunk.
- ◆ Report any crime or suspicion of crime at once. Public apathy is the criminal's greatest ally. No violation is too small to be reported. You can't assume that someone else has already reported it.
- ◆ Should you be stopped by a police officer on or off post, be polite and understanding. This person is doing his or her job.

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## *Precautions for Avoidance of Terrorist Attacks*

### Before an Attack

1. Learn about the nature of terrorism. Terrorists look for visible targets, with high “shock” impact potential, where they can also avoid detection before or after an attack such as international airports, large cities, major international events, resorts, federal and government buildings, schools, and high-profile landmarks.
2. Learn about the different types of terrorist weapons including kamikaze vehicles, explosives, kidnappings, hijackings, arson, and shootings.
3. Prepare to deal with a terrorist incident by adapting many of the same techniques used to prepare for other crises.
  - a. Be alert and aware of the surrounding area. The very nature of terrorism suggests that there may be little or no warning.
  - b. Take precautions when traveling. Be aware of conspicuous or unusual behavior. Do not accept packages from strangers. Do not leave luggage unattended.
  - c. Learn where emergency exits are located. Think ahead about how to evacuate a building, subway, or congested public area in a hurry. Learn where staircases are located.
  - d. Notice your immediate surroundings. Be aware of heavy or breakable objects that could move, fall, or break during an explosion.
  - e. If you are in an overseas location, know where your non-combatant evacuation (NEO) packets are and the name of your NEO warden.
4. Prepare for a Building Explosion

The use of explosives by terrorists can result in collapsed buildings and fires. People who live or work in a multi-level building can do the following:

  - a. Review emergency evacuation procedures. Know where fire exits are located.
  - b. Keep fire extinguishers in working order. Know where they are located and how to use them.
  - c. Learn first aid. Contact the local chapter of the American Red Cross for additional information.



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- d. Keep the following items in a designated place on each floor of the building: portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries; several flashlights and extra batteries; first aid kit and manual; several hard hats; and fluorescent tape to rope off dangerous areas.
  - e. There may be bombs being sent through the mail. A package bomb sent to a school or public building might be a technique used by terrorists. Check all packages and watch for:
    - ◆ tampering or re-taping of a box;
    - ◆ sender unknown to you; not usual supplier;
    - ◆ stains or unusual odors coming from the box;
    - ◆ heavy, unbalanced contents;
    - ◆ addressee unknown; and
    - ◆ generic address (“Customer, Occupant,” etc.).

## 5. Know How to Handle Bomb Threats

If you receive a bomb threat, get as much information from the caller as possible. Keep the caller on the line, and record everything that is said. Notify the police, building security, and building management.

After you’ve been notified of a bomb threat, do not touch any suspicious packages. Clear the area around any suspicious packages, and notify the police immediately. In evacuating a building, avoid standing in front of windows or other potentially hazardous areas. Do not restrict sidewalks or streets to be used by emergency officials.

### During an Attack

1. In a building explosion, get out of the building as quickly and calmly as possible.
2. If items are falling off of bookshelves or from the ceiling, get under a sturdy table or desk.
3. If there is a fire:
  - a. Stay low to the floor, and exit the building as quickly as possible.
  - b. Cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth.

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- c. When approaching a closed door, use the palm of your hand and forearm to feel the lower, middle, and upper parts of the door. If it is not hot, brace yourself against the door and open it slowly. If it is hot to the touch, do not open the door—seek an alternate escape route.
  - d. Heavy smoke and poisonous gases collect first along the ceiling. Stay below the smoke at all times.

### After an Attack

If you are trapped in debris:

- ◆ Use a flashlight.
- ◆ Stay in your area so you don't kick up dust. Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing.
- ◆ Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort—shouting can cause a person to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

### Assisting Victims

Untrained persons should not attempt to rescue people who are inside a collapsed building. Wait for emergency personnel to arrive.

### *Chemical Agents*

Chemical agents are poisonous gases, liquids, or solids that have toxic effects on people, animals, or plants. Most chemical agents cause serious injuries or death. The severity of injuries depends on the type and amount of the chemical agent used, and the duration of the exposure.

Were a chemical agent attack to occur, authorities would instruct citizens to either seek shelter where they are and seal the premises or to evacuate immediately. Exposure to chemical agents can be fatal. Leaving the shelter to rescue or assist victims can be a deadly decision. There is no assistance that the untrained person can offer that would likely be of any value to the victims of chemical agents.

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## *Biological Agents*

Biological agents are organisms or toxins that have illness-producing effects on people, livestock, and crops.

Because biological agents cannot necessarily be detected and may take time to grow and cause a disease, it is almost impossible to know that a biological attack has occurred. If government officials become aware of a biological attack through an informant or warning by terrorists, they will most likely instruct citizens to either seek shelter where they are and seal the premises or to evacuate immediately.

A person affected by a biological agent requires the immediate attention of professional medical personnel. Some biological agents are contagious, and victims may need to be quarantined. Also, some medical facilities may not receive victims for fear of contaminating the hospital population.

For information on Anthrax, Smallpox, and other public threats, check: [www.homelandhealth.com/consumers](http://www.homelandhealth.com/consumers).

For additional information and subsequent precautions, check out the following links:

<http://www.fema.gov/library/terror.htm>

<http://www.epa.gov/swercepp/cntr-ter.html>

<http://nsi.org/Library/Terrorism/bombthreat.html>

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## FAMILY RESOURCE LINK

### Topic: Family Security and Safety, and Firearms

**Discussion:** Family security and safety are concerns to soldiers and families when the soldier is away from home. Units should include family security in predeployment family support planning.

**Lessons:** Major commands can minimize soldier and family concerns prior to deployment through active support from their Directorate of Public Works (or DEH) and the Provost Marshal.

- ◆ For example, on-post quarters should be equipped with deadbolt locks. Housing areas should be well lighted and continually patrolled by military police.
- ◆ Off-post families, especially those overseas, should be advised not to put up yellow ribbons or red, white, and blue banners that call attention to their quarters as being those of deployed soldiers.
- ◆ Commands have been surprised by the “run” on handguns at local Rod and Gun Clubs. While family security is important, control of family firearms is a genuine safety concern to the military community. The purchase of firearms during unit deployment is sometimes a last-minute action imbedded in a multitude of other important deployment actions. Often, there is little or no time to effectively train the spouse in proper control and use of firearms. There is an ever-present danger that family weapons may become accessible to young children or adolescents, who are largely naive about their potential dangers or proper handling.
- ◆ Commanders have moral and statutory responsibilities to control privately owned firearms, especially in on-post housing areas. Soldiers are required to register privately owned firearms with the command and to secure them while they’re deployed.
- ◆ While soldiers living in the billets are required to secure privately owned firearms in unit arms rooms, commanders can also offer the use of unit arms rooms to soldiers living in family housing or off-post to secure their privately owned firearms during deployments.

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## Nutritional Health

Despite the changes deployment brings to families' daily lives, it is important to maintain good nutritional habits in both the amount and type of food consumed. (This applies also to medicine and alcohol.) This is true for both husbands and wives. Generally, mealtime is shared time, so it is "loaded" emotionally. Some people find that they eat more than they should when they are stressed. Some spouses find that setting out exact amounts that they plan to eat and putting the rest away helps to maintain limits on what is eaten.

Just as it is desirable to have one month's pay ahead in savings, it is wise to have at least one week's supply of food in the house at any time in case of illness, inclement weather, lack of finances, or transportation problems.

## Don't Forget the Family Car/Truck

The soldier should show family members how to do basic household and automobile maintenance and repairs if they do not already know. Leave a list of the preferred repair people for automobile and household emergencies. Organize the workbench and tools so all members of the family (children, too) can find tools for minor repairs. Keep a checklist of maintenance tasks to be completed before deployment.

## Family Housing

Generally, a big question for military couples during separation is where the family members will live. For some, there may be a choice between going home to relatives or staying in military housing. Those who stay must be especially willing to develop friendships with trusted people who can offer support when needed. This may mean going outside their immediate circle of friends and really taking advantage of the support available through the FRG. Living can be less stressful if family members learn about available community services that they can turn to for help.

Generally, the family will best deal with the stress of deployment by remaining in their home, maintaining familiar routines, and not moving to another location to stay with relatives. Relocating is always more costly, disrupts the children's schooling and their

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emotional stability, and takes the family away from their military support and problem-solving network. Staying in the family's current home is almost always a better option.

Provisions should be made in case it becomes necessary for family members to leave during the soldier's deployment. They should be aware of the options and standard procedures. Foremost is to notify the RDC of their new address and phone number in case an emergency involving the deployed soldier requires notifying the family. This can prevent many headaches for the RDC.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Families Who Leave Home during a Deployment**

- ◆ In one battalion, a family departed the area without notifying the RDC. The soldier, deployed to another country, was diagnosed with a very contagious disease. The RDC was requested to contact the family so they could go to the nearest medical facility to be examined for evidence of this disease. The RDC received no answer to frequent telephone calls and visited the house several times, finding no one at home. A neighbor told the RDC that they had left the area to go to the spouse's home. She left no forwarding address with anyone. Finally, during one of the RDC's visits to try to contact her, she and her family drove up to the house, and the RDC was able to pass on the message. Fortunately, she and her family were free of the disease.
- ◆ If the soldier knows his family may relocate temporarily, this information needs to be provided to the RDC, along with the address and phone number of the temporary location.

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## BRIEFING OUTLINE

Following is a suggested outline for a predeployment briefing for soldiers and family members. Leaders, ACS staff, FRG leaders, or chaplains can give this.

Separation is a fact of military life. There are several things you should know about it:

- A. You might experience any number of different feelings or a mixture of feelings, some of which may seem contradictory. This is common. These feelings include:
  - 1. Emptiness
  - 2. Loneliness
  - 3. Fear
  - 4. Sadness
  - 5. Anger
  - 6. Grief
- B. Keep in mind that these feelings are normal.
- C. There may be a tendency to avoid talking about the upcoming separation.
  - 1. Communication between spouses can break down prior to a separation, but it doesn't have to.
  - 2. It is better to work at communicating painful feelings than to avoid them and leave important things unsaid.
  - 3. Remember, men and women tend to communicate differently; men may be more oriented toward factual content, while women may be more attuned to feelings.
- D. There may be pre-separation anger and resentment.
  - 1. You may find yourselves on edge with each other.
  - 2. You may find yourselves arguing more frequently.
  - 3. These are normal reactions, and they can be worked through.

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- E. There are several things you can do to help you cope better with your separation.
1. Communicate with your spouse. Both partners are responsible for effective communication.
  2. Set mileposts to help the time go by.
  3. Manage your time; don't let it manage you.
  4. Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays are often more difficult to handle. Plan activities for these days.
  5. Keep busy with recreation, exercise classes, or volunteer work—a great way to gain experience that can be translated into a job resume.
- F. Depression may accompany your separation. Talk with someone about your feelings.
1. Some depression is normal and to be expected during a period of separation.
  2. Depression can be aggravated by feelings of powerlessness.
  3. Boredom can add to depression.
  4. Depression can intensify if you turn your resentments inward.
- G. Remember that you are not powerless or alone; help is available through many sources.
1. FRG
  2. Chaplain
  3. ACS or Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator
  4. FAC
  5. Other friends
  6. Community resources



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## FAMILY SUPPORT DURING DEPLOYMENT

This section features candid comments from the field to reinforce the importance of the family readiness effort. It provides sample standard operating procedures (SOP) specifying the FRG's role during unannounced deployments and discusses the special roles of the RDC and Family Readiness Liaison during deployments.

### Candid Comments from the Ranks

Various members of the family readiness system throughout the Army made the following comments during discussions on deployment issues. Although much of the information has been included in one form or another in this handbook, the comments themselves might also help give direction to a system of continuing family readiness:

- ◆ Traditionally, the Army priority has been mission first, welfare of troops second. This remains true, but Army leaders recognize that the welfare of troops and families has a very significant effect on successful mission accomplishment.
- ◆ Readiness on a continuing basis means that we don't have to reinvent the wheel each time a unit deploys. Command support for the family must be timely, consistent, and ongoing.
- ◆ The FAC makes my job a lot easier when I'm deployed because my wife knows who to contact if for nothing more than for moral support, so that she has someone to talk to for a few minutes.
- ◆ Once I'm deployed, I'm glad there's someone who is concerned with my family so they can call for help.
- ◆ There has to be a two-way flow of information between the command and the families; otherwise, the family feels isolated. That's not good for morale. For example, spouses should be told that the manifest may change at the last minute and that the soldier may not be returning home at the time anticipated.
- ◆ Murphy's Law usually takes over 24 hours after deployment—whatever can go wrong does go wrong: car breaks down, toilet backs up, child gets sick. It is important

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that the family of the deployed soldier be ready to handle the situation.

- ◆ Because most of the deployments of [our] division are announced, there is not a sense of urgency for soldiers to have their affairs in order ahead of time. This leaves a false sense of security. It is important that the unit commander and chain of command take the initiative in helping the soldier understand the importance of being prepared at all times.
- ◆ To be effective, helping spouses must be legitimized and trusted with the information they need to help others.
- ◆ An FRG might be more effective if NCO wives are encouraged to get involved instead of leaving it all to the officer's wives. If the NCO understands that there is a purpose and structure for family support, they are less likely to view the FRG as a coffee club.
- ◆ Some senior NCOs must be encouraged to change their attitudes toward the families. They traditionally see leaving the families on their own as a "rite of passage" that's part of being in the Army. Times have changed; if the family is not supported, the soldier will not reenlist. It's that simple.
- ◆ Caring is the basis of inspiring soldiers to be prepared. The unit commander's attitude should be, "We care; therefore, we want your family to be properly taken care of in your absence."
- ◆ Family deployment readiness should be made a part of the "teamwork" of the unit. There should be a unit family readiness checklist for the commander.
- ◆ Awareness and education are keys to family readiness. Effort should go into ways to convince the soldier and spouse to be prepared. A spouse should know enough about the family readiness system to be able to remind the soldier about things he or she has to do to keep the family prepared.
- ◆ Spouses may question the sincerity of support efforts if the only contact of concern is during deployment. Therefore, it may be a good idea to establish an outreach system on a continuing basis. Contact may be viewed less as "snooping" if it is ongoing.

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUPS' ROLE IN UNANNOUNCED DEPLOYMENTS**

**F**amily Readiness Groups are, of course, especially important during deployment, particularly in the event of an unannounced deployment when special needs arise. What follows is a set of sample standard operating procedures that might be used during an unannounced deployment, with provisions for notifying soldiers' families and solving some of the problems likely to appear.

Deployment FRG information sheets are to be filed in the unit orderly room to aid each soldier's family in the event of deployment. These are to provide a record of names, addresses, and phone numbers of next-of-kin; special medical requirements; language spoken; and family members' potential transportation problems while the military member is deployed.

Notification procedures are as follows:

- ◆ For rostered soldiers, the unit FRG chairperson or representative will call spouses in the FRG roster active section. The unit commander will authorize inactive list notifications in the event of deployment.
- ◆ For nonrostered soldiers, Soldier Family Information sheets are to be used to contact the next-of-kin of soldiers not on the FRG roster. The unit Point of Contact (POC) will notify a deployed single soldier's family. The FRG representative may volunteer to assist the POC in notification.
- ◆ The Army authorizes notification of only one person or household. If the soldier has listed more than one person to be notified, the military representative will select one. As a guideline for notification priority, a wife has priority over a mother, a mother over a sister, and so on.
- ◆ The use of government phones is authorized for notification calls. Each call must be made with approval of the unit commander or his representative and recorded on the appropriate form. Tell the operator that the call is official, and limit the call to not more than five minutes.
- ◆ The rear detachment commander will provide the FRG representative with the following information to pass on to

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each soldier's family: time of soldier's deployment; soldier's current location (if known); soldier's mailing address; location for receipt of mail from soldier; location of soldier's POV and documentation required for family member to pick up the POV; and the unit POC's telephone number in case of a family emergency. This may be the FRG chairperson or representative, the RDC, a member of the FAC staff, or another designated individual.

- ◆ The unit POC, FRG representative, or other designated caller will record each completed call. This memorandum for record will include date and time of the call, person receiving the call, and information relayed.

The following procedures apply to areas of special concern:

- ◆ *Soldier's mail to family.* Deployed soldiers may mail letters and sometimes packages to their families.
- ◆ *Mail to deployed soldiers.* Based on mission, deployment location, and needs of the soldiers, the unit POC, RDC, commander, or Family Assistance Center will advise family members of mailing procedures. For example, when the soldiers are deployed to areas with tropical or desert-like climates, it is better to send sealed snack foods than perishables such as cookies, brownies, cakes, or fruits.
- ◆ *FRG telephone network.* Once deployment commences, the FRG chairperson, phonetree chairperson, or phonetree POCs will maintain frequent contact with families on the active telephone roster. Spouses on the inactive roster are encouraged to become active during deployment. Government phones may be used to provide local information updates and long distance calls if FRG members leave the area. The FRG representative must maintain a record of each long distance and local call; the unit will have forms for this.
- ◆ *Transportation.* The spouse may pick up the deployed soldier's POV if left in the unit area. If the soldier's vehicle is secured in the motor pool, the FRG representative can make arrangements through the RDC or unit POC to pick up the car at a time convenient to the spouse. The FRG representative can help spouses find transportation to the unit or the motor pool.

- ◆ *Pay problems.* These are to be addressed before deployment. If problems arise during deployment, the FRG representative will contact the RDC or FAC for resolution.
- ◆ *Army Emergency Relief.* Normally located with the ACS office, AER exists to help families with financial emergencies and to provide low-interest loans or grants to needy servicemembers and their families. The FRG will notify the RDC if a spouse needs financial help. The RDC will help complete the forms needed to request AER assistance. ACS also provides budget counseling for Army families. Families with financial problems are encouraged to seek guidance from ACS personnel or the unit command financial specialist NCO (CFSNCO) if the unit has one assigned.
- ◆ *Leave and Earnings Statements (LESs).* The RDC will deliver LESs to the orderly room at the end of each month and issue them to spouses. Coordinate transportation to the orderly room with the FRG. It is necessary to mail LESs to out-of-town spouses. A Power of Attorney or similar document, per unit SOP, is required for spouses to receive servicemember LESs.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Disposition of LESs and W-2 Forms**

**Discussion:** In some prior deployments, many spouses of deployed soldiers had difficulty acquiring LESs and W-2 forms. Often, the RDCs would not release these documents to the spouse, or the forms were forwarded to the theater of operations. In most cases, soldiers did not want or need the LESs while in theater.

**Lessons:** Obtaining LESs and W-2 forms is a command decision that should be made prior to deployment and relayed to Finance. Either the LESs are forwarded to the soldiers in theater or they are retained by the RDCs. If the command decides to have the RDCs retain the LESs and W-2s, spouses should be able to acquire these forms by using a Power of Attorney. However, the soldiers must specify that the spouses are authorized to receive the LESs by requesting a Power of Attorney. Units should publish LES release requirements to all soldiers and families.

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- ◆ *Legal Assistance.* The Office of the Staff Judge Advocate can answer spouses' legal questions. The RDC will provide the name of the attorney assigned to support the battalion. Any legal problems within the FRG network should be brought immediately to the attention of the RDC. While the lawyer from SJA cannot represent a family-member spouse in a civilian court, he can give advice on how to obtain a civilian lawyer.
  - ◆ *Power of Attorney.* The RDC will arrange for the spouse to obtain a POA as necessary. A SJA lawyer will prepare the paperwork, and the RDC will forward it to the deployed soldier for signature. The RDC and a SJA lawyer will advise the spouse whether a General or Special POA is appropriate. To use the POA off post, it may be necessary to register it with the state. A lawyer from SJA can explain the procedure.
  - ◆ *Identification Card (ID Card).* The RDC will be notified if an ID card is lost, stolen, or expired. He or she will initiate the necessary paperwork for reissue or renewal.

FRG volunteers and family members should be made aware of these additional sources of assistance:

- ◆ *Chaplains.* The battalion chaplain will provide pastoral care, counseling, and assistance. The chaplain can help the FRG deal with problems and suggest other agencies that may be of service. The chaplain's office can sometimes assist those in need whose problems do not fit into other helping agencies' functions.
- ◆ *Army Community Service.* ACS is a principal source of social services for AC and RC Army personnel and their family members. Services include emergency loans (AER), a lending closet for household items, children's programs, childcare, FRG training, Army Family Team Building (AFTB) classes, volunteer services coordination, Army Family Action Plan (AFAP), budget counseling, welcome packets for all newcomers, and Operation READY classes.
- ◆ *State Family Program Office.* This is the office to which Army National Guard families should turn for support similar to that provided by ACS. This office can refer the Guard family to essential services available in the community or on active Army installations. Check [www.arng.army.mil](http://www.arng.army.mil) or

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[www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/toc.htm](http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/toc.htm) for information about Army Reserve and National Guard family resources.

- ◆ *Family Program Coordinator.* Some Army Reserve centers have personnel designated to assist families. If this service is not available, Army Reservists and their families can contact ACS (if near an installation) or check with a local Army National Guard unit for information on how to contact the State Family Program Office. Check <http://www.army.mil/usar/index.htm> and [www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/toc.htm](http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/toc.htm) for additional family resources.
- ◆ *Rear detachment commander.* The RDC is a member of the battalion who has been designated to stay behind to run the day-to-day operations. He or she is the battalion-level support point of contact for FRG-related problems, providing information and assistance as needed.
- ◆ *Telephone numbers.* The FRG and the unit POC or RDC will maintain a current list of family members' telephone numbers, as well as those of essential service providers.

## TIPS FOR FRG VOLUNTEERS

### Do:

- ◆ Offer support, sympathy, and a shoulder to cry on.
- ◆ Offer to arrange “one-shot,” short-term assistance, such as commissary runs, transportation, or childcare.
- ◆ Try to link up neighbors, friends, and same-unit wives to help each other out.
- ◆ Offer to visit, or call to arrange for another wife to do so.
- ◆ Pass important information to the RDC or chaplain in a timely manner.
- ◆ Encourage wives to call each other periodically just to check up on how they are doing.
- ◆ Stay in daily contact with the RDC or FAC.

### Don't:

- ◆ overtax or overexert yourself; trust others to help.
- ◆ try to be all things to all people.
- ◆ make promises or guarantees of unit assistance or action (such as bringing spouse home), or infringe on the duties of the RDC.
- ◆ be surprised if you are misunderstood or misquoted; you can avoid both to some extent if you are clear in your communication and stay in the area of your responsibilities.
- ◆ expect to successfully resolve every situation; sometimes you just can't win!

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## Role of the Rear Detachment Commander

The role of the RDC is to ensure, in cooperation with the FAC and the FRG program, that families are cared for and assisted during deployment.

To that end, the RDC's responsibilities will be to implement the unit Family Assistance Plan; to provide unit information systems, facilities, and resources to FRGs; to monitor family care plans; and to train and support the Family Readiness Liaison.

The RDC is valuable to families by providing assistance that requires official action. He is the primary interface with the installation support structure. The RDC also informs of and coordinates security concerns and precautions with the FRGs.

He/she also provides assistance with emergency notification, emergency leave for soldiers, and transportation home due to death or serious illness of family or relatives. The RDC must maintain constant communication with the deployed unit, preferably through DSN telephone, fax, and e-mail. Video teleconferencing provides even more effective communications.

The RDC needs networks to do his job. His network should include the Command Financial Specialist NCO, the unit and next higher-level chaplain office, the mobilization and deployment program manager/agent at Army Community Service, and any RC unit FRL/RDC if RC personnel are part of the deployed task force. He should have a working knowledge of the installation support structure and have names and phone numbers of key personnel in community support agencies (Directorate of Community Activities [DCA]).

The RDC mission continues through redeployment. He/she assists the FRG leaders in setting up reunion classes for spouses, with the same intensity as providing predeployment briefings. Again, the network can provide a working team to reintegrate the unit as smoothly as possible. A big part of the redeployment mission is recognition of all personnel, both soldiers and volunteers who supported the deployment effort. Their key roles should be recognized at community-welcoming events.

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## The Need for Family Readiness Groups

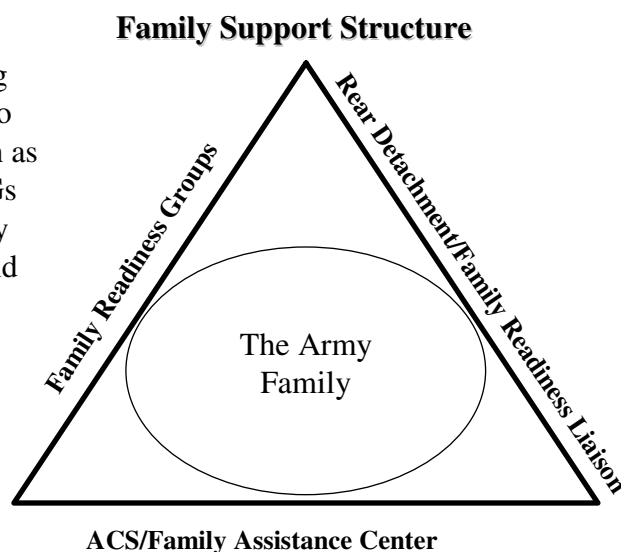
When deployed, a typical battalion task force will leave behind roughly 250 spouses and 400 children. The deployed soldier's effectiveness and the unit's mission accomplishment are contingent upon the morale of the family members. As good leadership sustains the soldier's morale, so good leadership and concern sustains the family members' morale. Neither is based solely on financial security or physical needs such as food and lodging. As with soldiers, family members must receive respect, be kept informed, and know that their sacrifice is worthwhile. One way to accomplish this is by contact with family members of other deployed soldiers. When structure is added to this body of family members, mutual support increases.

FRGs should initially act as an information agency, using telephone contact and a monthly newsletter (if desired) to disseminate information. The FRG's next major function as a conduit of feedback should evolve spontaneously. FRGs can identify issues and questions of concern to the family members. The RDC, as part of the command, can respond to these and return the solutions and information to the FRG for dissemination. This process will help the FRG to grow in structure, strength, and credibility.

For an FRG to flourish, spouses must voluntarily commit themselves as members. Cooperation and volunteerism are essential. Once an FRG is organized, the RDC must patiently allow the group its independence. The persons who will best understand the needs of the spouses are the spouses themselves. The RDC should pay attention to their concerns. Any issue raised by the spouses merits attention. The best position that the RDC can have in relation to the FRG is that of being an advocate and provider of resource support, with little or no involvement in the inner workings of the FRG.

### *Rear Detachment Emotional Support for FRGs*

The entire rear detachment must project a positive image to the spouses. The rear detachment can enjoy a good working rapport with the spouses through the extension of simple courtesies. Those soldiers left back in the barracks, for example, might personally



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escort visiting spouses to the orderly room rather than just pointing them down the hall. They may need to be reminded to be polite at all times.

Some simple gestures can help demonstrate goodwill on the part of the RDC and set a positive tone for RDC–FRG relations. For example, the battalion might purchase a Polaroid camera and film for use in snapping pictures of spouses. The spouse walks out with a snapshot to send to the soldier, which is an act of caring by the battalion.

The soldiers' LESs could be photocopied before being sent to them. For those soldiers who have signed a release, the copy of their LES is mailed to their spouse from the rear detachment, arriving at their home on or about payday.

The RDC of one unit set up a telephone credit card, which was charged to the battalion budget. This number was delegated to a select number of FRG contact persons who called long distance to spouses who had left the post area. This call every three weeks or so affirmed that the family member was doing well and helped to break their isolation from the FRG. In two months, this service cost the unit less than \$60.

The RDC can act as an advocate for the spouses in dealings with such offices as the deputy installation commander on active Army posts, who often has the authority to overcome roadblocks. On this point, three and one-half months after one active Army task force advance party deployed, there had been no congressional inquiries and no Inspector General complaints. Further, no soldier had been evacuated from the task force area of operations for family problems.

Good rapport and courteous treatment of all persons involved goes a long way toward facilitating a successful program.

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## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Family Emergencies Requiring Return of Servicemember**

**Discussion:** The Army recognizes that some family emergencies warrant return of the soldier if existing military operations permit. The field commander determines whether mission conditions will allow the soldier's return. Emergencies involve the death, critical illness, or injury of a member of the immediate family. The RDC should have a copy of the commander's redeployment criteria.

**Lessons:** Immediate family members include the soldier's spouse, children, brother or sister, and parent or guardian who raised the soldier in place of parents.

- ◆ Critical illness or injury means the possibility of death or permanent disability.
- ◆ Illnesses such as the flu and injuries such as a broken arm, although not minor, are not considered emergencies.
- ◆ Prior to the soldier's departure, spouses and guardians must be educated on early return policy, the notification process, and the commander's redeployment criteria.
- ◆ The spouse or guardian must contact the Red Cross, which will verify the nature of the emergency. The rear detachment, FRG, or installation FAC can assist the family in contacting the Red Cross, if necessary.

The soldier's commanding officer may require notification by Red Cross message verifying the nature of the emergency before the commander can make a decision to return the soldier.

## **Role of the Family Readiness Liaison**

FRLs act as coordinators for family assistance information. They can be appointed at any level of command and may work for or with the FAC or RDC. FRLs direct questions and requests from family members, FRG volunteers, and others to the proper agency or staff section. This role is especially vital when large numbers of soldiers are deployed, although the appointment and training of FRLs cannot wait until just before a deployment. Ideally, an FRL should be on call 24 hours a day (especially during deployments), and FRL contact numbers should be made available to soldiers, their families, and FRG volunteers.

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Each FRL should be briefed on the importance of his or her duties and trained in providing appropriate referral services. Each local Army installation and each local community will have a unique network of family-related programs, services, and agencies. Providing accurate, up-to-date information on this network is a significant job. Recognizing serious family problems and identifying appropriate resources to help solve them requires patience, good judgment, experience, and expertise, especially under crisis conditions. At times, the FRL may be called on to respond to situations involving domestic violence, potential suicide or another serious emergency, or to respond to distraught family members who have heard rumors of combat casualties.

See AR 600-20 (Draft), Para. 5.10 for duties of the Family Readiness Liaison.

See also “FRL Duties” in the next section of this chapter.

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section describes the roles of key military personnel who interact with the FRG and suggests how FRG duties might be distributed among volunteers. It also provides sample Standard Operating Procedures for ongoing FRG activities.

The roles and responsibilities of Army personnel whose activities most directly affect an FRG program and of key battalion-level and unit-level FRG volunteers are summarized below.

**Unit commanders** are responsible for establishing an atmosphere of care and concern for the families of unit soldiers. They should anticipate and address the needs of unit soldiers and their families when temporary separation occurs. This can be done by using orientation programs, command letters, predeployment briefings, and by providing family assistance materials and organizing social functions.

Unit commanders should organize systems of mutual assistance and a network of communication prior to and during deployment that includes the FRG and the chain of command. They actively sanction the FRG program and officially appoint key military FRLs. These FRLs assist the FRG by providing unit information systems, facilities, and resources, including unit rosters, mailing privileges, administrative supplies, equipment, transportation (when available and appropriate), training from unit and installation resources, and coordination of deployment family assistance plans.

The commander should involve community resource people in planning and implementing the deployment family support plan. This might include ACS staff, Staff Judge Advocate, the Red Cross, the adjutant or Bn S-1, chaplains, medical personnel, and command financial specialists. Commanders can ensure that all family members receive an installation telephone directory and appropriate family assistance materials. They should include soldiers in predeployment briefings and provide childcare whenever possible. They should also ensure that the necessary regulations and Standard Operating Procedures are in place prior to deployment, providing for the establishment of a FAC and a FAC duty book and the gathering of necessary information.

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**Rear detachment commanders** are responsible for ensuring that families are cared for and assisted during deployment, in cooperation with the FAC and the FRG program. They should make an on-call officer available at the rear detachment on a 24-hour basis and make sure that all those working at the rear detachment are familiar with the role of the FRG and know who the FRG volunteers are and how to contact them.

**Family Readiness Liaisons** are appointed at every level of command. They link the command to FRGs, and FRGs to community service agencies. They also provide referrals for soldiers and families to these agencies, update the unit roster monthly and provide it to FRG leaders, support newsletter production, and track family members who leave the area during deployments. (See AR 600-20 [Draft], section 5.10.)

**Army Community Service** is the principal source of services for many active Army and Reserve Component personnel and their families who live near installations. ACS provides resources to the rear detachment, the FAC and FRGs, and assists in developing, providing, and coordinating FRG training programs. ACS assists unit and installation personnel with predeployment briefings and ensures units have copies of the installation telephone directories for family members and appropriate materials to assist in developing these briefings.

ACS is also responsible for coordinating with Army Emergency Relief and the American Red Cross to ensure rapid response to emergency financial situations. ACS should develop an ACS family assistance mobilization plan, coordinate implementation of the plan with individual units, and familiarize ACS volunteers with the plan. They should also assist with unit and FRG outreach efforts, especially to junior ranking families off post, and assist in the training of rear detachment personnel, especially regarding available community resources.

The Army National Guard **State Family Program Office** provides many of the services listed above for the National Guard family members who do not live near installations. The Army Reserve provides a Family Program Director at each Regional Support Command, who provides similar services.

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**Chaplains** provide spiritual and emotional assistance and counseling to families. They may act as a liaison between family members and helping agencies, and they may provide for the physical needs of individuals not meeting other criteria, for example, by operating a food closet for families in need. Chaplains are also members of the FRG and should be invited to meetings. They are excellent resources for programs suited to soldiers and families at FRG meetings.

## **FRL Duties**

Because the service network in each local area will vary and because this information needs to be continuously updated, precise guidelines for handling specific problems and requests are not provided in this handbook. However, some of the special problems the FRL should be prepared to encounter and some of the resources most likely to be available are given in this section.

The FRL should keep careful records of all requests for information or assistance. A family assistance call sheet should be used to record, at a minimum:

- ◆ the name of the FRL and the date and time of the call;
- ◆ the caller's name and phone number and the problem reported;
- ◆ the name and phone number of the person needing assistance (if not the same as the caller) and this person's address;
- ◆ at least one other means of contact, such as a neighbor's phone or the person's FRG point of contact;
- ◆ the name, rank, and unit of the soldier in this person's family, and their relationship to the person needing assistance; and
- ◆ complete information on the disposition of the inquiry (information given, agency to which the person was referred, results of follow-up contacts).

Collection of this type of information from family members may require the use of a Privacy Act statement specifying that the purpose of the information is to provide assistance to the family and that giving the information is voluntary but failure to respond may result in a delay in receiving services. The FRL should check with the local command for details on this requirement.

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A local resource notebook, in which information on services available both through the Army and through local community agencies is kept, should be made available to each FRL as a part of his or her training. Telephone numbers, hours of operation, names of contact persons, and details of service eligibility and availability will need constant updating. Examples of offices and agencies on which current information should be kept include these, although this list is far from complete:

- ◆ Adjutant General's Office
- ◆ Ambulance Services
- ◆ American Red Cross
- ◆ Army Community Service
- ◆ Army Emergency Relief
- ◆ TRICARE Office
- ◆ Chaplain's Office
- ◆ Dental Care Facilities
- ◆ Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Counseling
- ◆ Emergency Medical Facilities
- ◆ Finance Section
- ◆ Food Bank Program
- ◆ Food Stamp Program
- ◆ Home Health Care
- ◆ Housing Directorate
- ◆ Immunization Clinic
- ◆ Inspector General's Office
- ◆ Legal Aid Society
- ◆ Lending Closet
- ◆ Mental Health Facilities
- ◆ Military and Local Police
- ◆ Ophthalmology/Optometry Facilities
- ◆ Outpatient Medical Facilities
- ◆ Public Transportation



- ◆ Staff Judge Advocate
- ◆ Transportation Office (Household Goods)
- ◆ United Way
- ◆ Well-Baby and Well-Child Clinics
- ◆ WIC (Women, Infants and Children)

FRLs should be trained to distinguish between emergency and nonemergency inquiries. Sometimes this will be obvious; at other times, it may be clear only after careful listening and tactful questioning. Procedures should be established for responding to emergencies during off-duty as well as on-duty hours. All callers should be told to call back if the referral agency does not appear able to resolve their problem; all calls should be followed up by the FRL within 24 hours to be sure needed help has been received. An FRL receiving a call that might involve a life-threatening emergency should never tell the caller to hang up; instead, they should keep the caller on the phone while they get someone else to get help.

**Casualty information.** All calls received from family members regarding rumors of either the death or the injury of a soldier must be handled with tact and diplomacy. Nothing should be confirmed or denied; only Casualty Branch personnel can give out casualty information.

An FRL who receives a call about a casualty rumor should take these steps:

- ◆ Ask the caller politely to try to remain as calm as possible; remind the caller that information that does not come through official Army channels is unreliable.
- ◆ Tell the caller that if the servicemember were in fact to become a casualty, a representative of Casualty Branch would contact them in person as soon as possible with this information.
- ◆ Inform the caller that Casualty Branch will be contacted to investigate their concern, and then follow up by making this inquiry.

## LIMIT

FRLs should be aware that legal requirements and limitations under either state or federal law might affect their work. Reports that suggest the possibility of child abuse or neglect must be reported to the appropriate investigative agency. Reports of sexual assault or domestic violence are police matters, although victims of these crimes often elect to work through appropriate community agencies that can provide emotional support and specialized assistance.

## LIMIT

Remember, the FRL should never make casualty notifications. Only the experts—Casualty Branch personnel—are authorized to release such information, using procedures established specifically for just such a purpose.

- ◆ If Casualty Branch has no information on any casualty involving this soldier, call the family member as soon as possible and advise them of this.
- ◆ If Casualty Branch does have information that the soldier sustained a casualty and the family member calls you again before official notification has been made, tell them you are still working on their request.

The FRL should be trained to remain polite, tactful, and sympathetic to the fears of the spouse or other family member, even if these fears turn out to have no foundation in fact. Family members who are worried or upset may need to be referred to a chaplain or mental health counselor even if there has been no known casualty.

**Public affairs.** Questions related to public affairs, news reports, or rumors of unit activities should be answered only on the basis of official public information releases from the commander or the RDC. Requests for additional information should be referred to the Public Affairs Officer. Special care should be taken to ensure that only authorized public information is released.

Advise the family member to be polite and use their own discretion if contacted by the press. However, it's best that they get in touch with the Public Affairs office before talking to someone from the news media; this office can give them whatever specific advice or assistance they might need. The FRL should remind the family member to check the credentials of anyone who contacts them to avoid a situation that could be awkward or even dangerous. The Public Affairs office can take care of this for them.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Dealing with Grief**

**Discussion:** How a community deals with the grief brought about by the sudden, traumatic losses possible in war or in training accidents is critical. Leaders are the key. They must lead with warmth and sensitivity, and give the community permission to grieve through public observances. Comforting and ensuring the welfare of the next of kin are also vital to giving them the strength to move ahead.

**Lessons:** The following list of tips is provided to assist the bereaved:

- ◆ Listen.
- ◆ Provide assurance, but do not dismiss or negate the person's feelings.
- ◆ Be patient.
- ◆ Repeat directions/explanations until they are understood and remembered.
- ◆ Treat them with warmth and sensitivity, the way you'd want to be treated.
- ◆ Don't tell someone how he or she should feel; let them experience their own emotions.
- ◆ Do share your own feelings about related experiences of loss.
- ◆ Arrange for a close friend or relative to stay with the survivor.
- ◆ Be with the survivor at a time normally reserved for the deceased spouse, such as evening when the spouse would be returning from work.
- ◆ Allow the bereaved to direct the conversation if desired (sometimes nothing needs to be said; one's presence is enough).
- ◆ Provide accurate information. It will lessen their hostility.
- ◆ Be honest.
- ◆ Help with chores and meals. Offer to babysit.
- ◆ Screen and keep records of phone calls and visitors.
- ◆ Send a note or flowers.
- ◆ Isolate them from the media, if desired and needed.
- ◆ Assist with thank-you notes.
- ◆ Call weeks later, when others have stopped calling.
- ◆ Spend special time with the widowed when depression is most likely to be experienced—anniversaries of the incident, holidays and birthdays, and during such times as when a child leaves or when the widowed may be experiencing a new loss that is likely to reopen old wounds.
- ◆ Ensure that a person who speaks the same language is available.
- ◆ Provide alternatives; be a sounding board; do not make decisions for them; allow people to decide what is best for themselves.
- ◆ Encourage their independence.
- ◆ Include them in social activities.
- ◆ Remember, only a physician can prescribe medication for the bereaved.

## FAMILY RESOURCE LINK

### TOPIC: Dealing with the News Media

**Discussion:** Reporters relish the opportunity to interview soldiers and their families during military operations. Interviewers often focus on the sensational, the emotional, or the controversial; these areas supposedly “sell” news. American news reporters play a vital role in democracy. It is not harassment when they ask for an interview. It is harassment when they persist after you’ve declined to comment.

**Lessons:** Before answering questions, write down the name of the reporter and his news organization. This will discourage the reporter from persisting if you decline to comment.

- ◆ Before an interview, set the ground rules. Tell the interviewer what you will or will not discuss, especially when talking to a television or radio reporter. If the interviewer breaks your ground rules once the taping session starts, end the interview. Keep in mind that with today’s technology, even the enemy has access to your comments the moment you make them.
- ◆ Do not address specific units, personnel strength, or anything else that would identify your (or your spouse’s) mission. Talk only about those areas in which you have first-hand knowledge. Do not speculate about future operations.
- ◆ Do not attempt to speak for your unit, installation, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.
- ◆ Do not comment on our national policies, especially foreign affairs; leave this to the highest levels of government.
- ◆ Don’t say anything, even in jest, that you don’t want to read, see, or hear later.
- ◆ Be aware of the levels of attribution used by some reporters: “on the record” remarks, where you may be quoted directly or indirectly by name; “background information” remarks, where the interviewer agrees to attribute your comments only to a nonspecific source (a “family member,” for example); or “off the record” remarks that are to be held in confidence and not used in any form.
- ◆ “Do not quote me” is not the same as “off the record.” If you tell a reporter not to quote you, he or she may still assume you are providing “background information” that can be used in a story. Don’t make “background” remarks if you are being taped. It is always best to assume you are speaking “on the record.”

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## DEPLOYMENT 101

The following section contains a straight and to-the-point briefing/handout for soldiers (Deployment 101: Soldier and Family Readiness Checklists). Use this at your own discretion. It may communicate with some of our young soldiers. Along with it are comprehensive checklists for the soldier and his spouse, which can be very helpful and should be made a part of the package.

Also included in the following section are three sample forms that might be used as one of the last steps in preparing soldiers and family members for deployment. The Individual Deployment Checklist is for use by deploying soldiers immediately before departure. Deploying soldiers should also fill out the Individual Deployment Family Survey to provide information that might be needed to assist their family members. Finally, a Briefing Evaluation Form is included to give soldiers and family members attending predeployment briefings the opportunity to provide feedback on briefing effectiveness. Adapt these forms to local requirements to close the predeployment preparation loop prior to the soldier's departure.

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## Deployment 101: Soldier and Family Readiness Checklists

Hey, soldier! Listen up. You joined the Army, remember? They said you'd be going to the field, to strange and wonderful places, and probably alone (except for your buddies). So what's your family going to do without you? That's up to you. So get with it, and get 'em ready to hang without you for a while. (Yeah, you don't want 'em to think they can live without you, but you got to get 'em ready!)

You got to start early, hear? Don't mess around until just before the bag drop to tell your spouse about the bills for your car and all those credit cards. Leave the checkbook, and make sure he or she can sign those checks! You know your unit can get the 911 phone call and be out of town in 48 hours. You got to be ready for that.

What's in it for you? Peace of mind! When you're chambering a live round, you can't be worrying about your car parked illegally or your family starving because you didn't leave 'em money for food! Wake up and smell the coffee, and don't put yourself and your buddies in a bad spot.

Open up your files to your spouse. Make sure they have all those important papers you stuffed into the drawer at home. Maybe he/she will organize 'em for you! You could be better organized, you know.

You got 'em that POA for picking up your LES? How about their ID cards? When do they expire? You don't know? Well, look at it and go figure! Will you be back before expiration? If not, better get 'em renewed right soon!

How about extra keys? Make a couple for the car and house. Locksmiths are expensive. Do they have all the phone numbers for the rear det and Army Community Service? How about a map of the post and location of those places they might need to go? Are they staying at home or going to stay with momma? If they're leaving for momma's place, let the rear det commander know. If something happens to you, where's he going to look first? Your home? Right. Not someplace else. So leave him their phone number!

Now there's a checklist at the end of this page. Use it, soldier. We live and die by the checklist, and you better get this one done right so you can keep your mind on what you're supposed to be doing when you get to the playground.

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## SOLDIER'S CHECKLIST

### Automotive:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Proper periodic maintenance up-to-date (oil change, lubrication, tune-up, fluid levels)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Equipment in good condition (brakes, tires, battery, lights)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance policy adequate (liability, medical, uninsured motorists, damage to automobile)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Road service policy (if desired; provides assistance with flats, lock-outs, and other emergencies)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vehicle registration/license (on post and state) and renewal dates current/known
- \_\_\_\_\_ State annual safety inspection current and renewal date known
- \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's license for spouse current and renewal date known
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has automotive papers (tire warranty, battery guarantee, insurance policy, road service card)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has automobile information: warranties/guarantees in effect and from whom; correct tire pressure and how to inflate and check tires; oil to use and how to fill and check dipstick; gasoline to use; where to go for maintenance and repair services; how to get emergency road service; where car keys and spares are located
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse familiar with bus routes and alternative transportation in case the family car is out of service

### Family:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Unit has the complete current address and telephone number for your family, along with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of one or two relatives, neighbors, or friends who will know where your family is living (if you do not have a phone, list neighbors' numbers)

### Make sure spouse has:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Name, address, and telephone number of your landlord or mortgage company
- \_\_\_\_\_ Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for your commander, Army Community Service Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator, rear detachment commander, and Family Readiness Group representatives

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## Soldier's Checklist—Page 2

- \_\_\_\_\_ Current ID cards for each member of your family (check expiration dates)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keys (house, car, garage, personal storage company, safety deposit box)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage certificate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth certificates
- \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance policies (life, home, automobile)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family social security numbers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Deeds and/or mortgage papers
- \_\_\_\_\_ School registration papers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of service documents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of orders and all endorsements
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shipping documents and/or household goods inventory
- \_\_\_\_\_ Court orders for support and custody of legal dependents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unit mail card

### And if appropriate:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Naturalization papers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce decree and separation agreements
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adoption papers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Death certificate

### Financial:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Class EE Savings Bond allotment applied for (if desired)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bank or credit union accounts in both names with an “or” rather than an “and” between the names (checking, savings, and any other accounts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has account number, bank books, checkbooks, ATM card
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has credit cards, bills, information on amounts due, and when and how to report lost cards
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse knows amounts due on loans, monthly payment dates, addresses and phone numbers of loan companies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse is aware of savings bonds and securities owned, where they are, and how to gain access to them if needed



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## Soldier's Checklist—Page 3

- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has a signed release from the soldier to pick up a copy of LES
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse is aware of all bills that need to be paid routinely, with address and telephone number for each (rent or mortgage, car payment, telephone, electricity, appliance/furniture payments, water, credit cards, garbage collection, all types of insurance, debt repayment, cable television, dues and subscriptions, and so on)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has access to copies of state and federal income tax returns for the last five years; the name, address, and telephone number of the person or company who helped you with your return last year, along with information, forms, and tax deductible receipts for the current year
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse knows where to go for financial assistance in times of crisis: Army Community Services, Army Emergency Relief, rear detachment commander, Family Assistance Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator

### Legal:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has the name, address, and telephone number of your private or military attorney or legal advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ You and your spouse have current wills to specify how you want your property handled and distributed in the case of the death of either
- \_\_\_\_\_ If needed, spouse has Power of Attorney giving him or her the right to sign your name and do the things you could do if you were actually present; may be specific or general
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has copies of all insurance policies, along with the name and telephone number of your insurance agents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has information on where to go for legal aid: Legal Assistance Office, rear detachment commander, Family Assistance Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator

### Medical:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has family medical cards/knows how to get medical records
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has family immunization records; shots are up to date
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse knows medications/allergies of all family members
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prescriptions (medical and optical) are readily available
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rear detachment officer/ACS knows of family members with special needs, Exceptional Family Member Program, or chronic medical condition

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## Soldier's Checklist—Page 4

\_\_\_\_\_ Spouse has phone numbers for medical and dental services: emergency care, outpatient and inpatient medical care, pharmacy, routine or emergency dental care, and health benefits advisor for assistance with TRICARE

### Security/Safety:

\_\_\_\_\_ Military or local police crime prevention survey for your quarters has been conducted

\_\_\_\_\_ Your home or apartment has at least a front door “peephole” and adequate locks on all doors and windows

\_\_\_\_\_ Your family's name is on the Military Police Quarters Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ Your smoke detector is working and has a new battery

\_\_\_\_\_ Fire extinguishers are charged and are in good working condition; family members know where they are and how to use them

\_\_\_\_\_ Your family is familiar with alternate exits they can use to leave the home from each room in case of fire or other emergency

\_\_\_\_\_ Spouse knows how to reach police, MPs, fire department, ambulance, poison information center, chaplains, help line; locate numbers by the telephone

\_\_\_\_\_ Spouse and older children know how to turn off electricity, water, and gas in case of an emergency

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## **TO THE SPOUSE**

Once a unit has deployed, it is too late to realize you need your spouse's signature or don't know where things are or how important tasks are done. These problems can easily be avoided. The best solution is to be totally prepared.

True family readiness comes from a series of minor tasks accomplished well in advance rather than a sudden "crash" program begun after receiving an unexpected deployment notice. Last-minute rushing produces needless family worry and stress. It causes many parts of the family readiness plan to be left undone.

By looking ahead and anticipating the likelihood of a deployment, you and your loved ones can adequately plan for this separation. Remember, once your soldier has been deployed, the responsibility for your family transfers directly to you. Ultimately, you are responsible for knowing your rights and privileges and what resources are available to you as an Army spouse.



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## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

This information may be useful if you have an emergency that requires getting in touch with your soldier. Complete the form, and keep it near your telephone.

Soldier's Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Soldier's Military Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Soldier's Unit Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Soldier's First Sergeant: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Readiness Group Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

FRG Contact Person's Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Red Cross Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Steps to take:

1. Contact the Red Cross so they can confirm any emergency through Red Cross channels.
2. Call the rear detachment commander, Family Assistance Center, or Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator, as appropriate.
3. Give them the following information:
  - a) Soldier's full name and SSN
  - b) Nature of the emergency
  - c) Soldier's military unit
  - d) That you have notified the Red Cross



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## SPOUSE'S CHECKLIST

- \_\_\_\_\_ Take AFTB classes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get to know community resources, services, and locations

### **Automotive:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Get automobile key (and spares)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get garage key (and spares), if applicable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have oil changed, new oil and air filter installed, and car lubricated; know the mileage reading when the oil should be changed next
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure all fluid levels are up to normal (oil, transmission fluid, brake and steering fluid, water); know how to check and fill them yourself (if needed) and what gasoline to use
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure all vital equipment is in good condition and working order (including brakes, tires, battery, belts, hoses, headlights/high and low beams, tail lights, brake lights, turn signals)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review your insurance policy to make sure it provides adequate coverage (liability, medical, uninsured motorist, damage to your car and others); know the renewal date, cost of renewal, who to contact to renew the policy (name, address, and telephone number)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Investigate a road service policy (if desired) to provide assistance with flat tires, towing, stalled engine, being locked out of your car, and other emergencies; know what your policy covers, when it expires and has to be renewed, cost of renewal, who to contact to renew (name, address, and telephone number); know what to do if you don't have this coverage and one of these events happens
- \_\_\_\_\_ Look into the renewal of state and on-post vehicle registration (year, cost, where to go, what to do)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check your state driver's license expiration date, cost to renew, where to go, what to do
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check your annual state automotive safety check, if required (when it expires, cost to renew, where to go, and anything that may have to be repaired or replaced to pass this inspection)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take possession of automotive papers (car registration, safety inspection, tire warranties, battery guarantee, insurance policy and certificate of insurance, road service card); know where they are, what they mean, how to use them
- \_\_\_\_\_ Learn where to go, who to see or call when you have problems with the automobile (routine maintenance, auto repair, tires, oil changes, and lubrication)

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## Spouse's Checklist—Page 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Learn what alternative transportation is available (on post, car pools, taxis, city buses, friends)

\_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a list of automotive “do’s and don’ts” and hints on car care

### Family:

\_\_\_\_\_ Make sure your spouse’s unit has your name, address, and telephone number, along with the name, address, and telephone numbers of one or more people who will know where you are at all times (even if you travel or move)

\_\_\_\_\_ Get the name, address, and telephone number of your landlord, mortgage company, or government housing office

\_\_\_\_\_ Get the names and telephone numbers of key members of your Family Readiness Group, your unit’s rear detachment commander and chaplain, Family Assistance Center, Guard or Reserve Family Program Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_ Make sure you have a military ID card for each member of your family

\_\_\_\_\_ Get the keys to your house, safety deposit box, personal storage company

\_\_\_\_\_ Know when ID cards expire, and have required forms signed by sponsor before departure

### Make sure you have (if appropriate):

\_\_\_\_\_ Marriage certificate

\_\_\_\_\_ Birth certificates

\_\_\_\_\_ Insurance policies (life, home, auto)

\_\_\_\_\_ Family social security numbers (including your children’s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Rental or lease papers (if appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_ Deeds and/or mortgage papers (if appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_ School registration papers (if appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_ Spouse’s proof of military service documents

\_\_\_\_\_ Copies of your spouse’s orders and all amendments

\_\_\_\_\_ Shipping documents and/or household goods inventory

\_\_\_\_\_ Court orders for support and custody of legal dependents

\_\_\_\_\_ Unit mail card

\_\_\_\_\_ Copy of your most recent allotment request (if appropriate)



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## Spouse's Checklist—Page 3

- \_\_\_\_\_ Naturalization papers (if appropriate)—know the expiration date and prepare paperwork in advance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce decree (if appropriate)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adoption papers (if appropriate)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Death certificates (if appropriate)

### Financial:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Take possession of appropriate bank books, ATM cards, checkbooks, credit union papers or books, credit cards
- \_\_\_\_\_ Know how to report lost credit cards and how to request replacements. If a credit card is lost or stolen, report it immediately to the issuing company AND the credit-reporting agencies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure you can make deposits and withdrawals with only your signature. If the account shows an “and” between your spouse’s name and yours, it requires both signatures; an “or” ensures you can make deposits and withdrawals in the absence of your spouse. This can be changed only while the soldier is here.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep a list of automatic deposits and withdrawals or payments made to financial accounts (paycheck, insurance, loan, or bill payments)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have your spouse apply for a Class EE Savings Bond allotment (if desired and appropriate), and keep a copy of the signed application

### Important documents you should have:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Get a Power of Attorney, unit mail card, and military ID card if you will have to pick up your spouse’s paycheck and/or mail from the unit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a list of outstanding payments, loans, and other obligations with due dates, amount owed, who to pay, contact person, address and telephone numbers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a list of investments such as securities or bonds with their value, contact person’s name, address and telephone number; know how to cash these in an emergency
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get copies of the past five years’ state and federal income tax returns and everything needed for the next filing, including due dates and who to contact for assistance in preparing the returns
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare a list of military and community organizations that offer financial advice, counseling, information, and assistance

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## Spouse's Checklist—Page 4

### Legal:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Get the name, address, and telephone number of your military or private attorney or legal advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get a Power of Attorney (general or limited) if you will need to sign documents or act on your spouse's behalf during the deployment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure your will and your spouse's will are up to date and valid
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get copies of all insurance policies, and find out what is covered and to what extent; get contact person's name, address, and telephone number; ask whether you need a Power of Attorney to file a claim during your spouse's deployment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Secure a list of military and community organizations that offer legal advice, counseling, information, and assistance

### Medical:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure you have family medical cards for you and your children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure you have family shot records for you and your children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure current prescriptions for medicine and glasses or contact lenses are available
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get a list of military, community, state, and federal organizations that offer medical, mental or emotional, dental, and optical assistance

### Security/Safety:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Request a military or local police crime prevention survey for your home
- \_\_\_\_\_ Add a "peephole" to at least your front door and adequate locks to all of your doors and windows
- \_\_\_\_\_ Place your family's name on the Military Police Quarters Checklist (or notify the local police if you live in a civilian community) if your family will be away from home for an extended period
- \_\_\_\_\_ Install a smoke detector (or check existing detectors) in key areas of your residence (kitchen, bedroom, living room, shop/garage)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Install a fire extinguisher (or inspect existing extinguisher) in key areas of your residence (also recommended for your automobile)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discuss with your family alternate exits they can use to leave your home from each room in case of a fire or other emergency
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get a list of military and community organizations that offer security/safety advice, counseling, information, and assistance

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## MONTHLY FINANCIAL WORKSHEET

**Name of Bank or Credit Union:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Checking Account Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Income:**

Base Pay	\$ _____
Quarters Allowance (BAH)	\$ _____
BAS (Basic Allowance for Subsistence)	\$ _____
Other Allowance	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

**Deductions:**

Federal Withholding Tax	\$ _____
State Withholding Tax	\$ _____
FICA Tax (Social Security)	\$ _____
SGLI (Servicemen's Group Life Insurance)	\$ _____
Allotments	\$ _____
Other Deductions (dental, etc.)	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>AVAILABLE INCOME (Income minus Deductions)</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

**Monthly Expenses:**

	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Rent/Mortgage	\$ _____	_____
Utilities:	\$ _____	_____
Gas	\$ _____	_____
Electricity	\$ _____	_____
Telephone	\$ _____	_____
Heating oil	\$ _____	_____
Water	\$ _____	_____
Food (all groceries, including pet food)	\$ _____	_____

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## Monthly Financial Worksheet—Page 2

### Monthly Expenses:

	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Clothing Purchase	\$ _____	_____
Clothing Care (laundry, dry cleaning)	\$ _____	_____
Personal Items (hair care, toiletries)	\$ _____	_____
Installment payments:		
Car	\$ _____	_____
Furniture	\$ _____	_____
Appliances	\$ _____	_____
Insurance (all types)	\$ _____	_____
TV (cable)	\$ _____	_____
Newspaper/Magazines/Books	\$ _____	_____
Gasoline	\$ _____	_____
Recreation (movies, bowling, restaurants)	\$ _____	_____
Children’s Allowance (including lessons)	\$ _____	_____
Childcare	\$ _____	_____
Dental and/or Medical Costs	\$ _____	_____
Gifts	\$ _____	_____
Contributions to Church or Charity	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Credit Card Account	\$ _____	_____
Savings	\$ _____	_____
Emergency Fund	\$ _____	_____
<b>Total Expenses and Savings</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>Total Monthly Income:</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>Difference (+ or -):</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>

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## INDIVIDUAL DEPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

This form should be filled out by all deploying soldiers and initialed off by the next person in their chain of command.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

If married, answer the following:

Spouse's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a will? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a Power of Attorney? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Does your spouse have transportation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have ID cards for your spouse and children? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Did your spouse attend the briefing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Is your spouse listed on the FRG roster? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Special considerations/requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date attended deployment briefing \_\_\_\_\_

Reason it was missed/remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(continued on back)*

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## Individual Deployment Checklist—Page 2

Disposition of mail \_\_\_\_\_

Disposition of POV \_\_\_\_\_

Disposition of high-value items (if in barracks) \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Signature of Soldier (print and sign) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Signature of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Signature of Unit RDC \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date completed and turned in to the RDC \_\_\_\_\_

### PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority: 10 U.S.C. Section 3010, 5 U.S.C. 522a

Principle Purpose Information will be used to provide support, outreach and information to family members.

Routine Uses: Primary Use of this information is to facilitate volunteers in providing command information to family members concerning unit events and in emergencies.

Mandatory or Voluntary Disclosure: Voluntary

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## INDIVIDUAL DEPLOYMENT FAMILY SURVEY

This form should be filled out by all deploying soldiers to provide information that might be needed to assist their family members.

Soldier's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_

Children:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's work phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best time to call your spouse? Day \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Will your spouse and/or dependents be staying on post or in the local community while you are deployed?

If no, where will they be staying? \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's friends/neighbors who can be contacted if we aren't able to reach your spouse at home:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your spouse expecting a baby? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, when is the due date? \_\_\_\_\_

Does anyone in your family have any medical problems that the unit should be aware of?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a Power of Attorney for your spouse? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, is it General or Specific? \_\_\_\_\_

If Specific, what is it for? \_\_\_\_\_

*(continued on back)*

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## Individual Deployment Family Survey—Page 2

Does your spouse drive? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Will your spouse have access to a vehicle while you are deployed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no to either question, please explain arrangements you have made to assist your spouse:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you and your spouse have wills?

Soldier: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, be aware that if something happens to you or your spouse, the state will decide who will get your property and/or custody of your children, if any. Wills are easy to have made, and they are free through Legal Assistance.

Do you have a Family Care Plan? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no and you need one, you must complete it now.

If yes, attach a copy to this worksheet.

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Signature of Soldier (print and sign) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Signature of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Signature of Unit RDC \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date completed and turned in to the RDC \_\_\_\_\_

### PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority: 10 U.S.C. Section 3010, 5 U.S.C. 522a

Principle Purpose Information will be used to provide support, outreach and information to family members.

Routine Uses: Primary Use of this information is to facilitate volunteers in providing command information to family members concerning unit events and in emergencies.

Mandatory or Voluntary Disclosure: Voluntary



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## BRIEFING EVALUATION

This form should be completed by all soldiers and family members attending a predeployment briefing.

We appreciate your assistance in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the family-member predeployment briefing. Your comments will be used to evaluate our briefing and will influence the direction of future briefings and seminars given to families.

Thank you for your cooperation.

1. My interest in the briefing was:

High

Above Average

Average

Below Average

Low

2. The usefulness of the briefing was:

High

Above Average

Average

Below Average

Low

3. The planning and organization of the briefing was:

High

Above Average

Average

Below Average

Low

4. My overall evaluation of the briefing is:

High

Above Average

Average

Below Average

Low

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## **Briefing Evaluation—Page 2**

5. What session was most useful to you?  
Why?
  
6. Is there any subject you would add?
  
7. Please add any other thoughts or suggestions

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# 3

## Sustainment: Coping with Separation

- ◆ **Survival Strategies**
- ◆ **Children and Separation**
- ◆ **A Family Separation Workshop**
- ◆ **Homecoming**
- ◆ **Reunion Seminar**
- ◆ **Workshop Evaluation**



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## SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

**S**oldier, spouse, and children all feel the pang of separation. Deployment disrupts the normal functioning of the family unit. There is no denying that. But there are things that can be done to survive the separations.

This section and the one following (on communications) give many specific suggestions for surviving separations, written from the point of view of the military family anticipating or experiencing deployment separation. These suggestions can be passed on at a Family Readiness Group meeting or workshop, or duplicated for handouts.

All family members should be aware of the emotions associated with the four stages of the departure–return cycle. Both parents and children tend to act out emotions during this cycle—the kids will tend to mirror the emotional feelings of the parents. The stages are these:

- ◆ *Protest against loss:* “It’s not fair that you have to leave us.” Everyone is on edge and irritable. The spouse is likely to feel tense, selfish, and angry.
- ◆ *Despair:* “How will I ever live through these next few months without you”? You might find yourself waking up in the middle of the night feeling fearful.
- ◆ *Detachment:* Most days you feel in control; you are confident that you can handle the day-to-day living, but you may also experience despair and anger. “Why does he or she have to be away when I need him or her the most”?
- ◆ *Return adjustment:* Anxiety and doubts surface. “Will she still love me”? “Will he like the decision I made”? “Now that she knows how to take care of the family alone, will she still need me”?

Here are things you can do to help yourself and your family members to survive this separation. First of all, take the children to the soldier’s point of departure, even if it means taking them out of school, so that fearful fantasies are reduced. After the departure, participate in a planned activity, such as shopping or taking the children to the zoo. There’s no need to return to an empty house

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All family members should be aware of the emotions associated with the four stages of the departure–return cycle.

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immediately. Plan a pot-luck dinner, or go to a restaurant with another waiting family to get over the “first day hurdle.”

Try to carry on children’s activities just as if the soldier were home. Tell the children’s teachers that dad or mom just left so they will have more of an understanding of behavioral reactions and be able to help. Use mealtime or bedtime to talk about what to say to dad or mom on the next tape or in the next letter. Children whose fathers are away should be involved in organizations where there are good male leaders. Scouts or soccer and baseball teams help to channel some of their energy while teaching lifetime skills.

The soldier should call home, if possible, upon reaching his or her destination. Take your family on tour via a tape-recorded account and snapshots. Look for inexpensive tours on foot or by bus. Participate in a service project or other activity organized by the unit. Keep a diary of your experiences to share with the family.

For the spouse remaining at home, set some goals for yourself, and then pursue your self-development program whether or not your spouse is home. You will like yourself a lot better. Get involved in some ongoing activity. It might be a full- or part-time job. It might be volunteer work, which is an effective way of gaining professional skills. Don’t make excuses by saying that you will have to give it up when your soldier comes home. Dare to stretch yourself. Many organizations need your help: Army Community Service, your church, the American Red Cross, your school, and your unit’s FRG, to name a few. Get involved in FRG activities. Reach outside your immediate circle of friends. Take up a new hobby, or return to one you gave up for lack of time.

Know at least three of your neighbors. You may need their help on an emergency basis, and they can offer day-to-day support. Make sure you are financially secure before your soldier leaves. Do you have enough money to cover an unexpected bill? Don’t feel guilty about going out with friends and leaving your children with a babysitter. That’s the cheapest form of sanity you can buy. But resist the temptation to run home to mom if the going gets rough. That is usually a temporary solution at best. If you and your spouse have some differences, try to work them out before you are separated. They might get bigger if you don’t.

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Keep a journal of your thoughts and activities while your spouse is absent. Include snapshots of yourself and the children so the two of you can catch up together with what you have been doing. Find a “buddy,” another military family member who is also alone temporarily and whom you can call when you feel “blue.” If you have children, find another woman to pal around with who has children the same age as yours. This is where your unit’s FRG comes in especially handy—you’re all in the same boat and need the mutual support.

Little things can help a lot—cook a special dish that you enjoy but that your spouse hates; start a small sewing project; play the piano; do some physical labor, which will help relieve emotional tiredness. Take the kids on an outing. Go to the museum, to the library, or to the woods for a hike. Break up the week with special activities, such as a Friday night movie or a Tuesday morning shopping trip. Don’t sit at home on weekends thinking, “Oh, if only the family were together.” Get a group together and go to the beach, go skating, or have a picnic.

Finally, think of ways you can help reduce the stress of the return period. After you’ve experienced deployment a few times, you may be better able to handle the expectations that usually come with the soldier’s return. You may want to prepare for the return in a way that leaves you time to relax with the kids one or two days before your soldier arrives.

## **Communications**

Communications during separation play a critical role in maintaining an emotional presence of the soldier who is not physically present. It is very important for family members to share their thoughts and feelings with the soldier. Here are some helpful ways to sustain the relationship and prepare for a happy reunion.

### *Telephone Calls*

Commercial phone calls can be a very expensive way for a family to communicate, unless there is a real need to have a two-way conversation. The cost of collect calls can be quite a burden on a spouse’s already tight budget. If commercial calls are necessary, shop around for the best buy in prepaid phone cards. Buy two—one for deployed soldier and one for the spouse. Check with the

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Communications during separation play a critical role in maintaining an emotional presence of the soldier who is not physically present.

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unit RDC to find out how DSN (official telephone networks) calls can be made to or from the deployed unit. Often, morale calls on official telephones are allowed periodically. If commercial telephone calls are necessary, schedule them for convenience, and be prepared to discuss necessary issues.

### *E-Mail*

E-mail is so widespread now that most deployment locations have computer access for the soldier to send e-mail. Libraries, the unit rear detachment, and some family readiness centers provide computers for spouses to use for e-mail. E-mail is very inexpensive and versatile; however, it can enable bad news to travel at the speed of light. Be careful of using this method of communication for an emotionally laden message. It's better to compose it, park it for a few hours, review it for clarity and kindness, and then send it. It still can't replace the letter for personal and romantic communication. And remember, e-mail is not secure—it can be read by anyone who uses the computer.

### *Video*

Most ACS centers have video-teleconference capabilities. These are available to spouses and families throughout the day and sometimes into the evening hours. Videocassettes are also an excellent way for families to communicate during absences, particularly on special days and holidays. A recorder and video camera are required, but they may be rented in the continental United States or obtained through military video clubs outside of the U.S. Check [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org) for ACS centers with video-teleconferencing capability.

### *MARS*

Another method of communication is the Military Affiliated Radio Systems (MARS) network. Many military installations have MARS stations, which can be accessed by soldiers and families by contacting the nearest one. This system is an economical way to handle nonemergency calls and to send messages to families.



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## *Mail*

Letters from home boost morale and provide assurance of the family's welfare. Use any post office or the soldier's unit mailroom to mail letters to your spouse. Some hints for letters (e-mail or regular mail) include:

- ◆ Handwritten letters. These are still the best way to express private and intimate communications.
- ◆ Answer all questions. Write the letter with the soldier's picture in front of you. This will help you imagine you are talking directly to him or her.
- ◆ Let your spouse know how much you appreciate the letters, tapes, and pictures that have been sent. Mention in each letter one or two things that made you feel especially close.
- ◆ Express yourself clearly. Don't leave the other person to guess what you mean.
- ◆ If writing at length daily is difficult, the family should consider postcards. Receiving notes frequently (and regularly) is more important than the length of the message.
- ◆ Expressions of love are important; the need to verbally express affection does not diminish with distance. The soldier should be reassured that he or she is cherished. Sometimes problems take undue priority over saying, "I love you." Relationships need to be nurtured if they are to survive separations and ensure a loving reunion.
- ◆ Share your feelings as openly and as freely as you can without indulging in self-pity. Let your spouse know you'd like to share his or her feelings.
- ◆ Take responsibility for your feelings. Say, "I feel bad that you're not here." Avoid saying, "You make me feel bad."
- ◆ Both partners need to communicate regularly. Otherwise there is temptation to worry about the other or to be hurt. At a distance, the imagination can run wild; communication will reduce speculations. Some couples number their letters so it will be obvious if they are received out of order.
- ◆ The soldier should write directly to each child instead of including notes to children in a letter to a spouse. Some installations furnish special stationery for soldiers to use to

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Relationships  
need to be  
nurtured if they  
are to survive  
separations and  
ensure a loving  
reunion.

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write letters to their children. Inquire at the Army Community Service Center, or ask the Family Readiness Liaison in your unit.

- ◆ Add interesting newspaper articles and cartoons.
- ◆ Add photos. These are the best ways to share rapidly growing children. Include candid shots of the spouse, too. They can be enjoyed over and over again in quiet moments.
- ◆ One idea is for family members to prepare a “care package” with items such as love notes from the spouse and children, reminders of things to look forward to at home, kids’ drawings, magazines, a new item of clothing, a hat, a paperback book, homemade cookies, or funny reminders of life at home.
- ◆ Remember the security awareness issues that were referred to in Chapter 2.

### *Tape Recording*

Some families find that cassette tapes and compact disks (CDs) are easy to send (although a recorder is needed to play) and are even more personal than letters. As with letters or journals, a little can be added each day. Children love to hear their voices, and the tapes can be treasures to enjoy for many years to come. Friends could add to the tape, too.

### **Stress Management Techniques**

Here are some ways you can reduce the stress in your life; they are useful for all family members who are experiencing the stress of separation or relocation. These suggestions can be passed on at an FRG meeting or workshop. Don’t let the length of the list scare you. Try different techniques (each for at least three days) until you find ones that work for you. Some of the suggestions may mean major changes in the way you now face life. Try them. The only thing you have to lose is a lot of stress.

- ◆ Exercise; give physical expression to feelings of flight and fight through swimming, jogging, or tennis.
- ◆ Maintain good eating habits. Keep calories under control, and reduce sugar intake.

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- ◆ Do relaxation exercises. For example, inhale as you count from one to seven; hold your breath while counting to seven; then exhale for the same count. As you inhale and exhale, let go and feel your body relaxing. Or relax by keeping everything out of your mind and focusing on the number “one.”
  - ◆ Plan some aesthetic activity each day, such as a walk in a garden or through an art museum.
  - ◆ Read enjoyable books not related to your work that require concentration. Browse through a bookstore, or ask a librarian to help you select a book at your public library.
  - ◆ Practice “active listening.” Let others finish speaking without interruption. Then respond.
  - ◆ Have a place for retreat at home. Initiate a “quiet time” at home when everyone in the house is quiet.
  - ◆ Slow down. Operating in “overdrive” burns up energy.
  - ◆ Take personal responsibility for your actions, and also allow others to do the same.
  - ◆ Organize and manage your time. Your time is precious and finite.
  - ◆ Each week, take your calendar and block out some free time for yourself as a personal reward.
  - ◆ Focus on the quality of your life. It’s not the number of things you do but how well you do what you do.
  - ◆ When making decisions, take time to ponder and weigh alternatives. As a result, you will be more satisfied with your decisions.
  - ◆ Give your personality room for fantasies, dreams, and fresh hopes. Don’t be afraid to be spontaneous.
  - ◆ Manage your time nonstressfully. Learn to prioritize. Whatever does not get done today can go on your “to do” list for the next day.
  - ◆ Take vacations that suit you.
  - ◆ Be more flexible.
  - ◆ Identify and accept your own strengths and limitations. Everyone is different.

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Focus on the quality of your life. It’s not the number of things you do but how well you do what you do.

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- ◆ Establish long-range goals for your life. Identify short-term objectives that help you achieve these goals.
  - ◆ Delegate some of your work to others when possible. You don't have to do it all.
  - ◆ Program your workday in a way that makes effective use of your time and avoids "hurry sickness."
  - ◆ Revise your usual daily schedule of activities to eliminate as many events as possible that do not contribute directly to your own well being. Allow more time for activities so as not to be rushed. Allow a 5 to 10 minute break between appointments. Rise earlier so as not to rush to get dressed. Work in a peaceful place. Talk less and only when necessary. Schedule lunch as a real change of pace and activity. Skip any urgency about finishing work exactly on time (five o'clock frenzy). Before leaving your workspace, put things in order; turn your chair around away from your desk and spend 10 to 15 minutes relaxing. Mentally prepare yourself to return home, and leave the work there.
  - ◆ Learn to wait—a drill against "hurry sickness."

Each morning, noon, and mid-afternoon, remind yourself that living is always an unfinished business. You are only finished when you're dead. Begin to listen quietly to the conversation of other people. Quit trying to think of more than one thing at a time. If someone is doing a job slower than you could, don't interfere unless you're positive he or she can't do the job at all.

When confronted with any task, ask yourself, "Will this matter five years from now? Must I do this right now?" Before you begin to speak, ask yourself, "Do I really have anything important to say; does anyone want to hear it; is this the time to say it?" If the answer is "no," don't say it. Tell yourself at least once a day that no enterprise ever failed because it was executed too slowly or too well.

When you have scheduled appointments, anticipate that you may have to wait. Don't waste waiting time. For example, carry a paperback book or needlework with you for times when you have to wait. If you don't protect your allotment of time, no one else will. Remember that not everyone has "hurry sickness," and some won't mind waiting for you as much as you would mind waiting for them. Purposely

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frequent restaurants and other establishments with a companion where you know there will be a wait, and learn to wait without fidgeting.

- ◆ Retrieve your total personality. Detach yourself from the narrow pattern of work and short-circuited emotion. Express yourself!
- ◆ Widen your cultural and intellectual horizons with plays, concerts, good movies, good books, museums, and community celebrations and festivals.
- ◆ Open yourself to new friendships. Nourish yourself by communicating with people who reinforce your newly expanded interests.
- ◆ Choose events and experiences that yield pleasure as you live through them; concentrate on savoring them, and live each moment more fully.

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## CHILDREN AND SEPARATION

**S**ome say children are relatively unaffected by their father's absence, but studies show that is not true. Children probably experience the same psychological pattern as their mothers, due to their own feelings of loss and their awareness—conscious or unconscious—of the mother's emotional situation. Generally, they're upset when their mother is upset, and they're calm when she is calm. Children often test mom to find out if she will bend more when dad's gone, especially when he first leaves and again upon his return.

Some women compensate for their husband's absence by becoming permissive or overly protective with their children. Rules change. Some decisions are harder to make alone, so the mother may not be able to make clear-cut decisions. The children are being subjected to a different environment. They become caught between two worlds—juggling their behavior according to whether or not their father is home.

Both partners must be consistent in their discipline. They should decide on the rules and who is responsible for what area of discipline. Some fathers become "one of the kids" and expect the wife to be the disciplinarian. Sometimes, the mother essentially leaves the children without a parent at all by deferring decisions until the husband gets home: "Just wait until your Dad gets home. You're gonna get it!" Obviously, this sets up the returning father as the heavy, and it colors what could be a joyful reunion with fear.

### Children and Their Feelings

When the father returns, children behave in a variety of ways—with happy hugs, kisses, and squeals of welcome, but also with feelings of hurt, anger, resentment, and hostility. Child psychologists say all children have both positive and negative feelings toward returning parents. That's okay, as long as the feelings are dealt with honestly.

"Children need stability," says one military counselor. "Look at it this way. If one of the two most important people in your life were constantly coming and going—here two weeks, gone two weeks, home two days, gone again—wouldn't your security be shaken a little? Imagine what it does to the children!"

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With their father gone, children often become the main focus of the mother. But what happens when he returns and she becomes a wife again? The child often feels he or she is not “number one” anymore and has to take second place—physically and emotionally. Insecurity, loss of status, and change in routine all add up to two strong emotions: hurt and anger directed at father. Children also feel love, pride, need, and security. The mixed feelings leave them confused, unable to understand what’s happening to them.

Children express their feelings in different ways, and their outward behavior is not always a good reflection of what’s going on emotionally. Some children cover up their true feelings; others are more open. A child’s rejection, even if it is subtle, can be devastating to a returning parent. Some psychologists say part of a child’s negative feelings toward a father may be a reflection of his mother’s attitudes, suppressed by the wife but sensed by the children.

Helping a child cope with the emotions of separation requires that the family be open to the honest expression of feelings. These steps will help children cope—even when there appears to be no conflict. Pass the steps on to the FRG volunteers and other family members.

### **Predeployment Suggestions**

Before deployment, spend time explaining, at the child’s level, why you are going, where, with whom (for example, with Mary’s Dad), and for how long you will be gone. Sit down with the whole family and talk about your feelings. Let family members express how they feel about the separation. Talk about what will happen when dad (or mom) is gone and what will be different when he returns. Let the older children relate their assessments of previous deployments to younger children—how long it seemed, what they did, how they felt while one parent was away and when he or she returned. The departing parent should spend time individually with each child—play a game, go for a walk, or go out for an ice cream cone—just the two of you. Take a picture of each child with the parent who is about to leave.

During deployment, display pictures of the missing parent at the child’s eye level. Let each child have a picture in their room of him or herself with the missing dad or mom. Routine is important.

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Keep the same rules and family schedule. The children need the stability of unbroken routine.

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Keep the same rules and family schedule. The children need the stability of unbroken routine. But make opportunities for special outings, especially on weekends and holidays when both parents would usually have been home (picnics, breakfast at McDonald's, visits to historic sites, building a bird feeder together). Encourage writing letters to dad or mom, and enclose schoolwork or drawings. Have the missing parent write a separate letter to each child occasionally, mailed in a separate envelope. That extra postage is well worth it! The parent can also read stories and talk to the children on tape.

Have each child choose a chore that is usually done by the absent parent. It will be a special contribution to maintain the house and will help develop responsibility. Praise them for their efforts. Keep in touch with teachers. Work together to evaluate, avert, or redirect unusual or negative behavior. Discuss with the children the fact that people do change, so after a long period of separation they may see some changes in their parent. They will adjust better to the changes if they are explained, and these explanations will help them to understand that the seemingly "strange" behavior does not mean that their parent does not love them.

### **Children and Reunion**

Make reunion a family event; mom and dad can vacation alone later. Expect some anger and insecurity from the children. Talk about the negative feelings as well as the good ones. The returning parent might arrange a date with each child to reestablish the relationship. He or she may have to court the children, as well as his or her partner. Spend as much time as possible as a family, without outsiders, at the beginning. Postpone visits with relatives and dinner parties with friends for a few days.



## FAMILY RESOURCE LINK

### TOPIC: Preparing Children for Parental Deployment

**Discussion:** Deployment of forces in short/long-term situations places soldiers under heavy work demands to prepare unit equipment for movement and to get their personnel records in order. Unit leaders are not always able to give them predictable “family time” before departure. Recurrent false starts sometimes keep many soldiers and families from bringing closure to their “good-byes.”

**Lessons:** Deployment farewell practices are a significant command issue affecting morale. Many soldiers and spouses have no time or training in how to manage deployment departure from children or one another. Commanders who are attuned to these family concerns are able to allocate some free time to their soldiers and enhance the morale and cohesiveness of their unit.

- ◆ Soldiers need time to devote genuine attention to their children and the anxieties they hold. Their perceptions and concerns are very real. The disruption of the family during deployment can have continuing effects on how children see themselves and the world in which they live. It can affect their performance in school and their response to authority.
- ◆ To help children cope with the absence of a deployed parent, the parent should talk with each child individually; explain simply and honestly what is going to happen; talk about where the parent is going, why, and what he or she will be doing (using a map or globe); talk about what the child will be doing during the separation; prepare the child for the soldier’s absence at events (such as ball games) parents normally attend; talk about when the soldier expects to be home in terms of special occasions; and remind the child of previous separations and happy reunions.
- ◆ Spouses should help children give the deploying parent personal items they’ve made to take along or to decorate a suitcase or locker. Also, they should help the children put together a survival kit of family photos, stationery, and books.
- ◆ Children should be included in family good-byes at the point of departure. If possible, let the children be present as the soldier boards the aircraft or ship to see how the soldier will travel. Letting them see the parent deploy gives them a greater sense of reality and reduces fantasies.

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## The Seven Myths of the Absent Father

Leonard J. Lexier, M.D., has identified seven common themes that typify the myths parents use to cope with the stress of father absence. (Some of these myths may apply equally well to mother absence.) These myths and consequences are described below. Awareness of these myths and their consequences can provide a foundation for pertinent family programs and are useful for FRG volunteers to understand. Consider including them in an FRG workshop on separation.

*Myth #1: Physical separation means emotional disengagement. Fathers are singled out, both by themselves and by families, as the cause and cure of many childhood disturbances.*

It is difficult to reconcile love of work and love of family, but it is especially difficult for fathers when their work entails physical separation. Analysis of the most successful military families reveals the common ability of the spouse to keep the father emotionally present at home during periods of physical separation. These mothers and fathers also have noncompetitive relationships. Fathers, even though physically separated, maintain an active and highly emotionally charged relationship with their children. The success with which a father's interest and his loving attachment are communicated to the child in large measure dictates the outcome of the child's emotional development.

If a disturbance arises requiring psychological evaluation and intervention, one of the most common fantasies heard from fathers is that a change in location or assignment will provide the "cure." This is a reflection of the guilt felt that somehow the father, and by extension the military, caused the problem in the first place. Dr. Lexier has observed fathers who leave active duty out of concern for their families, only to discover that this was neither the cause nor the cure. As a result, they now have an additional burden of job dissatisfaction.

*Myth #2: Anger is not an acceptable part of a child's love relationship with the father.*

When faced with the upset over the father's impending separation, the direct verbal expression of anger is not tolerated by many of the fathers, nor is the anger seen as a normal reflection of the child's

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Analysis of the most successful military families reveals the common ability of the spouse to keep the father emotionally present at home during periods of physical separation.

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love. This can lead to the anger being displaced into other parental relationships, especially onto adults at school. Returning fathers do not anticipate that the process of reunion would release feelings of anger associated with the initial separation. They have little ability to predict this reaction nor can they understand this behavior. They tend to see the behavior as defiance of teacher or parental authority and challenge to the father's position. A wise father will recognize and accept these expressions of angry feelings for what they are and tolerate them as natural and normal.

*Myth #3: "You have to be there when the keel is laid but not at the launching," that is, the father's presence is not necessary to the child's growth and development.*

This myth is frequently coupled with the idea that fathers play an insignificant role in the mental development of their children. The net effect that these myths have had for some men is that they feel more like uncles to their children than fathers. This was especially true for soldiers during the Vietnam period, when tours extended for periods of time of up to 13 months.

*Myth #4: The human mind, in terms of feelings, works like a wall switch that is either "on" or "off."*

This myth says the human psyche has the ability to make almost instantaneous adjustments to different situations, much like an on-off light switch.

It would be more accurate to compare the mind to a rheostat or dimmer switch. How fast a person adjusts to changes in his or her environment depends a lot on his or her personality and emotional makeup. Often, following an extended deployment, both husband and wife underestimate the amount of time needed to shift back to a normal family environment.

Both expect the other to be well rested, emotionally and sexually available, and eager to pick up the relationship where it left off at the time of deployment. For example, the Navy wives Dr. Lexier studied had no concept of the number of inspections and drills required to bring a nuclear armed and driven ship into port. Wives also had little knowledge of the "channel fever" that lasts the 48 hours before making port.

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Often, following an extended deployment, both husband and wife underestimate the amount of time needed to shift back to a normal family environment.

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Husbands fail to appreciate the intense excitement and anxiety that their return evokes in spouses and children. Some men have described how they would try to get their children out of the way: “Tell the kids that you threw 25 half dollars on the lawn and that they cannot come in until they find all 25. But only throw out 24.” Men’s expectations center on noncompetitive possession of the wife. Some men in this study expected that the children would be sent to neighbors for the first 48 hours after their return. Both husbands and wives expect to adjust to the presence of the other in a few days. Actually, the period of adjustment can take as long as six weeks, depending on the length of separation.

*Myth #5: A good father’s major contribution to the family is being a strict disciplinarian, capable of straightening out problems that arise during his absence.*

The flip side of this myth is the idea of a good mother and wife who allows the returning father to make changes in the family routine so he can reestablish himself as the head of the household.

Fathers and mothers have little sense of how changes in family routine affect their children. Furthermore, they do not see the connection between male children’s negative attitude toward women and the father’s tendency to belittle the woman’s effort to manage the family during periods of father absence.

*Myth #6: Fathers have little to do with the education of children, especially during the elementary school grades.*

This concept has led fathers not to have predeployment conferences with teachers nor familiarize themselves with the anticipated course of instruction that their children will receive. Planned father–teacher conferences via mailed material from the classroom teacher are not arranged, and fathers are called upon only during times of academic or behavioral difficulties.

*Myth #7: Physical affection is not necessary as the children enter pubescence.*

Withdrawal of physical affection at the time of the daughter’s puberty is typically seen as the cause for running away and other antisocial behaviors. Inconsistency of parental expectations and disagreement on rules and limits are associated with many

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behavioral disturbances. Adolescent males who historically over-idealized their father when they were younger have greater difficulties resolving the negative connotation placed on their close emotional relationship with their fathers. Often, the result is manifested as severe school underachievement and dropout, along with heavy alcohol and marijuana use. This is especially true of those adolescents whose fathers had highly successful military careers.

It is obvious that Army fathers have a concern for their children. What they need are programs that enhance the relationships between military parents and their children. Unit leaders, chaplains, and DCA personnel can collaborate in creating programs to enhance fathering skills and therefore improve family life in the Army.

For additional resources and lesson plans dealing with separation issues, see the Operation READY modules, *Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness* and *Homecoming and Reunion*.

For in-depth resources on these issues, contact the Marywood University Military Family Institute on the web: <http://mfi.marywood.edu>.

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## **Wartime Separation of Mothers and Children: Lessons from Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm**

*by Penny F. Pierce Ph.D., RN, Assistant Professor, The University of Michigan School of Nursing, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Catherine L. Buck, M.S.W., The Institute for Social Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan*

### *Executive Summary*

Children whose mothers deployed during the Persian Gulf War (Operations Desert Shield and Storm) experienced a number of social and psychological stressors associated with this life disruption. Despite this experience during the deployment, these children typically did not show evidence of lasting effects. For example, two years later, children whose mothers were deployed did not, as a group, demonstrate more symptoms of stress than children whose mothers were not deployed. When children's adjustment was measured two years after the war, their wartime behavioral problems were not predictive of subsequent behavioral problems. The results of this study indicate that maintaining a stable environment is a key determinant of children's adjustment during wartime maternal separation.

### *Introduction*

An unprecedented number of women were mobilized to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This mobilization captured the attention of the media as mothers in uniform exchanged their farewells with young children and infants. For the first time in our Nation's history, large numbers of mothers of dependent children joined the ranks of soldiers, sailors, and airmen to serve their country in time of war.

Throughout the media, concerns were raised about the effects that such a separation might have on the servicemembers' combat readiness and the physical and emotional welfare of the children left

behind. At the time, there was little information about maternal wartime separation and children's well being.

This study was conducted, in part, to describe the impact of a mother's military deployment on her children by providing a variety of information about the experience. Data were collected from 263 mothers (71% enlisted and 29% officers) who ranged in age from 19 to 51 (mean age of 34) with an average of two children (mean age was 7 years). The study was conducted two years after the war. Data were collected about events at the time of the war, about children's responses to those events, and about their adjustment by the time the study took place.

We now have important information about the type and number of changes in children's lives during the war, the amount of difficulty mothers experienced in arranging care for their children, as well as the symptoms of distress exhibited by these children.

### *Changes in Children's Lives*

Unlike previous wars when fathers left the family and mothers retained the task of providing a stable home life, many children of Desert Shield and Storm mothers experienced exceptional disruptions in their lives and daily routines. One focus of this research was on the changes in children's lives and their reactions to those changes.

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## *Difficulty Providing for Children*

The disruptions in children's lives and routines were stressful not only to the children but also to the mothers who had struggled to make hurried arrangements. Providing adequate care and supervision often meant placing the child with the mother's ex-husband, parent, or adult sibling in another geographic area. Mothers were asked how difficult it had been to arrange comprehensive care for their children during their absence.

Comprehensive care was assessed across several domains: financial, physical, emotional, social, and educational. The study also explored the conflict mothers experienced between providing adequate care and fulfilling military responsibilities.

## *Children's Behavioral Adjustment*

The measure of children's behavioral stress used in this research evaluated anxiety, tension, aggression, impulsivity, withdrawal, social conflict, inattention and inability to concentrate, nervousness, restlessness, impatience, sadness and depression, explosive or unpredictable behavior, frustration, irritation, and worrying.

## *Implications for Family Support Before, During, and After Deployment*

The study of war-related stressors and the adjustment that follows can add to our general understanding of how military families can best be supported to remain intact and psychologically healthy. Understanding the factors that contribute to both successful and unsuccessful adjustment is essential before we can provide family support during turbulent separations and reunions. *The results of this study indicate that maintaining a stable environment is a key determinant of children's adjustment during wartime maternal separation.*

This study suggests five ways to work toward this objective:

1. Support services traditionally provided for spouses could be made available to extended family members caring for children of deployed mothers. This would allow servicemembers to perform their duties with less anxiety about children they have left behind.
2. Non-military family members may need specialized support to be able to fully utilize existing resources. This is particularly important for Reserve and Guard members who may not live near a military installation where resources are readily available.
3. Outreach programs would be extremely useful to non-military family members who find themselves in the position of having to negotiate the personal affairs of the deployed mother.
4. Predeployment briefings to designated family members regarding the psychological care of the child would be invaluable.
  - ◆ Assisting caregivers in providing age-dependent information concerning the mother's location, job, and safety would be very helpful in reducing some of the anxieties children have.
  - ◆ Providing guidance on ways to ease the transition of children who have to leave their home and stay with a relative would be particularly useful.
5. Use demographic and deployment-related factors to identify families for whom special interventions may be needed. Factors significantly related to an increase in children's behavioral stress responses include:



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- ◆ Children whose mothers were deployed to the combat theater
  - ◆ Families with more than one child
  - ◆ Extended length of deployment to the combat theater
  - ◆ Multiple disruptions in the child(ren)'s lives
  - ◆ Children of Reserve or Guard mothers
  - ◆ Children over the age of 8

The results of this study suggest that any effort to reduce the disruptions in children's lives when mothers are called to duty are likely to reduce the negative impact of the separation on the well being of dependent children. Other efforts toward providing instrumental help, such as childcare, financial support to cover additional expenses, and emotional support in caring for the children should be addressed. Parental strain that accumulates from feelings of guilt and the burden of deployment-related family stressors contributes to the poor mental health of the mother, which in turn, adversely affects the children's well being.

This study, in its entirety, is available through the Marywood Military Family Institute's website (<http://mfi.marywood.edu>). *The Research Digest, Volume 2. No. 2.*



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## **Backgrounder: Dealing with Separation**

*by Dr. Linda Alpert*

Many mothers dread the long separations from their husbands that is part and parcel of life in the military. [This applies to husbands anticipating their wives' leaving, too.] Why? Listen to what Mary Ellen had to say: "I have trouble with my children when my husband is away on assignment. They just won't listen to me like they do to him. When he's home, anytime the kids won't obey me, he steps in and makes them mind. When he's away, they just run wild."

Mary Ellen is not alone. "My kids won't listen" is the cry from Connecticut to California. Let's set the record straight right now. Moms are every bit as capable as dads at effectively disciplining kids. The problem is that through the decades of "wait until your father gets home," many dads have developed discipline strategies that many mothers haven't learned to use. Let's look at some of these differences.

Men tend to dispense with words and action quickly; women tend to talk, nag, cajole, plead, remind, threaten, and bribe. But words are weak discipline tools. Using words to make kids mind is like trying to steer your car with your horn; it just won't work.

Another ineffective parenting technique moms are prone to use is the "rescue operation." Rescuing moms bring their kids' forgotten lunches to school, drive kids to ball practice when they miss the bus, take out the garbage themselves when the kids have gone to bed without doing it. The intention of these moms is usually laudable; they want to help their kids out of a tight jam. But the effect rescuing behavior has on kids overall is negative.

Overly sympathetic moms make the mistake of relaxing all the rules in times of stress, and long separations certainly qualify as stressful periods. All misbehavior is excused because the kids are under pressure, or unhappy, or upset. Mom does so much to compensate for kids' unhappiness that she robs them of the opportunity to learn to cope with stress while continuing to act appropriately in the world.

When you stop excusing, bailing, rescuing, and talking too much and start taking appropriate action, you will find that you can discipline your kids as well as dad.

Like many parents, you may need to learn what actions are appropriate and effective for coping with today's children. Pick up one of the many books available on the subject, or attend one of the excellent parent training programs offered by schools, family service centers, agencies, and religious organizations around the country. Group programs provide an excellent peer support group for adults as they learn new parenting skills.

Once you stop talking and take action, do it all the time. Don't rely on your husband to do it when he's around. Share the responsibility. In so doing, your kids will get used to the idea that mom means business when they step out of line, whether dad is home or away.

While dad is away on assignment, you'll also want to take some steps to help kids cope with the long separation. Helping your kids do this begins before dad leaves. With the whole family together, mark the dates dad will be away on a large hanging calendar. Once he is gone, take time each evening to mark off the day that is ending.

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Count how many days dad has been gone to look ahead to his return. Relate the remaining days to tangible events in a child's life. "Dad will return in 50 more bedtimes." "After you see 12 more Cosby shows, Dad will be back." The calendar and references make time concrete and understandable for kids.

A map placed by the calendar makes it easy for kids to understand where dad is. Attach the map to corkboard or a bulletin board and use marking pins to show dad's location on any given day. You could even pin a wallet-size picture of dad to the map at the appropriate locations.

A way to help your kids before dad leaves is to make special good night and good morning tapes with personal messages and stories for each child to listen to. These tapes could be placed with a small, inexpensive tape recorder on a table next to each child's bed.

Beside each bed, too, place a recent picture of the child alone with dad. Add a small personal memento of Dad's to reassure your child that he will be coming home. It could be a favorite tie, a piece of jewelry, or even a knick-knack that your kids know is important to dad.

While your husband is away, make him a real part of your daily life. Take a few minutes after dinner and have everyone contribute a few words about their day in a letter that will be mailed off once a week. If you prefer, make a "talking letter" with an audiotape. Accumulate a "family newsbox" in which kids put samples of their papers and art work brought home from school, placemats from restaurants if you eat out, news about the family pet, short summaries of family activities, even new jokes or riddles that someone has learned. Imagine the fun the whole family will have when dad returns and you look together through everything in the newsbox.

Most important of all, you can encourage the kids to share their feelings related to their father's absence. Unexpressed feelings often appear disguised as aggression and inappropriate behavior. The more the feelings can be voiced, the easier it is for kids to accept them and function normally. At different times, they may express sadness, anger, loneliness, and resentment. Don't ever demand they be "strong" and hide tears. Listen to them; put your arm around them, and reassure them that whatever they feel is okay.

Another way to help your children during long separations is to increase what I like to call the "4 A's of Parenting": attention, appreciation, acceptance, and affection. Attention means "quality time" spent listening, talking, and doing things together. Appreciation is expressing thanks for specific tasks and behavior contributed toward the well being of the family. Acceptance implies letting kids know that they are liked just the way they are now, however imperfect that may be. And affection refers to all the physical and verbal ways you demonstrate your love for your children.

You can never give too much of the 4 A's. You can't spoil your child by listening too much or expressing love too often. During separations, you can double the A's, triple them, go as high as you like. But at the same time, remember to take appropriate action when the kids misbehave.

A special kind of support for separated families is a "best friend family," another family with kids approximately the same age as yours whose dad is also away on assignment. The purpose of this family is fun and support. Loneliness is decreased when we can play and talk with others in similar circumstances. Share meals often. Plan enjoyable weekend excursions, and celebrate birthdays, holidays, and special occasions with each other. Encourage the kids to talk openly about their feelings for their fathers and about

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the separation. Such sharing will happen naturally if you look at each other's maps, calendars, and family newsboxes. The long separations won't seem quite so harsh when there are others to share the wait.

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## A FAMILY SEPARATION WORKSHOP

**S**eparation of family members due to deployments and extended unaccompanied tours is stressful. Individual family members are subjected to different worries, fears, and anxieties before, during, and after these separations.

The soldier and his or her family (children as well as spouse) need to be aware of the problems likely to arise as a result of a separation and prepare for these problems to be better able to cope with them. An FRG-sponsored family separation workshop is a good way to prepare soldiers and their families for this challenge.

Ideally, soldiers and their families should attend the workshops as a group. This may not always be possible, but hopefully, at least the soldier or the spouse will attend so at least one adult member of the family is exposed to the ideas and concepts that will be presented.

Workshops should be held in the evenings. This will require childcare facilities for preschoolers since the families will be attending the workshops as a unit. A maximum of four evening sessions, or fewer, will minimize the time the family must spend in the structured workshop environment.

Avoid a paternalistic approach. The workshop should be treated as a review for those who have been through separations before and as a refresher in common sense for first-timers. Avoid lecturing.

The goal of the workshops is twofold:

- ◆ to make the soldier and the family aware of the problems likely to be encountered before, during, and after separation; and
- ◆ to prepare the soldier and the family to deal with these problems as they arise, improving their ability to cope with the stresses of separation.

On completion of the workshop, the participants should:

- ◆ be aware of the various stresses and problems likely to occur before, during, and after an extended family separation and be able to identify at least the major ones;

- ◆ through improved communication skills, be more aware of the other family members' reactions to the separation, resulting in a more open dialogue between family members regarding their true feelings about the separation and how it is affecting them personally;
- ◆ be able to cope with the problems associated with separation by using the skills acquired in the workshops in the areas of improved communications skills, ability to combat boredom and loneliness, better planning, and minimizing role conflict during and after the separation; and
- ◆ be aware of the resources available to family members during separation in case of emergency or other personal needs.

Begin with an overview of the workshop schedule as a whole. Explain how each phase of the separation and reunion cycle will be covered. Then explain the agenda for the day's program.

In a pre-separation workshop, each spouse might fill out a sheet listing the strengths of his or her partner that the writer feels will enable the partner to handle the separation. A short, voluntary discussion of these lists may follow if time permits. Then each spouse might list his or her own fears or anxieties of the upcoming separation, again followed by a short discussion of these points.

Role playing can be a useful technique in a postdeployment workshop. Have the group view a short videotape on separation and reunion. Check with your local Army Community Service office or unit POC on the availability of videotapes or other audiovisual instructional material. This can help participants become more aware of their partner's feelings toward the separation, how they view their partner, and what fears they both harbor. Ask for volunteers to participate. Afterward, list feelings, and discuss ways to handle the situation.

Here is a role-playing example, with parts for a female spouse and a male soldier.

*You are a 23-year-old female married to a 25-year-old staff sergeant. He has just returned from a one month deployment, and you are going through a period of readjusting to one another.*

Video resources on these subjects are available as part of the Operation READY materials. Ask for the videos entitled, *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles, Coping with Stress, and Making Your Reunion Work.*

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*Until he deployed, your husband handled all of the family finances. He gave you a household allowance, and if you needed more you had to go to him and ask. You really had no idea of how the rest of the family finances were disbursed and were in the dark when it came to money matters.*

*During the deployment, you took on the routine chores of banking and bill paying and became responsible for most of the family's finances. You enjoyed the job, did it well, and also planned on retaining it after your husband returned.*

*On his return, your husband tells you that he wants to go back to the old system of giving you an allowance while he resumes the responsibility for the books. You see this as unfair and resist. It all comes to a head one evening when you are writing checks to pay the monthly bills and he comes in and confronts you, demanding that you give up your role of family financial manager.*

Here is the scenario from the soldier's point of view:

*You are a 25-year-old staff sergeant and have just returned from a one month deployment. Before you left, you handled all of the family finances on a regular basis, and your 23-year-old wife had virtually nothing to do with controlling the family budget.*

*While you were gone, it was necessary for her to assume responsibility for the routine, everyday financial affairs of the family such as bill paying and handling the savings accounts. You've returned and decided to take over the family responsibilities once again. Your wife resists and claims she did a good job while you were gone and sees no reason why she has to relinquish her position.*

*You view this as a threat to your control of the family purse strings and demand that she give up control of the family finances. She still resists. It all comes to a head one evening when you confront her while she's writing checks for the family bills.*

Summarize major points at the end of each workshop session. At the end of this chapter is an evaluation form for use in getting feedback from workshop participants.

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## HOME COMING

by Celeste McCall

**W**e expect to react to reunion with joy, but it also brings anxiety and represents a period of readjustment that can be difficult. These suggestions (adapted from material in the *Army Times*) should help. Again, they can be the subject of an FRG meeting or workshop.

Approximately two weeks before the soldier returns home, both soldiers and family members will begin to experience anxieties. Here are some of the questions that run through their minds:

- ◆ Will everything still be the same?
- ◆ Will she (he) welcome me with open arms?
- ◆ Do they still need me?
- ◆ Will he notice that I did a good job taking care of the family?
- ◆ Will I be able to continue my class and go out with my friends?
- ◆ Will Dad (Mom) be angry with me?

During the unwinding time, after the soldier returns, there is bound to be some friction. Both husband and wife need a little time alone to sort out the readjustment process.

The soldier, especially, has been surrounded by people the entire deployment and may feel more need to be alone than the spouse, who may have had more than enough time on her or his hands. Being aware of each other's needs is crucial to a smooth reunion.

Here are some tips for spouses on how to cope with those "reunion blues":

- ◆ Acknowledge that there is nothing wrong with feelings of discomfort or uneasiness.
- ◆ Expect your soldier to be different. Think how much you have changed. So has the soldier. Remember that he or she has been subject to daily regimentation and routine and may rebel against schedules and preplanned events. Leave some room for spontaneity.
- ◆ Expect your soldier to have trouble sleeping for a while. He or she may be used to certain sounds or to the presence of other people in a barracks.
- ◆ The soldier might not have been behind the wheel of a car for quite a while. Go ahead and drive home.
- ◆ Don't be defensive about the way you've handle the children. Discuss any criticisms calmly.
- ◆ Expect that it will take time to reestablish sexual intimacy.
- ◆ The soldier may want to celebrate the return home with a spending spree. If you can't afford it, hold tight to purse strings. The urge to spend will pass.
- ◆ Don't grill your partner about real or imagined affairs. Don't poke around his or her belongings looking for "clues." Questioning your mate about infidelity can only destroy trust between the two of you. Swallow your curiosity.
- ◆ Expect the soldier to be surprised or hurt that you've coped so well alone. Reassure your spouse that he or she is needed, without giving up your independence.



- ◆ Communicate before the soldier returns. Sharing feelings and concerns about his or her return in the last letters will help clear the air and give you time to handle those feelings before reunion.
- ◆ Take things slow and easy. Perhaps recalling how the relationship first started will help; again, share this with him or her in that last letter.
- ◆ Communicate soon after your soldier returns: Ask him or her not to “take over,” especially with the children; allow him or her to gradually assume the original role. Let the soldier know what family rituals continued while he or she was gone and what new ones may have started.
- ◆ Keep a journal of events and feelings during those last weeks when no mail is exchanged. This can update the soldier more readily than trying to recall everything at once.
- ◆ When talking with the soldier, don’t be too quick to analyze what he or she is saying—simply listen.
- ◆ Let the needs of the family as a whole come first. It is very important that the children have “quality time” with the soldier right away. After a reasonable time, a few days or weeks, plan that second honeymoon, and arrange to have someone take care of the children for two or three days.
- ◆ Take it easy on the children, especially where discipline is concerned. It’s best for children to have a constant routine, so let existing rules stand. Don’t barge in as the “heavy”; wait to negotiate any changes.
- ◆ Don’t try to alter the financial affairs. Chances are your spouse has been handling them fine. Remember that prices have probably risen during your absence. Don’t try to second guess your spouse’s decisions. Assume that he or she made the best decisions at the time.
- ◆ Sex might be awkward with your spouse at first. Talk it over. Physical sex may not be what your partner needs at this time.
- ◆ Be willing to spend some time cuddling, talking, and getting reacquainted. Don’t grill your partner about infidelity.
- ◆ Expect your spouse to be different. He or she is a more confident and independent person. How did you feel the first time you negotiated a loan or fixed a car or made a major decision all by yourself? Remember, the fact that he or she has shown the ability to cope alone does not mean that your mate wants to take on all responsibilities and shut you out.
- ◆ Expect your spouse to be a little envious of your travels, so go easy on the descriptions of seven-course Asian banquets or German beer fests. Bring a gift.

Now, here are some tips for the returning soldier:

- ◆ Don’t disturb a family setup that has been working well. It’s best to ease back into the system gradually. Try to enjoy being an “honored guest” for a while.
- ◆ Don’t ask right away to pack the kids off to a relative or friend so the two of you can have an intimate reunion. It’s vital to reaffirm your bond with your children. Later, the two of you can slip away for a “second honeymoon.”

See the Operation READY module entitled *Homecoming and Reunion* for additional lesson plans and resources related to redeployment and reunion.



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## REUNION SEMINAR

**D**eployments are difficult times for the whole family. Understanding some of the dynamics of family relationships can be helpful when reunion time comes. Reunion is sometimes the most difficult part of deployment. Reality rarely matches our expectations.

Family members tend to fantasize about how good reunion will be in order to get through the deployment period. The soldier looks forward to returning to a loving family, super sex, peace and quiet, and a good home-cooked meal. The spouse at home cleans in preparation for reunion and plans a special meal. A wife may buy a new outfit in expectation of the return of a loving husband who will relieve her of responsibility for the kids. Reality, in contrast, may mean a fussy four-year-old who spills milk six times at the reunion meal; a husband who doesn't notice the new outfit; or a spouse who forgot to make the car payment while the soldier was gone.

A reunion briefing or seminar to prepare soldiers and their families for what to expect can lessen the shock and stress of reunion. This section gives a suggested outline of points that a reunion briefing might address.

*The RDC, FRL, FRG leader, or trained volunteers can give this briefing. Others, such as ACS, Social Work Services, unit chaplain, or Family Life Chaplain have similar briefings they can present.*

- A. All anticipation of reunion isn't positive. Be prepared for this.
  - 1. Old problems don't go away. If they were not resolved before deployment, they will still be there.
  - 2. New hurts (real or imagined) often arise. New anger may crop up during separation. Letters may not have gotten through, or there may be disagreement with the decisions made by the spouse remaining at home.
  - 3. Fidelity may be an issue.
- B. Mixed feelings about reunion are normal.
  - 1. You may be happy to see each other but each resent the other. Avoid competition over "who had it worse."

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A reunion briefing or seminar to prepare soldiers and their families for what to expect can lessen the shock and stress of reunion.

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2. Each spouse wants the other to take care of him or her.
  3. Both want to be together, but they both also need space to be alone.
  4. The spouse at home became used to his or her own routine and way of doing things, while the soldier had to abide by the Army routine—where there is a right and wrong way of doing everything.
- C. It is normal to “pigeonhole” your feelings during deployment; this is an emotional survival tactic.
1. The soldier buries (or suppresses) his or her feelings so as not to miss the family too much.
  2. The spouse suppresses his or her feelings in order to get through the lonely nights.
  3. It takes time to open up to our feelings and to feel the love again.
    - a. For husbands, developing loving closeness with the children may take time.
    - b. Wives may not be as responsive sexually at first; this may take some time, too.
    - c. Kids may be angry with dad or mom for going away. They may not let you pick them up or get close at first.
- D. When reunion expectations fall short of reality, there are steps you can take.
1. Recognize the problems. Awareness is half the battle. Now that you are aware of the situation, you can change it.
  2. Talk about it without blaming the other person. Try to see some humor in the situation. Realize there will be some awkwardness and that it’s okay to discuss your feelings.
  3. Give each other physical and emotional space. Don’t pressure your wife into sex or your children into talking. Give your family time to get used to your presence, and be ready to talk.
  4. Have good communication.
    - a. Remember that the message sent isn’t always the message received.

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- b. Our emotions distort the message; one partner or the other may be angry or upset.
  - c. Feedback is necessary; otherwise, we may wrongly assume our messages are understood.

For example, a man might say to his wife, “When’s dinner ready?” She hears, “You’re late cooking; get busy!” What he meant was, “I’m really looking forward to dinner with you.”

Or the wife might say, “I don’t have enough money to buy groceries.” He might hear, “You don’t make enough.” What she meant was, “I forgot to cash a check.”

- 5. Nonverbal communication is as powerful as verbal and usually says more than one might be willing to state verbally.
  - a. Walking in the door, sitting down and watching TV without saying anything is still communicating.
  - b. A powerful message is being sent, but it may be an ambiguous one.
  - c. Negative feelings should be put into words to allow the other person to deal with your feelings. Otherwise we can avoid responsibility for these.
  - d. Your tone of voice must match your words to convey the right message. No matter how hard you try, your voice will betray your emotions.

For example, depending on our tone of voice, we can say, “You look great!” and either be sincere or mean just the opposite.

- 6. Remember that men and women sometimes communicate differently. For example, a wife is describing her feelings when she says, “I don’t want you to go.” A husband may respond with a factual statement, “You know I have no choice.”

The husband might have shown that he understands the wife’s feelings by saying instead, “I know it’s hard on you, but it’s part of my job.” This type of “feeling response” can often avoid an argument.

- E. Many strategies used in relationships have negative effects.
  - 1. We sometimes talk or think our way into being angrier about a situation than we need to be.

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2. We may resort to labeling or name-calling—categorizing someone in a totally negative manner (“You jerk!”) while forgetting all about his or her many positive traits.
  3. We may think we can mind-read and assume we know why a person acted in a certain way, even believing they were just trying to hurt or get back at us. (“She is trying to drive me crazy.”)
  4. We may also think we can tell the future, believing that because something happened in the past that it will continue. (“He’ll never change.”)
  5. We may exaggerate the importance of a negative event rather than being mildly annoyed over an inconvenience. (“I can’t stand it.”)
  6. We make “should” statements, translating preferences into demands. (“Because I said so.”) This causes feelings of injustice, self-righteous anger, and vengeance.
- F. To combat “self-angering” thoughts and overcome reliance on negative strategies, try positive ones instead.
1. Avoid labeling by focusing on the behavior, not the personality. (“I don’t like her complaining about the Army.”)
  2. Avoid trying to guess about motives and intentions. (“I don’t know why she’s doing this.”)
  3. Remember that nobody knows the future. Negative predictions can become self-fulfilling prophecies; if you don’t think things will get better, they probably won’t. Avoid the words “always” and “never.”
  4. Think carefully about how bad or inconvenient something really is. Is it really the end of the world or just an inconvenience?
  5. Don’t make your preferences into demands on others; don’t assume everyone has to do things your way.
  6. Expect a certain amount of “craziness.” It’s better for your mental health and the health of your relationship. Try to accept your spouse’s behavior, and work out ways to handle the differences.
- G. The incidents of spouse and child abuse increase immediately before and after deployments. The emotional factors associated

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with separation are a major cause. Expectations also play a role. Be aware of this.

1. Your child may not respond to you as you expect.
  - a. The child may have learned to live by different rules while the soldier was away.
  - b. Discipline by example is perhaps the best control you can have on your kids.
  - c. You will have to readjust to being around kids again; giving orders as though still in the field does not make for an open and happy family.
2. Recognize the signs of child abuse.
  - a. Disciplining that leaves marks or bruises, or hitting a child on the face or head are definitely abuse.
  - b. Emotional abuse (involving name-calling, threatening, and so on) can be more damaging than physical abuse.
3. Recognize the forms that spouse abuse can take.
  - a. Physical battering may be involved.
  - b. Sexual abuse (including marital rape) also constitutes abuse.
  - c. Psychological abuse (threats or harassment; more than an argument) is another form of abuse.
  - d. Destruction of property or pets is also abuse.
4. Recognize the causes of spouse abuse.
  - a. Concerns about fidelity may be involved.
  - b. The returning soldier may resent changes made while the soldier was gone.
  - c. Your spouse may be doing some things differently now, and you want to have more control.
  - d. Husbands may resent their wives becoming more independent.
  - e. Each spouse may want his or her needs met immediately.

The above material will work best if it is combined with interactive exercises that allow those attending to participate and explore their feelings rather than just listening passively. For examples, see the

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section on family separation workshops, which appeared earlier in this chapter, and the *Homecoming and Reunion* module of the Operation READY materials. Some material suggested earlier in this chapter for predeployment briefings may also be useful at reunion.

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## WORKSHOP EVALUATION\*

1. Did you understand the goals and objectives of the workshop? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. In your opinion, were those workshop aims met? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
3. If you answered NO to either 1 or 2, please elaborate below:
  
4. Circle the word that best describes the overall effectiveness of the workshop.  
Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding
5. Based on your response above, what suggestions do you have for improving the workshop?
6. How did you benefit from this workshop?
  
7. Did the workshop meet the needs of the overall audience? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
8. Please rate the trainer's presentation by circling the most appropriate response.  
Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding
9. What are your comments about the trainer's presentation?
  
10. If you were the next trainer to present this workshop, how would you improve it?

\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses if necessary.





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# 4

## Starting a Family Readiness Group Program

*Responsibilities and activities of a typical Family Readiness Group program for those leading or facilitating FRG development, especially those starting new programs*

- ◆ **Are You Ready?**
- ◆ **A Successful Start**
- ◆ **FRG Formation and Participation**
- ◆ **Organization**
- ◆ **Roles and Positions within the FRG**
- ◆ **Summary**
- ◆ **Successful FRGs in the Army Today**
- ◆ **Family Readiness Group Questionnaire**



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## ARE YOU READY?

**M**any deployments are announced in advance. This knowledge can, and sometimes does, lead to complacency. It leaves the soldier with a false sense of security—the feeling that there is always time to take care of family needs before he or she deploys.

The high percentage of announced deployments may tend to blind soldiers, families, and the chain of command to the real need for an ongoing, effective family support system—one that provides for the needs of the family while the soldier is away but also emphasizes the need for total family readiness.

But the possibility remains that the phone could ring in the middle of the night with orders for the soldier to be ready to take off to an undisclosed destination for an unknown length of time. Or the soldier could wake up to a situation that leaves no time to prepare.

Just suppose it's 3:25 a.m. on Christmas day. The phone rings. The message is short. The soldier hangs up the phone and calls the next person in the alert chain to pass on the word. Fifteen minutes later he or she is out of the driveway with all military gear in the back seat of a car. The soldier's spouse rolls over and goes back to sleep thinking, "Another stupid practice alert!"

However, for the spouse, the uncertainty of when that phone might ring and the chance of the soldier really going on a mission causes all kinds of hidden fears to surface. The "what if?" question produces a great deal of stress.

Perhaps the night before things had not been exactly as this couple had planned at home—dinner burned, and they squabbled with each other and with the kids. Being on alert status, even when it is not the real thing, creates its own anxieties—the pressure creates emotional stress.

The soldier drives away from his or her quarters, promising to make it up to their spouse when they get back. As the spouse drifts off to sleep, he or she decides that "we will kiss and make up" when the soldier returns home that evening.

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The purpose of an FRG is to ease the strain and possible traumatic stress associated with military separation for both the family and the soldier.

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But what if this was not a practice alert? What if it were the real thing? Would this soldier's family be prepared? Did he or she leave home in a good frame of mind? Do both the soldier and the spouse have a handle on the family's financial situation? Are both satisfied that they have taken care of all household problems? Can the spouse handle emergency situations? Does he or she know how and where to get help? Would this couple be able to spend those last precious hours secure in the knowledge that both have done everything they could to be ready for this moment—physically, emotionally, and mentally?

Family support programs are designed to make sure that these questions can be answered, "Yes" as often as possible. Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) can be key components of these programs.

### **What Is a Family Readiness Group?**

Many different types of support groups exist within the Army community. For the purpose of this handbook, an FRG is a unit- or battalion-affiliated organization of officers, enlisted soldiers, and family members that uses volunteers to provide social and emotional support, outreach services, and information to family members prior to, during, and in the immediate aftermath of family separations (deployments, extended tours of duty, and field-training exercises).

The purpose of an FRG is to ease the strain and possible traumatic stress associated with military separation for both the family and the soldier. The FRG's main objective is to enable a unit's family members to establish and operate a system through which they can effectively gather information, solve problems, and maintain a system of mutual support. FRGs are key to improving a unit's readiness.

FRGs include volunteers and program participants. FRG volunteers are appointed representatives or committee members who are responsible for a variety of FRG projects and activities. A volunteer may be a family member or an active-duty soldier; many are spouses of married soldiers. Program participants are recipients of FRG services who, for example, attend the classes, seminars, and social events that may be sponsored by volunteers.

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### *Value to the Family*

For the family member, a unit's FRG is an effective way of gaining information and support during deployment. Through successful FRG efforts, many spouses have developed a more positive attitude toward themselves, the deployment, and the Army. Involvement in FRG activities may result in acquiring valuable new skills.

### *Value to the Soldier*

For the soldier, it is reassuring to know that family members will receive reliable and friendly support when the soldier is called away. This contributes to a consistent level of performance in the unit, increases the effectiveness of training, and ensures a psychological readiness to fight.

### *Value to the Command*

For the command, a unit FRG increases the level of group confidence, commitment, and predictability among soldiers and improves training. The FRG can enhance unit togetherness and increase unit readiness by institutionalizing self-help and helping family members identify with the unit.

FRGs can help the unit prevent problems within families that impact adversely on soldier performance or reduce unit strength through attrition. This frees up the unit commander's time and conserves other resources (psychological, social, and budgetary). Through the assistance of FRGs, detractors from the military mission can be reduced.

### *Value to the Community*

For the military and civilian communities, an FRG program can help to forestall serious family problems that would place greater demand on community service agencies, such as family violence, alcoholism or drug abuse within the family, adolescent problems and delinquency, child abuse, and broken family units. FRGs are in a position to supply family members with information and referrals about military or civilian community resources and opportunities, and can help families develop self-reliance by sharing coping skills.

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The FRG can enhance unit togetherness and increase unit readiness by institutionalizing self-help and helping family members identify with the unit.

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For the Army, a successful unit FRG program, combined with effective community resources, will make spouses—especially younger ones—feel that they are truly a part of the Army family.

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The FRG can contribute to other Army family programs that enhance the overall quality of community life, such as sponsorship of newly arrived families on post, improved childcare resources, outreach programs for off-post and geographically separated families, prevention of social-psychological isolation among junior enlisted families, rumor control, and support of family members experiencing temporary feelings of stress during deployment.

For the Army, a successful unit FRG program, combined with effective community resources, will make spouses—especially younger ones—feel that they are truly a part of the Army family. That, coupled with a training program that challenges the soldier, makes an unbeatable combination that will assure success in the all-important mission of retaining high-quality servicemembers.

The goals of an FRG program include:

- ◆ becoming an essential part of a military unit’s family support system through activities such as unit activity day, unit family briefings, family meals in the dining facility, and so on;
- ◆ reducing social isolation among family members, especially in the junior enlisted ranks;
- ◆ enabling the members to provide each other with close, personal, mutual support;
- ◆ assisting members to gather important information and access to resources more efficiently and effectively;
- ◆ facilitating and establishing a real sense of community among soldiers and their family members; and
- ◆ enhancing the military family member’s feelings of belonging, control, self-reliance, and self-esteem.

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## A SUCCESSFUL START

This section describes how to get an FRG program started. First steps, possible initial goals, military linkages, and factors important to FRG success are discussed.

FRGs may be established at any level of command but are usually found at the battalion or unit level. Unit representatives and family members should decide whether activities such as meetings and newsletters are best managed at the battalion or the unit level.

### FAMILY RESOURCE LINK

#### TOPIC: Formation of FRGs

**Discussion:** Commanders recognize the need to ensure the stability of families when soldiers are deployed. Their personal commitment and the support of their staffs are important ingredients in the formation of FRGs.

**Lessons:** FRGs can be formed quickly during mobilization or deployment preparations, but they work much better if they are ongoing activities established prior to deployment.

- ◆ Units should participate in the process of establishing FRGs, but the ultimate effectiveness of a group lies in the strengths of the families themselves, the FRG's training, the imagination of FRG leaders, and the initiative of FRG volunteers.
- ◆ FRGs are most effective at battalion and unit levels. They work best when NCO, junior enlisted, or junior officer spouses who have energy, interest, and natural leadership abilities are motivated to serve in leadership roles. These spouses are seen as more readily able to understand the economic and lifestyle problems of soldiers and their spouses.

During a major deployment—especially one involving activation of Reserve Component forces—there is a need for family support for those who do not fit the normal FRG criteria. These include guardians of children whose parents have deployed and active and reserve families of all services who have temporarily moved from military installations and away from rear detachments. Family support for this category should be “purple suited,” accommodating the needs of all military families regardless of active/reserve or service affiliation.

## Forming a Battalion-Level Steering Committee

Initially, a steering committee might be formed at the battalion level. Membership on this committee should include, but not be limited to, the battalion commander, a senior NCO, the battalion FRL, interested key senior spouses of the battalion, a member of the battalion staff, the chaplain, and the military and family members representing each subordinate unit (that is, the company, battery, troop, or separate detachment within the battalion). Its initial tasks could include these:

- ◆ to identify, integrate, and establish possible mutual goals relating to the FRGs;
- ◆ to establish benchmarks for charting the progress and development of the FRGs;
- ◆ to inform staff of the subordinate unit and the battalion about the purpose, function, and structure of the FRG;
- ◆ to recruit volunteers to develop committees to address the goals and needs of the FRG as identified at the meetings;
- ◆ to provide advice and support to companies developing FRGs;
- ◆ to provide volunteers with specific job descriptions;
- ◆ to provide training for volunteers in areas such as communication skills, crisis intervention, problem solving, use of available resources, newsletter production, and other training as determined;
- ◆ to provide rewards and unit recognition for volunteers;
- ◆ to provide facility support for volunteers to effectively carry out their duties; and
- ◆ to serve as a vehicle for information sharing through participation in an FRG forum (composed of representatives from all FRGs on post), an FRG council, or other similar organization at the installation level.

### Resources

See Chapter 5 of this handbook for information on FRGs and volunteer management.

See the Operation READY resource, *The Army FRG Leader's Handbook*.

Check this website:  
<http://www.armyspouse.org>.



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## Unit-Level FRGs (Company/Battery/Troop)

The FRG's goals must incorporate the needs of both the military organization and the family members. In setting goals, the partnership between the Army and its families must be stressed.

To maximize attendance at FRG meetings, it may be necessary to plan two meetings with identical agendas—one in the morning and one in the evening—announcing the date, time, and place of each meeting and including provisions for childcare.

At these meetings, the purpose, structure, and goals of the FRG program should be highlighted. Input from the attendees should be encouraged through surveys, evaluation questionnaires, brainstorming sessions, and so on to identify and prioritize FRG members' needs.

Publicize FRG meetings at formations, staff meetings, spouses' coffee groups, with flyers, and so on. Incentives to reward attendance may include time off from duty for active duty soldiers if family members attend the meeting, competition among units to promote participation, or a free morning following the meeting. Notices can be followed up with telephone calls using the unit roster.

## FRG Linkages

A successful FRG program requires ongoing close cooperation with the affiliated military units. The following information describes four key linkages: the relationship between the FRG and the unit commander; information exchange between the FRG and military unit representatives; the use of unit facilities by the FRG; and the link between FRGs and installation community assistance resources.

### *To the Commander*

First of all, each FRG functions with the express support of its unit commander. Without the active backing of the commander, an FRG may not develop effectively. An FRG's authority flows primarily from the commander's willingness to support volunteers. This support calls for regular meetings with FRG representatives;

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A successful FRG program requires ongoing close cooperation with the affiliated military units.

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however, this function does not require much time on the part of a commander.

The commander needs to have full knowledge of planned FRG activities and easy access to FRG representatives in order to provide guidance, to offer unit resources and facilities to the FRG, and to create a climate of caring for family members and recognition for FRG volunteers.

### *To the Unit*

Secondly, military units are important sources of information for FRGs. The converse is also true. It is important that FRG representatives and military unit representatives—such as command sergeants major, first sergeants, FRLs, rear detachment personnel, unit commanders, executive officers, noncommissioned officers, and chaplains—develop appropriate working relationships in order to establish an efficient information exchange system.

The FRL officer or NCO is key to the FRG in terms of linking the FRG to community-assistance agencies, conducting unit briefings, providing logistical support to the FRG, and assisting with newsletter production. This person also provides updated rosters monthly. The FRG that desires a productive and working relationship with the unit will find this to be an essential linkage.

### *To the Unit Orderly Room Personnel*

Thirdly, unit facilities must be available to the FRG. Access to a meeting place within the unit is an important asset for an FRG at unit and battalion levels. Unit day rooms, conference rooms, lawns, dining facilities and learning centers, as well as chapels, theaters, and other military facilities are the most accessible and acceptable meeting places, depending on the size and function of the group.

Access to unit reproduction capabilities for FRG newsletters and flyers, mailing privileges for FRG materials, and use of unit telephone and audiovisual equipment can greatly assist FRG communication and family awareness. The FRL can facilitate these assets for the FRG.

Unit support of FRG activities through providing space for parties, refreshments, and babysitting services, and through fundraising

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efforts by soldiers and family members can be a basis for positive bonding between the unit and the families for an FRG at the unit level and, at times, across an entire battalion.

### *To the Community*

Finally, the FRG and community-assistance resources should work closely together. In the active Army, each installation has agencies dedicated to the needs of Army families that can support the aims of the unit FRG. Army Community Service can be of assistance in facilitating training of FRG volunteers and linking FRGs to installation services such as chaplains, doctors, and other professionals.

Reserve component FRGs may access resources available in civilian communities where they live and work. Such contacts are encouraged and may be made easier by initiating contact through the State Family Program Office of the National Guard, the local National Guard Armory, or the local Army Reserve Center for Army Reservists.

FRGs at the unit level should be encouraged to make effective use of community resources on behalf of their family members and to broaden their ties to the military community, while retaining a primary affiliation with the deploying unit and its membership.

### **Keys to Success**

Careful and early preparation and ongoing reevaluation are the keys to success in unit deployment family readiness efforts that include FRGs. The emphasis in this section is on preparation; the need for ongoing reevaluation of the family readiness system was discussed in Chapter 1.

To be effective, the family assistance plan must be developed and in place prior to a deployment or extended training exercise. A plan contains Army and civilian community agencies and services available to assist families and units during peacetime and training deployments. Agency phone numbers, as well as POC and RDC duties are generally included in the plan. Interaction among FRG leaders, RDC, and the FAC staff during deployment or emergencies is also an important element.

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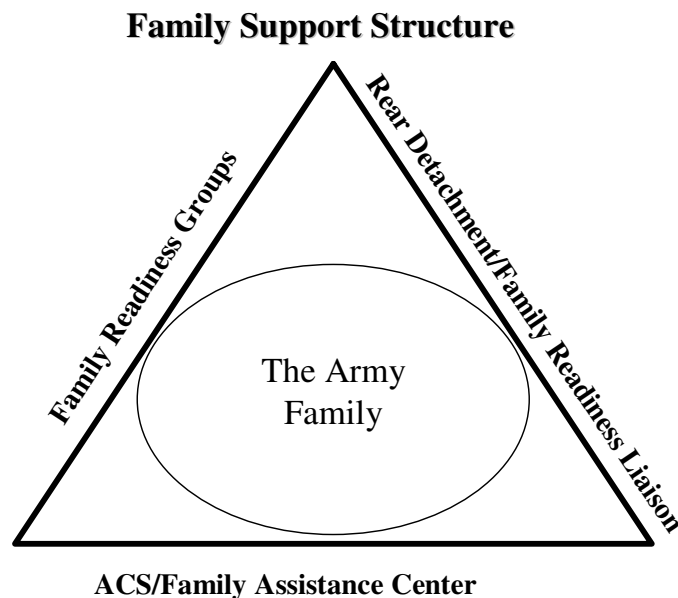
**Reserve Component  
FRGs may access  
resources available in  
civilian communities  
where they live and work.**

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The effectiveness of this system rests on the integration of the three components. The goal is for the FAC staff and the RDC to be back-up resources, with the FRG as the most immediate source of help. Without a functional FRG, family members tend to overwhelm the FAC and RDC with inquiries. This leads to their inability to respond in a timely and adequate manner. If time does not permit development of an ideal plan, identify whatever services the unit can realistically offer, and make them available to soldiers and their families. More credibility and unit cohesion will result from providing a few effective services than from making large commitments that are not kept.

The family support structure, no matter how simple or complex, must be compatible with the support system to be used during mobilization. A deployment could easily escalate into a partial or total mobilization. The family support structure must be viewed as part and parcel of the combat readiness of the entire command.



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## FRG FORMATION AND PARTICIPATION

**C**larification of roles both within an FRG and between FRG representatives and military representatives is essential, especially during deployment situations. These roles need to be established in writing prior to deployment and clearly defined and implemented in both deployment and nondeployment situations. When key members of an integrated system have a role in organizing and evaluating that system, they have an increased desire to see it work.

Participation in the FRG should be strongly encouraged, but it cannot be mandated. When family members understand their need for an FRG, they are more willing to become involved in one. Even when interest is present, the development of a responsive, well-functioning FRG is often a slow process, especially in units that are not facing an impending deployment or extended training exercise. An impending or anticipated deployment creates a coalescing effect by increasing the need felt by family members to bond together to help one another cope with a common “crisis.” Without this “crisis,” a coalescing effect may not be present. This does not mean that the formation of an FRG will be impossible, just more difficult.

Other factors often mentioned in starting and maintaining successful FRG programs are the genuine concern, interest, and willingness of family members to establish and sustain the FRG.

An essential component is family member leadership and participation in organizing and operating the FRG. It is clear that for a unit commander to operate as the FRG leader is counter-productive, and it is deadly to the volunteer spirit of the FRG. However, it is extremely important for the commander to demonstrate and assure active support for and approval of FRG activities.

Early contact of spouses who are new to the unit by leaders or volunteers of the FRG will ensure participation of these families at a later date.

The existence of an executive committee is critical to develop the organizational structure of the whole family readiness system for

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Participation in the FRG should be strongly encouraged, but it cannot be mandated.

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mobilization and deployment, to delineate the respective roles of each component, and to formalize an ongoing command linkage to the FRG and family members for information exchange.

Written appointment orders of FRG leaders at the unit and battalion levels ensure validation of the volunteer position and eliminate confusion when accurate job descriptions are provided.

Formal incorporation of the FRG into the unit's written family assistance plan will provide consistency. When combined with the purpose, goals, objectives, structure, and responsibilities outlined, the FRG is defined as a command program—worthy of the commander's deep interest.

The action level of effort is concentrated around events such as predeployment, deployment, and the immediate postdeployment periods. FRGs provide support to family members and soldiers by offering accurate and helpful information on unit activities and referral assistance to community resources. Activities during this level are geared toward helping family members cope during the separation and bonding with other family members in the unit.

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**Although the FRG must have strong command support and backing, it must belong to the unit FRG members.**

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The sustaining level of effort by the FRG takes place at a reduced degree of interaction between FRG volunteers and family members as well as within the FRG organization. This period occurs mainly during non-deployment periods, but minimal sustainment roles may also operate from time to time during extended deployments. During the sustainment period, FRGs update rosters of family member addresses and telephone numbers; continue regular meetings between FRG representatives and unit leaders; and through group meetings or telephone contacts, the FRG provides welcoming, sponsorship, orientation, and networking support for new family members and families in crisis or transition.

Although the FRG must have strong command support and backing, it must belong to the unit FRG members. They must organize and operate the FRG, with unit support. Without an organized, well-developed, and self-directed structure, an FRG may not survive adverse events, may not maintain an effective and comprehensive family readiness network, may not maintain adequate participation on the part of family members, and may not effectively anticipate and address the issues and concerns important to family members.

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## **Family Readiness Group Volunteer Leadership**

Studies have shown that a variety of volunteer leadership options occur in FRGs. The overriding factor that contributes to the FRG leader's success and group satisfaction is that he or she is truly a volunteer and not assuming the position of leadership merely because of his or her spouse's military position. Commanders are ultimately responsible for unit FRGs, and the commander must approve FRG leaders. Volunteer leaders of FRGs are usually volunteers elected by the group or volunteers who emerge from the group.

Regardless of the method used in designating the FRG leader, leaders and key volunteers should be acknowledged in writing. For example, if the commander's spouse does not play the role of the unit FRG leader, this person can be recognized as an advisor to the FRG and an informal intermediary with senior spouses in the "chain of concern" or command spouse organization within the community. Commanders' spouses may be included in planning and executing programs and activities to the extent they wish to be involved.

Commanders' spouses or their representative participate in command and staff spouse activities and functions, regardless of whether they are the FRG leader. As such, they will be a conduit of information for the FRG. For example, there are various social and coffee groups such as battalion officers or NCO and enlisted spouse groups within units that are not "official." There are also numerous other sub-groups that can form within the unit. Individuals within the FRG may be members of one or many of the various groups at one time that are not necessarily the official FRG.

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## ORGANIZATION

### Formal Structure

There is no “best way” to structure an FRG. The structure should be tailored to the unit, its mission, and the demographics of its family members. There are many different agencies that can help you establish an FRG in your unit. One of the first places to check, once you decide to set up an FRG, is with other units that already have a program in place. Then visit the ACS office at your installation. Reserve component units should contact the Army National Guard State Family Program Coordinator or U.S. Army Reserve Regional Support Command Family Readiness Coordinator through their unit chain of command. These agency representatives can help identify what is already in place and help design a program to meet specific identified unit and family needs. Other places to find out what is available in the local area are:

- ◆ the unit or organization staff,
- ◆ the chaplain in the unit or chapel,
- ◆ the ACS mobilization and deployment section, and
- ◆ the Installation Volunteer Coordinator (IVC).

### Organization Structure

FRGs can be organized to form a communication and support network as follows:

- ◆ unit point of contact,
- ◆ unit volunteer leadership, and
- ◆ battalion volunteer leadership and facilitators.

Each level in the structure is designed to facilitate communication, to ensure contact, and to encourage mutual support. This structure may need to be modified depending on the organization and geographic location of the various components.

FRG structure within the unit consists of the points of contact and unit volunteer leadership. In many cases, the primary focus of FRG activity occurs at the unit level. This is particularly true when group members have a sense of ownership. Army research indicates that FRGs at the lowest unit level are the most successful.



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The quality of FRG activity within a unit will most directly determine its effectiveness. Strong and visible unit command support is essential to ensure that an active communication and support network extends throughout the unit and reaches all family members. Strong unit command support also encourages volunteerism and participation by family members, soldiers, and even single soldiers.

### **Contact with FRG Participants**

Unit POCs initiate and maintain basic contact with family members. Suggested basic contact generally consists of at least one telephone call or visit every two weeks to everyone in the POC's phonetree branch during deployment, and less often, as appropriate, when the soldiers are at home station. This process reduces social isolation and reassures family members that there is a communication, support, and information system operational and at their disposal. Information calls are normally better received than calls merely to "check up on" families. POCs also distribute accurate and timely information, identify family member concerns arising within their groupings, and act to have these concerns addressed in a timely manner at appropriate organizational levels.

During deployments, POCs may become major sources of unit information for family members. They are often the first to know of family concerns and, most often, are available to coordinate support for family members. They are helpful in providing accurate information, in soliciting volunteer assistance, and in reducing stressful fears or countering false rumors.

Several factors determine the number and size of phonetree branches in each unit. These factors include the number of family members in a unit and the number of family member volunteers recruited as POCs. Generally, three to ten phonetree branches will cover company-size units, with six to ten family members in each group. A phonetree branch should not exceed ten families. Larger groups tend to be less cohesive, less personal, overtax the POC's efforts, and develop communication and support gaps. However, FRGs may have to live for a while with a few groups that are larger than desired. This is especially true in the early phases of organization or when there is no immediate crisis. During those times, it may be more difficult to recruit volunteers.

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**Strong and visible unit command support is essential to ensure that an active communication and support network extends throughout the unit and reaches all family members.**

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While groups most often follow the organizational alignment of the associated military unit (i.e., the group is based on the sponsor's unit assignment), some groups have experienced success geographically where large numbers of military families live in one area.

### **Unit-Level FRG Management**

The unit FRG leader and phonetree committee chairperson are the first volunteer leadership roles to fill within an FRG.

FRGs benefit by meeting regularly to organize activities. FRG members:

- ◆ implement FRG activities and a communication support network within the unit;
- ◆ coordinate its activities with the unit chain of command, to include the FRL;
- ◆ form a link with the unit, especially the first sergeant;
- ◆ initiate supportive actions identified by soldiers and families at this level, as needed; and
- ◆ relate soldier and family member concerns to the battalion, when appropriate.

Responsibilities of the FRG leader include:

- ◆ Communicate with the phonetree committee chairperson and/or POCs regularly as information and need dictate during periods of deployment and as needed during the sustainment period. The purpose of these calls is to support the POCs, to ensure that contact within phonetree branches is being maintained, to present frequent opportunities for the transmission of information and the identification of family concerns, to assist POCs in addressing family members' concerns, and to obtain concerns that need to be addressed.
- ◆ Establish and maintain military linkages at the unit level for exchanging pertinent information with unit chain of command, particularly with the FRL.

POCs call FRG leaders as the first step in handling family member issues when they are not sure of the appropriate answer or agency to call. During deployments, FRG leaders

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interface with the RDC and FRL at unit levels to solve problems.

Some FRGs function without needing to organize at the battalion level; however, unit FRGs are often short on resources, influence, and access. Organizing and conducting family member events, getting information and resources, and responding to family member concerns can be taxing for a unit FRG. For example, producing a unit FRG newsletter can be a difficult task when attempted by one unit FRG, but it's a fairly easy task when shared with other FRGs within a battalion.

### **Battalion-Level FRG Management**

Battalion-level FRG representatives serve as the interface between family members and battalion-level military personnel. They gather information and access resources from the battalion and from military and community resource agencies, and they manage and coordinate the activities of the overall FRG. These representatives may organize into a central steering committee and other functional committees to plan overall FRG support.

Battalion-level FRGs may also serve as the interface between unit-level FRGs and the community, although it is certainly appropriate for unit-level FRGs to do so when required. During deployment, battalion-level volunteers may be the first family members to be given official information of importance.

These volunteers should communicate often with all principal unit volunteers during deployment and as needed during the sustainment period when the soldiers are in garrison. The purpose of these contacts is to provide support, ensure continuity of activities, and establish frequent opportunities for the exchange of family member information and concerns.

The frequency of battalion-level FRG meetings should be determined by the tasks to be accomplished and the availability of family member volunteer time. However, key participants in the family readiness program, both military and family member, should meet at least once a month—even during sustainment—to ensure organizational continuity.

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## FAMILY RESOURCE LINK

### TOPIC: Family Readiness Groups

The Army originally called its family support network the “Family Support Group (FSG),” a term found in many references. The concept had early roots among Army families who banded together during war or tours overseas or other isolated locations, to provide information, moral support, and social outlets to their members. The Army focused sharply on family readiness as a result of lessons learned during the 1990–91 Gulf War.

On 1 June 2000, Department of the Army renamed it “Family Readiness Group (FRG)” Army-wide to emphasize the need for readiness and self-sufficiency among Army families in the modern Army.

In this handbook, we go a step farther, emphasizing the critical need for effective FRGs. What we mean by an effective FRG is a family of soldiers and family members who:

- ◆ have strong, caring **leadership**;
- ◆ have an effective **organization** in a positive, friendly environment;
- ◆ love the Army life;
- ◆ work, **train**, and play well together;
- ◆ plan and enjoy **fun activities** and include everyone;
- ◆ **communicate** well and share timely, accurate information; and
- ◆ make Army units and families stronger.

The bold-faced words above are the five **essential ingredients** of an **effective** FRG.

Taken from Operation READY, *The Army FRG Leader’s Handbook*.

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## Informal Structure

An FRG also has an informal structure—a caring network of family members. Through this network, the group can educate and inform themselves regarding things that are important to them as military family members. An FRG is a means not only of supporting family activities during deployment but also of enriching family life on a continuing basis.

The informal FRG structure should involve all family members and should be organized, managed, and directed primarily by them. Everyone within the community, regardless of the military member's rank, is automatically a member, with the opportunity to participate as much or as little as he or she wishes.

All family members should have the opportunity to hold office within an FRG, to participate in projects, and to provide mutual support. All family members should be able to use the group to get to know other family members within the military unit and to join in activities that are mutually beneficial.

Each FRG should set its own goals; here are some typical ones to consider:

- ◆ Conduct monthly meetings at any good, central location on a day and time to be decided by the FRG.
- ◆ Provide speakers or activities in a planned informational program during each monthly meeting, with a mid-program refreshment break.
- ◆ Elect/appoint a phonetree committee chairperson and POCs. They should be given appropriate training prior to beginning regular personal phone contact with each spouse.
- ◆ Elect a newsletter editor to organize and publish a unit FRG newsletter, which will be mailed to all spouses at their homes.
- ◆ Elect a special events committee chairperson to plan, organize, and execute FRG activities and special events.
- ◆ Elect a hospitality/welcome committee chairperson, who is in charge of welcoming all new members and families.

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An FRG is a means not only of supporting family activities during deployment but also of enriching family life on a continuing basis.

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- ◆ Elect a publicity committee chairperson to inform all soldiers and family members in the FRG of all activities.
  - ◆ Elect a fundraiser committee chairperson to manage all FRG fundraising activities.
  - ◆ Elect a childcare committee chairperson to ensure acceptable childcare for FRG meetings and special events.

In addition to the above goals, the FRG should establish, as accurately as possible, a confidential list of each spouse's name, address, and phone number. The phonetree is established from the alert roster, and POCs pass on information to their assigned families.

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## ROLES AND POSITIONS WITHIN THE FRG

**T**he Family Readiness Group provides for the general welfare of family members through mutual assistance and involvement. FRGs develop and operate systems to provide information, solve and manage family problems, welcome and orient new families, create involvement, and prevent isolation. They interact with military family members, the unit commander and the RDC at the unit and battalion levels, and help involve families in unit activities.

FRGs should refer family needs that cannot be met within the FRG to the appropriate unit, installation, or community resources. FRGs provide support to families who remain in the local area while soldiers serve unaccompanied tours, and they assist the unit in developing and evaluating appropriate deployment materials. FRGs help ensure that all family members have deployment information and installation telephone directories.

Sample duties and responsibilities that might be performed in FRGs at either the unit or the battalion level are given below. These are samples only and should not be considered limiting or restricting in any way. Each FRG is different and has different needs. Creativity and innovation, not regulations and stereotypes, are called for. Use these samples with that in mind.

### **Battalion-Level FRG**

**The battalion FRG advisor** recruits potential leaders for the FRG structure and attends initial unit-level FRG meetings, and unit and battalion-level FRG steering committee meetings. This person acts as a spokesperson for the FRG program and acts as advisor to other FRG members, available to and approachable by all of them.

The battalion FRG advisor writes battalion-level news articles for the monthly newsletter and helps proofread the newsletter prior to its going to press. She or he gives battalion information updates at FRG meetings, keeps the RDC informed of FRG happenings, and in general, helps keep all FRG members informed of functions and events.

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FRGs should refer family needs that cannot be met within the FRG to the appropriate unit, installation, or community resources.

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This person also negotiates the use of available resources and helps solve problems at the lowest level. She or he acts as the FRG spokesperson at any special meetings where FRG information is required, contacts out-of-town spouses on occasion, and sends out periodic assessments to FRG members.

The FRG **newsletter editor** holds monthly staff meetings to collect news and discuss the upcoming edition of the newsletter; writes battalion-level news articles; and directs the layout of the material. The newsletter editor assembles the newsletter material and proofreads the final copy, giving it to the advisor and commander to read prior to printing, and delivers the master copy to the appropriate agency for printing. The editor also attends executive committee and FRG meetings.

The FRG **childcare committee chairperson** selects a room with facilities that are adequate to accommodate the children of FRG members during meetings, compiles a list of experienced babysitters, and makes babysitters aware of the parents' and the group's guidelines during FRG meetings. This person arranges babysitters' transportation to and from FRG meetings, periodically checks the nursery during the meetings, distributes refreshments for the children, and pays the babysitters with funds obtained from the treasurer. She or he attends executive committee and FRG meetings.

The FRG **hospitality/welcome committee chairperson** ensures that notes of appreciation are sent to guest speakers and attends executive committee and FRG meetings.

The FRG **treasurer** keeps records of donated money and expenditures, arranges for door prizes during FRG meetings (when applicable), and provides the childcare committee chairperson with funds to pay babysitters. She or he attends executive committee and FRG meetings.

The FRG **secretary** keeps records of all FRG functions and attends executive committee and FRG meetings.

### **Unit-Level FRG**

The **company FRG leader** gets the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all married personnel in the unit from the first sergeant.



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She or he selects a unit newsletter editor for the newsletter staff, selects POCs from spouses in the unit who will make calls to families in their phonetree branch, and selects a unit hospitality/welcome committee chairperson. (These appointments can be made by a vote of the unit FRG, if desired.) The company FRG leader attends battalion-level FRG meetings on behalf of the unit, determines dates for monthly FRG meetings, organizes a unit spouses' telephone tree to distribute information, and notifies the unit hospitality/welcome chairperson of people to be remembered with cards on special occasions.

POCs attend training sessions to learn the best ways of handling problems through social services, phone the unit spouses on a regular basis to let them know the system is working and that they are being thought of and cared for, ask the families if they need assistance, and inform the chairperson of problems. These volunteers also disseminate information to family members and help combat rumors.

The **FRG secretary** attends unit FRG meetings and keeps records of the meetings, especially of any votes taken. The secretary may also assist the newsletter editor in putting together the newsletter (for example, by typing).

The **FRG hospitality/welcome committee chairperson** welcomes all new families to the unit. This person also keeps a calendar of important dates for unit families and sends cards for important events (such as birthdays and births).

Traditionally, the **commander's spouse** has had an important role in FRG programs. Where this is still the case, she or he should be aware that by virtue of the commander's position, other spouses may expect him or her to have far more power and influence with the unit than she or he actually does to get them what they need, want, or demand. Many will assume that if the spouse tells the RDC to do something, it will be done. Where it is possible to do so, the commander's spouse might try to explain to others that the role is to operate from a position of concern, care, and compassion as an Army spouse, not from a position of control, coercion, and command. This is a frustrating and difficult role, but it can be extremely critical; a successful deployment depends in part on spousal support.

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**All soldiers** should encourage their families to take an active part in the Army community and to share details of the heritage and the accomplishments of their unit with their families. It is also imperative that all soldiers be kept well informed with regard to their individual role within their unit during both peacetime and deployment.

Sometimes, because of the nature of the soldier's work, he or she may not be able to discuss certain things at home or answer certain questions. In the course of work, a soldier may come in contact with many operations, documents, and pieces of equipment that are considered classified. Only those persons with a "need to know" are given information about them.

### **LIMIT**

Basic rules for spouses:

- ◆ Don't press your spouse for details of his or her job.
- ◆ Don't gossip to those outside the unit about the unit's schedule or activities, especially deployments.
- ◆ Develop the habit of saying, "I don't know" if you are asked unnecessary questions about the status or mission of your spouse's unit or about his or her job. Rest assured that information will come to you as promptly as possible through your FRG concerning actual deployments.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: FRG Operations and Functions**

**Discussion:** In many units, the operations and functions of FRGs have been thought out in advance of unit deployments. In proactive units, areas that hold the potential of becoming problems to families during the soldier's absence have been addressed, with support actions established to facilitate resolution (for example, what to do if the spouse is locked out of quarters or the family car, how to handle landlord or pay problems).

**Lessons:** FRGs foster an atmosphere of mutual support and togetherness in times of need. However, the extent of FRG support should be realistic. Family members may develop an inappropriate dependency on FRG leaders who exceed their mandate for FRG operations.

- ◆ Commanders of deployable units and rear detachments should clearly define the operational boundaries of FRG activities for FRG leaders. FRGs without boundaries may be subjected to conflicts among volunteers and loss of mutual support within the group.
- ◆ FRGs distribute pertinent information to families and provide a mechanism for family members to get assistance in dealing with common problems. Some assistance may come directly from the FRG, or the FRG volunteer may refer the spouse or guardian to the FRL or to an agency especially equipped to handle specific problems.
- ◆ Disseminating correct and timely information is very important. FRGs should assist or participate with the rear detachment in conducting periodic information briefings. FRGs need help from RDCs/ FRLs in preparing newsletters and paying postage. A reading file for families to review during the week is helpful if they are unable to attend scheduled information briefings. The data in the reading file must be kept current.
- ◆ Databases that produce family support rosters have significant application during a serious training accident or mass casualty situation. Emphasis on completeness and accuracy is essential to assure viable databases.
- ◆ FRGs perform an important function by helping rear detachments and military communities to keep track of family members. During deployments, some family members leave the area to live with family, while others visit relatives or friends and then return to their quarters. This makes 100 percent accountability of family members very difficult for FRLs, rear detachment, and commanders. In overseas areas, this impacts on noncombatant evacuation operations planning.
- ◆ Some commanders are not married and may be less focused on, or have less appreciation for, family support issues. FRGs can be very effective in facilitating a unified effort for the command.
- ◆ For Reserve units, family support may need to be regionally based, with unit-based telephone trees. Family unit activities or social events are needed during nondeployment times to acquaint spouses with other spouses.
- ◆ When phone calls became expensive or difficult, such as in the distances associated with Reserve units, newsletters become very important.
- ◆ Rosters are important tools for FRGs. They are more accurate when the information is gathered as part of unit in-processing. In addition to names, addresses, and phone numbers, rosters may contain information on special problems (such as language spoken or physical disability).
- ◆ Rosters should be transformed into useful "telephone trees" to provide verbal support to FRG members or to transmit valuable information rapidly. Phonetree POCs form positive support relationships by bonding together families or servicemembers in the same unit or platoon.

## SUMMARY

The Family Readiness Group is designed to be useful to family members, soldiers, and military units during periods of normal military life and military crises, reducing stress for both the soldier and family members.

The principal purpose of an FRG program is to enable a unit's family members to establish and operate a system through which they can effectively gather information, solve problems, and maintain a system of mutual support. FRGs have the potential for improving a unit's readiness and can become an essential part of a unit's family support program through activities such as unit activity day, unit family briefings, and battalion or unit family meals.

The success of an FRG is dependent on family members interacting regularly with each other and with military unit representatives. This interaction creates the network that identifies and helps solve family member concerns and issues effectively, efficiently, and in a close, personal, caring manner.

Through involvement in managing an FRG and interacting within a unit community, family members become an important and integral part of that unit's activities. Family members should be given the opportunity to belong, to make significant contributions, and to fill significant and satisfying roles within their community relevant to their interests.

It is important to maintain a sense of perspective in relation to the goals, purposes, and limitations of an FRG. FRG volunteers cannot be substitute parents, social workers, or psychiatrists, nor can they always meet members' needs for such things as transportation or housing. Sponsoring social activities may be an important means of accomplishing program goals. FRG-sponsored events should always be chosen with these program goals in mind.

At the end of this chapter is a blank Family Readiness Group Questionnaire (pages 186-187) that can be copied for use in compiling member information.

### TIPS

For a peaceful and productive FRG:

- ◆ Be friendly and positive in FRG meetings.
- ◆ Forget about rank! This is a spouses' group. Spouses do not wear rank unless they themselves are in the military.
- ◆ Show respect to the resource people.
- ◆ Mingle with all of the spouses at the meetings.
- ◆ Be useful—share information.
- ◆ Draw leadership from all sources.
- ◆ Listen and be open to new possibilities.
- ◆ Learn to ask questions instead of always giving advice.

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## SUCCESSFUL FRGs IN THE ARMY TODAY

*This material is taken from the Newsletter of the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) No. 01-3 JAN 01 Family Readiness; Techniques and Procedures on Family Support Initiatives.  
Website: <http://call.army.mil>.*

### *Mailing Address:*

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In many units, Family Readiness Groups (FRGs), formerly known as Family Support Groups (FSGs), are the centerpiece of the family readiness effort. This chapter examines the organization and operations of successful FRGs in the Army today.

The main goals of the FRG are threefold:

- ◆ The FRG aims to serve as a link between the deployed unit and families, whether or not those families remain at Home Station. In this capacity, the FRG serves as a conduit for command information on deployment and redeployment dates, changes in the unit's status or mission, and other items of interest to family members.
- ◆ The FRG facilitates deployment and redeployment briefings and activities in conjunction with the unit commander, rear detachment commander (RDC), and installation support agencies.
- ◆ The FRG serves as a mutual support group for family members, stepping in with advice, personal counseling, or assistance when families have problems during the unit deployment.

The most effective FRGs are those established as part of the unit's ongoing and routine mission preparation, rather than those created just prior to deployment.

### **Family Readiness Group Organization and Operations**

The organization of an FRG is a key element in determining how well the group functions during times of deployment. In support of Operation INTRINSIC ACTION in Kuwait and the stabilization force in Bosnia, the deployed units' FRGs developed effective organizational structures and operating methods in support of family readiness during the lengthy deployments.

### **Family Problems**

Leaders indicate that about 90 percent of family problems they encounter during deployments are financial. Too frequently, soldiers deploy without completely explaining what bills need to be paid. They also fail to provide their spouses with access to all of the financial instruments required to make those payments. FRG leaders cite the month immediately following a unit's deployment as the worst period for these financial problems. During that month, in addition to discovering that they did not know what bills to pay, where to pay them, or how to pay them, the demands and stresses of separation overwhelm many spouses, compounding financial problems. These problems and others identified by FRG personnel can be avoided in many cases through better communication between the spouse and soldier prior to the soldier's deployment.

FRG personnel identified “spouses that popped out of the woodwork,” those spouses for which the unit had no records. Similarly, FRG leaders also identified spouses who spoke no English, spouses who had no means of transportation (or a driver’s license) for them or their children, and spouses in need of counseling for depression and anxiety. FRG leaders cautioned against allowing rear detachment personnel to perform personal services for spouses (such as lawn mowing) based on ethical concerns. The word can spread quickly and soon everyone has a job they need completed. Like most unit commanders, FRG leaders generally reported spending 90 percent of their time on 10 percent of the people.

Family Readiness Groups of Task Force Eagle and Operation INTRINSIC ACTION units played a critical role in controlling rumors related to unit deployments, thus enhancing the units’ command information programs and unit morale. Units had the responsibility to support rear detachment and FRG efforts with timely and accurate information. Unit- or battery-level FRG leadership then used a variety of means to disseminate the information, including newsletters, monthly meetings, bulletin boards, telephone trees, and Internet sites.

Additionally, rear detachment personnel and FRG leaders often positioned themselves at the Family Readiness Center during blocks of VTC time or at other places they were likely to find spouses. In short, the most effective family readiness operations were those in which deployed units, rear detachment personnel, and family readiness leaders talked frequently and substantively.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- ◆ The most effective Family Readiness Groups are those that have been in existence for some time and not created just prior to the deployment.

- ◆ Successful FRGs contacted families every month and maintained constant contact with many of them.
- ◆ Financial problems will probably be the first issue to surface due to a deployment.
- ◆ Dissemination of information should be accomplished using as many methods as possible and performed continuously in order to reach everyone.

### **Family Readiness Group Leadership**

The primary factor in determining the success of a unit’s Family Readiness Group is the energy levels of FRG leaders. Unit- and battalion-level FRG operations live or die based on the energy of the personnel leading the family support initiatives at Home Station and on command emphasis placed on FRG operations by the unit’s leadership. In most cases, the best approach to identifying leaders of the FRG is to ask spouses to volunteer.

Successful FRG leaders generally are charismatic, people-oriented, caring people who tend to volunteer their time in the community in other ways as well. Family Readiness Groups in which the commander or first sergeant’s spouse took the lead without really wanting to be involved generally suffered later. At the same time, it is desirable to have someone lead the FRG whose spouse is of moderate rank within the military unit, since those individuals with less rank generally tend to get less information informally, or they get the information later in the process than those of higher rank. In any event, the spouses of unit leaders should serve on the FRG steering committee, regardless of their general interest in FRG operations, to facilitate the general two-way flow of information and to assist the FRG in making organizational decisions.



Family Readiness Group leaders are identified as those who are energetic and keep going until the job is done. At the same time, many FRG leaders are overworked, particularly in cases where units are unexpectedly extended in the theater of operations. Additionally, support agency personnel noted that FRG leaders often tend to assist everyone by themselves instead of relying on agency personnel or other spouses within the FRG. Unfortunately, it was also noted that often other spouses, upon seeing that the FRG leader was willing to work all issues, were inclined to leave the myriad tasks to the FRG leader to accomplish alone. FRG leaders should delegate problem solving, as appropriate, to other responsible spouses, installation support agencies, and rear detachment personnel.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- ◆ The energy of Family Readiness Group leaders can determine the success or failure of the group.
- ◆ Family Readiness Group leaders need to delegate responsibilities when assisting families.

### **Family Readiness Group Tasks before, during, and after Deployment**

**Before.** A functional Family Readiness Group has many tasks when a unit is notified of a deployment. Commanders and FRG leaders need to screen the soldiers to find those who have family members with special circumstances or special care needs. In addition to screening family members for pregnancies, exceptional family member medical conditions, and other situations prior to deployment, units should be aware of family members who might not speak English so

that they can properly plan alternative ways to keep those family members informed. After identifying those individuals with special circumstances, it is then necessary to adapt an overall FRG plan for those family needs.

**During.** A Family Readiness Group should also determine which spouses plan on departing the Home Station area after the unit deploys. Some spouses may want to live with relatives for support during the deployment, so units and FRG leaders need to make special provisions to disseminate information to them and to assist with medical and dental care and other personnel services. Within the stabilization force (SFOR), informal sampling indicated that 10 to 25 percent of families in most units relocated away from the vicinity of the Home Station installation during the period of the deployment. In addition, some of the augmentees' families also relocated during their deployment windows. While the task force commander made arrangements for these families to have access to command information through a toll-free telephone number and a frequently updated website, some soldiers reported difficulties with family support. Specific problems included securing health and dental care, and access to commissaries and other military facilities. Additionally, soldiers reported problems with telephones (no DSN access) and difficulty in achieving access to command information at the unit level.

**After.** Once a unit learns that the troops are coming home, arrangements should be made to conduct reunion briefings. Deployed task forces that conducted well-prepared and comprehensive reunion briefings significantly reduced incidences of spousal abuse, DUIs, and other redeployment problems among unit soldiers. Some units provided group counseling and briefings on likely sources of friction among family members after a lengthy separation. The briefings included issues

of control within the family, established routines within the family that may have changed during the separation, changed financial circumstances, and renewed relationships with children. Additionally, units conducted briefings aimed at ensuring that soldiers used alcohol responsibly upon their return, a particularly appropriate topic since alcohol had been off-limits during the months of deployment. Chaplains served as the primary action agent for briefings in the field, and FRG leaders and rear detachment commanders facilitated briefings at Home Station.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

- ◆ Spouses have special concerns, such as pregnancy or language, which will require that the support plan be adapted to their needs.
- ◆ Determine which families will be staying in the area and which will live with other family members during the deployment.
- ◆ Reunion briefings are very important for the family to properly welcome home the soldier.

### **Training Family Readiness Group Leaders**

Some units went to great lengths to train their FRG volunteers. One Task Force Eagle commander conducted significant FRG training prior to the unit's deployment to support the effective execution of FRG tasks at Home Station. Training topics included:

- ◆ Family crisis response and referral
- ◆ Basic military justice
- ◆ Suicide warning signs
- ◆ Supply accountability
- ◆ Legal information

- ◆ Personnel policies and accountability
- ◆ Family readiness group organization and operations
- ◆ Chaplain support services
- ◆ Family advocacy
- ◆ Casualty procedures
- ◆ American Red Cross capabilities
- ◆ Vehicle and weapon registration policies
- ◆ Housing policies
- ◆ Basic finance
- ◆ Childcare options
- ◆ Public affairs
- ◆ Sponsorship standards
- ◆ Physical security

The commander then conducted situational training exercises (STX) designed to ensure that FRG and rear detachment personnel could respond effectively to the inevitable challenges that would arise during the deployment.

### **Other Considerations**

There are a few other considerations that smaller units should keep in mind. Small units deploying to the theater of operations from posts other than the Home Station of the task force headquarters have special FRG coordination considerations. Task Force Eagle included a number of small units that deployed from Home Stations other than the division headquarters post. For these units (this includes active duty), there were special coordination and deployment considerations that impacted adversely on their family support initiatives. Several of these units, unlike the units belonging to the deployed division headquarters, were unable to reconnoiter the theater of operations prior to deploying. Similarly, given



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short notice in some cases and unclear mission guidance in others, these small units had difficulty getting installation support for the training of FRG personnel and for the Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) activities needed prior to deployment. In many cases, there was little or no coordination between the gaining unit headquarters and the small unit augmentees until both units were on the ground in the theater of operations.

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## FAMILY READINESS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Military Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Housing Area: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Information about children and/or dependent adults in the home (name, age, sex):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Does the nonmilitary spouse work? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Can the spouse drive? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Does your spouse speak English? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What other languages does your spouse speak? \_\_\_\_\_

Last Duty Station: \_\_\_\_\_

Who would you notify in case of an emergency other than your spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

In what areas would you like to have more information or need help with?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical / Dental Care           | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Daycare                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PX/Commissary Privileges        | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Counseling                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Babysitting                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterinary Services                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment Available         | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Activities                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serious Medical Problems        | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disabilities                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Counseling                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Services and Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with separation from spouse   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with separation from children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Care Services         | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with separation from parents  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Handicaps              | <input type="checkbox"/> Reunion after separation             |

Comments or additions to any of the above: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Please realize we need your active participation and assistance in making our Family Readiness Group a success. Which of the following areas would you be willing to help with?

Leadership position	_____	Mailing	_____
Program planning	_____	Transportation	_____
Newsletter	_____	Babysitting	_____
Telephoning	_____	Other (explain)	_____

What do you think Family Readiness Groups should do for your family?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What talents or abilities do you have that you would be willing to share with other Family Readiness Group members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What adult activities would you like the Family Readiness Group to sponsor?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What children's activities would you like the Family Readiness Group to sponsor?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Note: If you would like more information about the Family Readiness Group, please call:

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

(Name) (Telephone)

**Note: This questionnaire is used to gather general information necessary to initiate the Family Readiness Group program. The information listed above will not be released to any third-party individuals without your permission to do so.**

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority: 10 U.S.C. Section 3010, 5 U.S.C. 522a

Principle Purpose Information will be used to provide support, outreach and information to family members.

?:Routine Uses: Primary Use of this information is to facilitate volunteers in providing command information to family members concerning unit events and in emergencies.

Mandatory or Voluntary Disclosure: Voluntary



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# 5

## Resources for Successful Family Readiness Groups

*Ideas and resources for ongoing activities to assist those leading or facilitating Family Readiness Groups in developing a more comprehensive program*

- ◆ **FRG Activities**
- ◆ **Maintaining Telephone Contact**
- ◆ **Newsletters**
- ◆ **Volunteers**



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## FRG ACTIVITIES

The type and scope of activities in which the Family Readiness Group becomes involved depend largely on the identified needs of unit soldiers and their families; the number of FRG volunteers available; and the time, energy, and creativity of those volunteers. The emphasis will also vary depending on whether it is a deployment or a nondeployment period for the unit.

Certain FRG activities are essential and common to all groups since the goal of an FRG is to support the military mission through outreach and information to family members prior to and during periods of family separations. This includes holding regular meetings for battalion and unit representatives and POCs, publishing FRG newsletters, maintaining up-to-date family rosters, and organizing a telephone chain.

Many other activities that FRGs commonly sponsor, coordinate, or participate in also directly or indirectly foster family readiness goals. These typically include:

- ◆ sponsoring new families;
- ◆ holding newcomers' orientations;
- ◆ organizing holiday and other unit parties or outings;
- ◆ arranging employment or relocation briefings;
- ◆ compiling listings of available childcare, or actually providing short-term care;
- ◆ arranging transportation, especially during deployment, to essential locations such as the commissary or hospital and to FRG meetings;
- ◆ obtaining discount tickets for family activities, especially during deployment;
- ◆ making plans for reunion;
- ◆ raising funds for specific activities;
- ◆ providing workshops on topics such as coping with separation, managing stress, military benefits, prenatal care, preparing for deployment (emotionally and practically), or using community services;

- ◆ distributing deployment assistance materials and community resource directories to all family members; and
- ◆ attending AFTB classes in the unit or at the installation/ community level.

FRGs often form committees at the unit and battalion levels to handle various FRG activities and events. This maximizes involvement, makes the best use of individual talents, and avoids volunteer overload and burnout.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: FRG Initiatives**

**Discussion:** FRG activities should include ongoing initiatives to sustain family members in dealing with common problems.

**Lessons:** FRG initiatives could include predeployment training classes or programs on:

- ◆ family stress management;
- ◆ antiterrorism precautions;
- ◆ how to keep busy with sports, crafts, and or volunteer efforts;
- ◆ how to read Leave and Earnings Statements;
- ◆ spousal employment information and opportunities;
- ◆ basic home maintenance, including Army self-help programs;
- ◆ auto servicing;
- ◆ TRICARE procedures;
- ◆ dealing with the news media;
- ◆ control of privately owned firearms;
- ◆ managing finances; and
- ◆ counseling children about deployment.



## Fundraising Activities

Bake sales, auctions, recycling drives, and car washes are among the fundraising activities that might be authorized as FRG fundraisers. If conducted on post or at a National Guard armory or a Reserve center, the activity must have the unit commander's approval prior to the event. If conducted off post, any permits or licenses would be the responsibility of the FRG, and the activity should have the unit commander's prior approval. Ideas should be submitted well in advance to the appropriate approving authority.

Fundraising is not the focus of the FRG. It is only one aspect of the FRG functions and is necessary only to support FRG activities. FRGs should not regard fundraising as their sole reason for existence or as a major activity.

Remember, fundraising events can only be successful if they are publicized and involve as many people as possible. Several ideas can be combined and incorporated into carnivals and festivals.

### Activities for Fun and for Group Cohesion

Many FRG activities can be planned for fun and to develop group cohesion. For example, potluck dinners are a good way to welcome new people to the FRG, and it's sometimes easier to get the couples together in this way. Develop an international flavor by bringing traditional dishes from each family's native country of heritage, and take time to share the recipes. Another idea is to organize a house-to-house potluck with salads at one house, the main course at another, and perhaps dessert at a third home.

During a deployment, picnics can be organized for families and soldiers who have stayed behind. Ask the soldiers to be responsible for the music, and use the picnics for briefings. After reunion, arrange a barbecue for soldiers and families where the support people get certificates of appreciation.

The FRG can plan a variety of fun activities for its members. Schedule a family day right after deployment so the spouses can meet one another. Have movies and inexpensive meals. If soldiers are deployed, show videos of them at work. Have a carnival. Visit nighttime training so families can see their soldiers at work. Set aside one day a week for families while soldiers are deployed;

### LIMIT

If fundraising activities are conducted off post, an appropriate disclaimer must be included in all advance publicity and on signs or posters at the site, such as the following:

*This activity is not an official function of the U.S. Army.*

The unit commander, in consultation with the local Staff Judge Advocate's office, can provide the words appropriate to the occasion.

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arrange games for adults as well as children. Plan a tour to an often overlooked but inexpensive place. Arrange carpools, and have babysitting available as needed. Have a field day where a child or spouse does a soldier's job for a couple of hours, followed by a lunch or dinner. Let children ride in trucks or sit in helicopters. Arrange a unit family-day picnic at the beach.

Holidays provide many opportunities for FRG activities. Organize an Easter egg hunt, and involve single soldiers by asking them hide the eggs, play the Easter bunny, or judge the winners. At Halloween, have secret pals among the adults; discover who your secret pal is at a Halloween-time coffee. At Christmas, in addition to organizing gift parties for the children, make stockings for single soldiers; build camouflage Christmas trees, or decorate quad doors. Have the unit participate in annual 4th of July celebrations with a potluck or barbecue. On Valentine's Day, have children make valentines for single soldiers.

Ask to have predeployment briefings at a time that lets soldiers go home with their spouses afterward. Have a letter sent from the commander to family members explaining the deployment—where the unit is going, why, and what kind of training they expect the soldier to receive.

During deployment, plan a "Mom's night out," and trade off babysitting with another unit. Schedule bingo nights, card games, movies, or videos of soldiers in action. Have a banner-making party for returning soldiers. Plan welcome-home parties, especially for midnight reunions. Have soup and sandwiches or cookies and coffee. Go ice skating. Plan a children's party; create presents or pictures for the missing parent. Take family pictures to send. Rent cabins for a weekend family campout.

Personally invite new spouses to gatherings, and provide transportation if you can. Identify bilingual or non-English speaking spouses, and make a special effort to help them feel a part of the group. Have the welcome/hospitality committee to assist arriving and departing soldiers. (Don't forget single soldiers in this.) Adopt a single soldier to send letters to and to invite for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. Remember families in special need with holiday food baskets and Christmas gifts for the children.

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Have several small activity parties on the same evening, and let each spouse choose the most interesting. Have an FRG meeting where video games or other attractions are available to amuse the kids while the spouses socialize. Color-code name tags at battalion meetings or family days so spouses can easily identify families in the same unit. (This could also be done by geographical area.)

Announce awards, marriages, and births in the monthly newsletter. Present unit certificates of appreciation to all those involved in the FRG, not just the most active participants. Recognize births with special certificates.

### **Promoting Participation in the FRG**

The post television channel can be utilized to educate Army families on family readiness. Programs should hold family members' interest, whether with dramatizations, skits, or announcements promoting participation in FRGs and the importance of family readiness. A well-produced half-hour video on the subject of family support and deployment readiness could be aired periodically, especially when deployment is anticipated.

Sponsor workshops for unit commanders, NCOs, and their spouses on the importance, structure, and needs of FRGs. Readiness should be part of the unit's teamwork; a readiness buddy system involving two couples or a platoon "readiness party" with awards for the "readiest" family may help accomplish this.

Family readiness briefings might be more effective at the unit level. Basic deployment readiness information should be included in welcome packets, and the importance of family readiness should be stressed at welcome briefings rather than waiting for predeployment briefings. Predeployment briefings might include a slide show about the unit's destination, especially if it is a foreign country.

Unit commanders should have a record on each soldier and his or her family. They should be aware of the needs of each family. Chaplains might be encouraged to devote a sermon to the importance of families and Family Readiness Groups.

The RDC should be involved in postdeployment briefings. His or her first-hand knowledge of family problems during deployment is

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**Unit commanders  
should have a  
record on each  
soldier and his or  
her family.**

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valuable to the family readiness system. The RDC should be chosen on the basis of experience rather than convenience. Single and younger commanders may not be as sympathetic to family needs as an older married commander.

All these activities—whether sponsored by the FRG alone or with Army leadership; whether for social, educational, or fundraising purposes; or for providing assistance to families with specific problems—can contribute to military readiness by contributing to the health and cohesion of the family and the military unit.

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## MAINTAINING TELEPHONE CONTACT

The telephone tree extends to all members of the FRG. It is organized much like the unit's alert notification roster. FRG volunteers use the telephone tree most frequently to convey information, interest, and support to family members, especially during deployment. Confidentiality and discretion must be used in conveying information through the telephone tree.

Community resource personnel should be identified and made available to unit representatives and FRGs to help them handle some of the more difficult situations that may arise. Guidelines for telephone contacts are included below.

The unit roster is the basis for the FRG telephone network. Volunteers should be recruited to contact no more than ten family members each, since more than ten calls may overtax the volunteer. Generally, however, the number to be contacted will depend on the size of the unit and the number of volunteers. Two types of rosters may be generated and used by the FRG: volunteer rosters and membership rosters.

An FRG *volunteer roster* should contain the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all key family member volunteers, as well as those of the unit point of contact (POC). Because of the function these key people have within the FRG, this roster should be given maximum official visibility. All those persons to be listed should be informed about this and voluntarily agree in writing to have this information published. The roster should be available in the Family Assistance Center and in family member directories, and it should be included in deployment assistance materials.

All must perceive key military and family members listed on the volunteer roster as legitimate sources of help. Single soldiers should know that they can also use the FRG for sending accurate information to their next of kin or significant others while deployed. The services that FRG volunteers can provide must be widely known and the volunteers' credibility established.

An FRG *membership roster* consists of updated names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all families within the unit. FRG volunteers will use the information to initiate and maintain contact with those family members desiring to be contacted.

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Single soldiers should know that they can also use the FRG for sending accurate information to their next of kin or significant others while deployed.

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## LIMIT

Participation in the phonetree must be voluntary and a privacy act statement included on the FRG information form.

Confidentiality and the discretionary use of this information must be stressed. The phonetree should not be used for personal or commercial business.

For maximum participation in the phonetree, the purpose of collecting this information will need to be explained to soldiers and their family members. This can be done during in-processing into the unit, at a unit newcomers' briefing, or at an FRG briefing. The rosters, to be an effective tool, must be updated continuously.

## Points of Contact

The availability of unit POCs for calls from families within the command is critical to a successful FRG program. This will ensure that they are a visible part of the command. A large portion of the POCs' time will be expended in dealing with individuals on the telephone. Therefore, it is imperative that they be prepared for any type of call. The more information and resources they have, the better equipped they will be to assist those seeking help.

There are many ways to gather information and develop resources. POCs should become familiar with the unit's community resource and deployment materials, and keep them handy. POCs should be encouraged to be innovative with ideas and to share information with one another. Create a network of communication between FRG representatives, and encourage them to attend educational workshops and meetings.

## *Guidelines for POCs*

The following guidelines should be passed on to POCs:

To keep unit families well informed, POCs should ensure that they have current information. Also, the information POCs receive from callers should be clear, concise, and accurate. POCs should make sure they understand what is being said and if not, have it repeated.

When dealing with a problem call, POCs should ask pertinent questions and record the information gathered. When possible, the POC should give the caller information on available resources, and encourage them to follow up on their own. If this does not work, the POC should attempt to find a reasonable solution, being sure to tell the caller of their intentions. The POC should not tell the caller that they cannot or will not help them. The POC should continue to investigate and keep the caller informed if searching for the solution.

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The POC should always exercise tact, politeness, and good listening habits when handling phone calls, being sure to treat callers in the same manner they would like to be treated themselves. If the POC doesn't know what to do or doesn't have an answer, they shouldn't be afraid to say so. In this case, the caller should be assured that the POC will try to find the answer. POCs can utilize the many resources that are available to them, such as their unit phonetree chairperson, FRG leader, RDC, Army Community Service personnel, and chaplains.

**Confidentiality** plays an important part in the POC's position as an FRG representative. When a family member comes to the POC with any problem or tells the POC something in confidence, it is the POC's obligation (with the specific exceptions listed in the box to the right) to keep the confidence. The POC's worth as an FRG representative may depend on how well he or she can keep a confidence regarding the personal problems of a particular person or family.

While listening, the POC should ask himself or herself these questions:

- ◆ What is the caller feeling? Keep in mind that every call is important to the caller.
- ◆ What basic needs of the caller are not being met?
- ◆ What are the expectations of the POC? Are they realistic?
- ◆ Who might assist? Use available referral resources.

## Types of Calls

There are many different types of calls, and each should be handled differently.

### *Information Calls*

As has already been stated, the POC's information should be current and accurate. Giving outdated information can create many problems. If the information the caller is looking for is not available to the POC, then the POC should seek it out. The POC should maintain a notebook of all resources, announcements, and information received relating to Army families. The Army and

### **LIMIT**

Be aware that some problems, such as spouse and child abuse, must be referred to the appropriate agency. Don't try to be a psychologist or social worker. You may do more harm than good. Refer the caller to the right place to get the help he or she needs.

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civilian communities offer many services, and the POC should be constantly gathering information concerning those services.

### *Problem Calls*

Record all pertinent information. The POC should follow up on all calls, even if it is just to check that everything is all right.

### *Crisis Calls*

The handling of crisis calls can be a delicate situation. What determines a crisis? Since POCs are not trained as counselors, they have to rely on their sound judgment. How can a POC recognize if the crisis is genuine? This can be determined by listening and answering questions. Don't give rash answers; think first. If in doubt about what to do, the POC shouldn't hesitate to contact someone from their referral list for assistance. The POC may need ongoing access to a mental health expert for assistance with screening calls. POCs should not try to handle situations that they are not trained and qualified to handle.

In dealing with problem and crisis calls, the POC should give the caller alternatives to choose from. POCs can help callers to help themselves; be positive, and try to stay objective but responsive.

### *Social Calls*

POCs should limit the length of social calls. Everyone needs someone to talk to occasionally; loneliness is something all Army spouses face, and it does help to talk with someone. However, POCs have other obligations that require their time, and these calls need to be carefully controlled.

### *Gossip*

If a POC thinks that a caller is talking just to gossip or seems to be passing on unfounded rumors, the POC should remind the caller that they are not interested. If the rumor were true, the POC would have been notified.



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## *Chronic Callers*

Chronic callers may often have underlying problems that the POC may be able to bring out and possibly resolve. Use tact and diplomacy with chronic callers.

## **Tips for POCs**

In general, POCs should be well organized and take care of themselves. They need to recognize when they are overextending themselves and not allow people to exploit them. They should encourage friends to call them socially only during certain hours. When overloaded, the FRG leader and/or POC chairperson should find others to assist by identifying and using helpful people within the command. POCs should remain alert and try to accomplish everything in a professional manner, realizing that they can't be all things to all people!

POCs need to establish their sincerity. On initial contact, they should try to be calm and sympathetic, but be realistic because most people can see through insincerity. As POCs record pertinent information needed to assist individuals, they should use the individual's first name if comfortable doing so. POCs should reflect to the caller that they know how they feel—a simple confirmation of this will often soothe even the most hysterical person, if not initially, at least after a few repetitions.

A person may be very depressed when they finally call the POC. Their world may have come down around them, and they may feel humiliated. Their own actions or inactions may have caused their present predicament—or at least they may believe so. By using positive statements, the POC can reinforce their ability to cope with the problem.

The POC can ask the individual, “What do you think you should do?” If the caller's suggestion seems poor, say, “That's an idea, but what do you think about...?”

POCs shouldn't use negative statements; they tend to create feelings of inferiority and insecurity. The individual is already feeling insecure; don't enhance this emotion. The tips on the following page will help POCs to distinguish between positive, sympathetic statements and negative, judgmental ones.

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## USING POSITIVE STATEMENTS TO ASSIST CALLERS

### Avoid these phrases:

You should have called sooner.

Stop crying!

Calm down!

You should have taken the baby to the doctor last week.

I don't know if I can help you.

### Use these instead:

I'm glad you called me now. You're doing the right thing.

It's okay to cry. Take a deep breath when you're ready to tell me your problem.

Yes, that's awful, but we can do something about this.

Well, let's get the baby a doctor's appointment as soon as possible.

I'm sure we can find someone to help you. Let me find out who would handle this.

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## NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are an important means of building a sense of community and reaching out to all family members within a unit or battalion. Additionally, it is a way of disseminating important information, recognizing achievements, and publicizing FRG events. Check with the postal service for information on current mailing requirements and procedures, and with the command for limitations on the use of official mail. For example, advertisement of items for sale may be prohibited, and the availability of official postage may be limited.

Newsletters are prepared by the FRG to meet the needs of the group as determined by the members. Newsletters may be published monthly or bimonthly; they should be printed at least quarterly to maintain communication with the unit families. Monthly newsletters may do the best job of maintaining a sense of contact and providing up-to-date information. The unit or battalion FRG newsletter is designed to reach all family members, and its importance cannot be overemphasized. A good newsletter can:

- ◆ bond family members together by creating a sense of comradeship similar to that shared by the soldiers;
- ◆ relay information from the command and the FRG that will reduce social isolation and convey the command's concern for the families' well being;
- ◆ inform family members about the availability of installation and local civilian agencies for both routine and emergency services;
- ◆ help family members better understand not only what the unit is doing, but why, which can help reduce stress;
- ◆ keep families informed about activities sponsored by the unit or FRG;
- ◆ allow families to realize that others are experiencing many of the same tensions and strains of military life as they are experiencing; and
- ◆ institutionalize an important communication link and information source that is vital during a deployment.

### Resources

See the Virtual ACS website at: [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org).

Check with your local Installation Volunteer Coordinator.

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Each installation will have its own Memorandum of Instruction or Standard Operating Procedure on the printing and mailing of FRG newsletters.

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Each installation will have its own Memorandum of Instruction or Standard Operating Procedure on the printing and mailing of FRG newsletters. There is no specific format for a newsletter; it may take several editions before the right format for your unit and FRG is determined.

### **Newsletter Guidelines**

For the newsletter to be successful and a credible vehicle for communication, it must look professional. Consistency in format and clearly defined sections will help convey a sense of organization and credibility to readers. The newsletter should be carefully proofread for spelling and grammatical errors after typing. If a good volunteer typist cannot be found, arrange with the command to have it typed. If the command is deployed, the RDC can help.

#### **LIMIT**

The release of confidential unit information (departure or return dates, destination and so on) may jeopardize the unit's mission or endanger family members' security and is prohibited.

The newsletter name and any associated artwork, such as the unit crest, should take up no more than one-fourth of the first page. Include the date of the issue and the unit name and location. The masthead should also state the purpose and frequency of the publication, and include the names of key unit personnel and of the newsletter staff. Also include a disclaimer stating that opinions expressed by writers and other unofficial material in the newsletter is not an official expression by the Department of the Army. As with other disclaimer statements, check with the local command for proper wording.

Consistency in format and layout is vitally important. For example, reminders about FRG meetings or unit coffees, placed in the same easy-to-find spots each month, help keep attendance up at these functions. An attractive format that makes efficient use of space is critical. Uniformity from issue to issue assists the reader in locating items of special interest. Issues should not exceed 16 pages (eight pages front and back).

Since the average person only scans printed materials, divide content into clearly defined sections. Each section can be titled in capitals and key words underlined. Sample section headings might include a message from the command, medical news, new community programs, and items to note. Information that is squeezed together is often lost. If cost becomes an issue, it may be more important to have less information rather than a massive

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amount that is typed in a small font size, which no one may take the time to read.

Be sure that each item is complete and includes a source to check with for further information. Always check out your information for accuracy before printing. Content should be pertinent, complete, objective, and current.

Information should be presented in a readable and easy-to-understand format. Photographs sometimes cannot be clearly reproduced, but line art or graphics highlight and enhance layout.

### **Newsletter Content**

Newsletter content will vary depending on the type of information available to the FRG and whether the command is deployed or in garrison. It should include information from the command about activities and resources that would be helpful to the group. For example, family members of a deployed unit might appreciate tips on how to make their homes more secure or instructions on how to send messages to their spouses. Repeated printing of the most commonly needed emergency numbers is always highly recommended. Think about the specific needs and interests of the group. Ask for suggestions on subjects they are interested in.

Possibilities include:

- ◆ a message from the commander;
- ◆ specific news regarding videotaping of family events for viewing by deployed units or new programs to be initiated;
- ◆ information about helpful Army or community resources; for example, health clinic hours or childcare locations, with as much information as possible (including a phone number that has been verified);
- ◆ for deployed units, tips on handling different kinds of problems while soldiers are gone; for example, what kind of help is available at the post auto crafts shop;
- ◆ a question-and-answer section on the problems that seem to come up most frequently;
- ◆ periodic summaries of what the FRG POC can do to assist family members and encouragement to call on the FRG when assistance is needed; and

## LIMIT

When using copyrighted materials, remember that permission must be obtained from the source. This includes artwork as well as articles. The unit commander or Staff Judge Advocate can advise you on when and how to seek a copyright release.

- ◆ listings of the most commonly used resources (Army Community Service, Army Emergency Relief, Red Cross), with reminders of the services they offer—especially during deployments, which may eliminate many unnecessary telephone calls.

Ideas for articles can come from many sources. Get into the habit of watching for helpful information to pass along, and develop a filing system to find the information when it's need. Scan and identify useful material, and keep it in an envelope to collect potential items for the next newsletter. Try to keep up with the flow so it isn't overwhelming. Possible resources include:

- ◆ specific command messages and pertinent information that comes to the attention of unit personnel;
- ◆ newsletters from local Army and community resources, such as the hospital or housing office;
- ◆ other unit FRGs;
- ◆ Army presentations and military newspapers;
- ◆ local schools, churches, childcare facilities, specialized community programs, and military chapels;
- ◆ the local Chamber of Commerce; and
- ◆ local newspapers and magazines.

## Newsletter Distribution

The FRG may be authorized to use official mail to distribute FRG newsletters containing information commanders deem appropriate and necessary to maintain morale and enthusiasm within their unit. The commander or a designated representative must approve these mailings.

Official FRG newsletters require the commander's statement and signature prior to printing. The appearance of the signature block and commander's statement indicate the newsletter's content is official government material and is required for mailing in official mail channels.

Additionally, since many families have internet service now, FRGs may choose to offer the newsletters over e-mail in PDF format.

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## VOLUNTEERS

This section is intended to provide a resource for volunteers and for those who recruit and manage volunteers. Included are a general statement on the benefits of volunteering and an overview of the volunteer management process.

Most of this section deals specifically with volunteers in the FRG program. It outlines the recruitment process, benefits and guidelines for writing job descriptions, and it gives job descriptions for typical FRG volunteer positions. These job descriptions can also be used as samples for writing volunteer job descriptions for positions in any of the organizations or services associated with a particular installation.

### Why People Volunteer

The Army does not have the resources and personnel to provide all of the necessary services that contribute to a high-quality lifestyle for soldiers and their families. Most of these services, if not directly mission related, are only possible because they are staffed by volunteers. Likewise, communities use volunteers to work in important local organizations and activities. Volunteers are the lifeblood of many of the military and community programs and services that we have learned to take for granted. The overall quality of life both on post and in the communities where Guard members and Reservists live can be greatly enhanced by encouraging everyone to get involved.

People volunteer their time and abilities for many reasons. Most people say the personal satisfaction of helping people is the main reason. Volunteers also enjoy being exposed to new activities and experiences. It allows them to remain active and further develops their talents and skills. For many people, voluntary experience can be translated into additional credentials. Volunteers can often use this experience to their advantage in the future on resumes and job applications.

For military family members, volunteering is often an ideal way to gain experience. Volunteer work may allow parents with child-rearing responsibilities to enter the job market at a higher level once the kids are gone. Volunteer work sometimes turns into paying jobs.

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Volunteers are the lifeblood of many of the military and community programs and services that we have learned to take for granted.

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Services on post and in the community offer great opportunities for acquiring skills that are in demand in the workplace. For example, the need for quality childcare for working parents is so great that it has become a political issue. Volunteering in a childcare program offers an excellent opportunity to receive training in this area.

Members of active Army families can find opportunities to volunteer at the Installation Volunteer Coordinator's office, usually located within Army Community Service. Guard and Reserve families should ask about volunteering through the State Family Program Office or the Family Coordinator's Office. In areas where none of these offices exist, community programs such as the Red Cross or United Way offer good opportunities to make a contribution.

No matter the volunteers' interests, they're sure to find a service or organization where their time is needed and where they will benefit from the skills acquired. To ensure that this experience can be translated into a job resume, volunteers should request that there be a job description for what they do, and make sure that they can get a letter of recommendation from their supervisor listing specific examples of what they did for that organization. They may also need help in learning to develop a resume and filling out an application form to reflect their skills and experience.

## **Recruitment**

Methods used to get people involved vary. Common methods include:

- ◆ newsletters to all officer and enlisted spouses in each unit inviting them to participate on a steering committee or attend a briefing meeting;
- ◆ a command invitation to key family member leaders to attend a steering committee or briefing meeting; and
- ◆ a command briefing to soldiers and spouses of each unit outlining the proposed family readiness system and the importance placed on FRG involvement.

Whatever the method and whoever the audience, it is essential that command support be clearly evident. In addition to the commander, a family readiness briefing should be attended by



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some of the key support and resource personnel who are to be involved in the support system. These may include the commander's spouse, command sergeant major's spouse, RDC, ACS staff, a mental health representative, and the chaplain.

The agenda for the first briefing generally covers the mission of the unit, outlining the basic concept and goals of a family readiness system and stating the reasons why family member involvement in an FRG is so important. Personal or written testimonials about successful FRG initiatives are often helpful to convey the concept in concrete terms, especially if a large or mixed soldier and family member group is present.

Attendees should be given an opportunity to ask questions, make comments or suggestions, and indicate an interest in FRG involvement. If initial volunteer response is not overwhelming, do not become discouraged. Remember that the most successful method of recruitment is personal contact, and a large FRG steering committee is neither necessary nor desirable to get plans off the ground.

Any family member, whether civilian or military, male or female, should be considered a potential candidate for an FRG position. Selection should be based on good leadership and organizational skills, a caring attitude, a willingness to help, and an ability to work with others.

The commander's spouse does not need to be the battalion or unit leader for the FRG to be successful. However, in many FRGs, the commander's spouse takes an active role in supporting the FRG and being available for guidance and advice.

## **Supervision**

As volunteers in the Army family readiness programs, FRG members are entitled to recognition, training, and job descriptions. Each benefit increases the job market value of the volunteer's experience and makes it easy for the experience to be translated into a job resume.

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Any family member, whether civilian or military, male or female, should be considered a potential candidate for an FRG position.

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### *Volunteer Recognition*

Volunteers must be recognized for their work within the Army community. Recognition is not only a way to say thank you—it is a response to individual interest, commitment, and involvement. Methods of recognition vary as people and their motivations vary. Forms of recognition should be on both the unit and installation level and include informal and formal activities.

Volunteers may be nominated to receive a certificate from the commanding general. Units are encouraged to design their own certificates of recognition, using unit colors and logos.

Awarding other recognition items such as plaques or pins should be considered, and special funding can sometimes be made available for these. The unit FRL can obtain and help interpret guidelines for the types of recognition items that can be purchased; special care should be taken to be sure these guidelines are followed.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: Fluctuating Volunteer Support**

**Discussion:** Volunteers traditionally extend ACS service. Experience indicates that the numbers of volunteers available decrease somewhat during predeployment and immediately following troop departure. The numbers of volunteers usually reach or exceed previous levels at about the 30- to 45-day point after deployment. The increase is generally due to new volunteers joining the organization.

**Lessons:** Expect some loss in volunteer support at a time when additional staff is needed to meet new or increased service demands. Other staffing alternatives are needed to ensure effective responses in the event of volunteer loss. Gear volunteer orientation and training programs to process the new volunteers quickly.

Continue active volunteer recruitment efforts to tap potential new resources for prospective volunteers. Volunteers from the civilian community have provided valuable assistance to other activities, such as Child/Youth Services, and could be a resource for many ACS programs. The retired military community should not be overlooked as a potential source of volunteers.

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Letters of appreciation and commendation can also be presented, extending the unit's thanks and documenting the volunteer's work. These are of particular value if the volunteer wishes to use the FRG experience on a job resume. There are many other ways to recognize volunteers, such as a note from the unit commander, a handmade or purchased gift, a round of applause at the FRG meeting, and a sincere "thank you."

### *Volunteer Training*

The FRG volunteer is also entitled to training, and for many motivated volunteers, it is the most welcome and appreciated form of recognition. Training programs offer volunteers, who are committed to working for the good of the Army family, the opportunity for self improvement. What better way to enhance their skills, increase their self-esteem, and raise their potential for future service?

FRG volunteers should receive well-designed training on how to establish, operate, lead, support, and sustain an FRG. Inclusion of key military personnel in part or all of the training might also be advisable if they have had no prior experience with an FRG.

Some FRG volunteers are placed in the position of being the first contact point for family members who are in a crisis situation. Because of their unique function prior to and during deployments, they are also often in a position to be the best ones to evaluate how a family is coping (or is going to cope) with the separation and to arrange for early intervention to prevent a crisis situation from developing. In order to perform this role effectively, adequate training must be received.

Examples of training topics that will help FRG volunteers perform their functions more effectively include:

- ◆ effective communication,
- ◆ active listening,
- ◆ problem solving,
- ◆ crisis intervention,
- ◆ community resources,
- ◆ key unit and community resource personnel,

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FRG volunteers should receive well-designed training on how to establish, operate, lead, support, and sustain an FRG.

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Since the FRG exists to support the military mission, it is incumbent upon commanders to ensure that FRG volunteers are well trained.

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- ◆ principles of information and referral,
- ◆ use of a telephone tree,
- ◆ family advocacy,
- ◆ coping with stress,
- ◆ conflict resolution,
- ◆ effective meetings,
- ◆ management/leadership skills,
- ◆ time management,
- ◆ personal awareness,
- ◆ volunteer supervision,
- ◆ newsletter preparation,
- ◆ military correspondence, and
- ◆ committee management.

FRG volunteers should receive training in at least the first eight items listed above prior to the soldiers' deployment. Training should be ongoing, and FRG training needs should be periodically reevaluated based on the problems that are encountered prior to, during, and after deployment. Some FRG volunteers will require specialized training. Others, as they gain experience, may benefit from refresher courses.

Since the FRG exists to support the military mission, it is incumbent upon commanders to ensure that FRG volunteers are well trained. Training is a major area where a strong link to community assistance resources can be of great benefit to the commander.

### *Job Descriptions and Volunteer Recruitment*

All FRG volunteers, including committee chairpersons, should receive job descriptions. This helps clarify roles and provides added protection for volunteers in case legal action is ever taken against them. Unit POCs are especially vulnerable since they are the primary information and direct-service providers. Job descriptions assist the FRG in identifying the tasks that need to be done and in providing the volunteer with specific responsibilities

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and standards. They should be reviewed and evaluated periodically, with input from the volunteers as well as their supervisors.

Recruiting consists of matching a specific volunteer position and its unique needs with a qualified person who can volunteer the required time. Rarely does general recruiting for a variety of positions prove effective. The key steps in recruiting are as follows:

- ◆ Examine the volunteer job description.
- ◆ Investigate the marketplace for potential volunteers; that is, ask where you can find and contact the type of volunteer you need to fill a position.
- ◆ Know your competition for recruiting, what they offer to their volunteers, and how those volunteers are recruited and rewarded.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: FRG Volunteer Training**

Army Family Team Building (AFTB) is a volunteer-led organization with a central tenet: provide training and knowledge to spouses and family members to support the total Army effort. Strong families are the pillars of support behind strong soldiers, and AFTB's mission is to educate and train all of America's Army in knowledge, skills, and behaviors designed to prepare our Army families to move successfully into the future.

AFTB has three separate tracks: one for soldiers (active and reserve component), one for Department of the Army (DA) civilians, and one for family members.

AFTB's vision statement, "Empowering families for the 21st century," says it all. The organization is about providing proactive, forward-thinking support for today's families, and ensuring the strength of tomorrow's Army.

Check their website: <http://www.aftb.org>.

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Remember, some of your best prospects will not apply; they must be found and asked to consider volunteering their time.

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- ◆ Examine the elements of the volunteer position that are pluses and minuses: location, hours, costs, training, experience, benefits, and rewards.
- ◆ Determine what to communicate and the best medium to use to gain exposure: flyer, poster, letter, announcement, speech, help wanted ad, public service announcement, unit publication, bulletin board announcement, letter to the editor, feature story, news release, or display.
- ◆ Consider all the alternatives: nonworking spouses, teenagers, and senior citizens.
- ◆ Develop and implement an action plan for recruiting the best available candidate.
- ◆ Review interested individuals who match the position qualifications.
- ◆ Find out the needs and motivations of the top candidates.
- ◆ Select the best applicant based on qualifications, temperament, and ability to perform the assigned duties and to work effectively with others.

Remember, some of your best prospects will not apply; they must be found and asked to consider volunteering their time.

Training is necessary for all positions, but the amount and type of training required varies with the position. A few of the options, ranging from the most to the least intensive, are:

- ◆ formal training for complex or sensitive positions;
- ◆ on-the-job training, which enables new people to learn from established workers over a longer period of time; and
- ◆ familiarization, where a limited amount of time is spent familiarizing the new person with the required duties.

### **Motivating Volunteers**

Motivating volunteers is the key to productivity, morale, and retention. People react differently to various forms of motivation. Some are self-motivated, while others require constant external motivation. The important thing to remember is that the motivational tool (praise, recognition, or rewards) must fit the

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person, the position, and the circumstances. How it is done is also important, rather than simply what is done.

One expert listed 101 ways to recognize and positively motivate volunteers. They included these: smile, recognize personal needs, be cheerful, greet by name, hold rap sessions, give additional responsibility or privileges, take out to coffee, ask to help train others, compliment in public, write thank-you notes, plan off-duty fun times together, give an award, and send a birthday or holiday greeting card.

Work with volunteers the way you would like others to direct or supervise you. Attempt to have decisions made at the lowest possible level. Be certain the volunteer you choose is capable of handling the work and solving the problem. Define and explain the objective or the results you desire. Give assignments in manageable chunks. Explain the importance of the task assigned. Delegate the authority to make decisions along with the responsibility for carrying them out.

Know the volunteers' workloads. Do not overload and "burn out" volunteers. Help set priorities and timely deadlines. Be reasonable, but apply a little pressure to accomplish objectives and to meet deadlines. Tell volunteers when you intend to follow up, and then do it. Set up checkpoints and a system for reporting when deadlines are not met. Show you have confidence in their ability to carry out a task. Be more interested in the fact that it was done rather than worrying about every detail of how it was accomplished.

Demand completed work; don't take work back. Do not accept problems from volunteers; help them focus on alternative solutions. Always give praise for work well done and tasks completed on time. Remember, intelligent people learn from their mistakes. Review what went wrong and how to avoid it next time. Establish an enriching working atmosphere. Try to make each job enjoyable and fun. Empower those you lead.

### **Letters of Recommendation for Volunteers**

Letters of recommendation are important and should be written on official letterhead. The first paragraph should include the name of the agency for which the volunteer has worked and the time that has been committed to his or her volunteer assignment.

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**Work with  
volunteers the way  
you would like  
others to direct or  
supervise you.**

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The second paragraph might discuss the characteristics and abilities demonstrated by the volunteer. For the more experienced volunteer, this would include an amplification of any experience in working with human resources (either supervising people or working with others as an organizational leader) and any experience with material resources (budgeting or financial management). Additional paragraphs could highlight any major achievements, such as successful program development or implementation.

Since the nature of each volunteer experience differs, each letter will vary according to the length of time and level of responsibility of the volunteer's assignment. A task-specific job description is a valuable tool that can be used in the composition of this letter. A sample volunteer letter of recommendation appears on the following page.

### **Volunteer Job Descriptions**

The position title in a volunteer job description should describe the volunteer's responsibilities and what the volunteer actually does. Both a first and a second-line supervisor should be listed if possible. The first-line supervisor is the person the volunteer should go to if questions arise. The second-line supervisor is the person the volunteer should go to in the absence of the first-line supervisor. List supervisors by position rather than name because of staffing turnover.

A concise statement should reflect the ultimate goal or results of the service to be performed. Two primary benefits occur from defining volunteer jobs in terms of results:

- ◆ People gain a sense of achievement and feel worthwhile in their volunteer activity.
- ◆ Programs are more effective because people understand what they are supposed to accomplish.

Duties should be described clearly and concisely. This is the "what" and the "how" of the job. Usually, this is more effective if specific tasks are listed rather than put in paragraph form.



**SUBJECT: Letter of Recommendation**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

\_\_\_\_\_ was President of \_\_\_\_\_, a social, cultural, recreational, charitable, and educational organization, from June 2000 through May 2002.

As President, she directed the activities of the Executive Board, which consisted of 25 members. She was responsible for the overall management of a thrift shop, a music center, a drama center, a monthly publication, and all sources of revenue for the club. She spent an average of 25 hours per week directing these operations.

Under her supervision, the club organized and conducted two successful fundraising activities, netting over \$12,000. Through these efforts, the club was able to donate \$10,000 over and above the budget to charities and groups in the \_\_\_\_\_ community.

Her major accomplishments during her term in office were in establishing the Family Readiness Group program and the restructuring of the thrift shop's operations, thus ensuring the tax-free status of the organization.

\_\_\_\_\_ was a truly dedicated and professional volunteer. She consistently demonstrated strong organizational and managerial abilities. I recommend her to you without hesitation or qualification.

(Signature)  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding

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State the actual time commitment required. One of the most serious mistakes an agency can make is to fail to truthfully indicate how much time the volunteer will need to accomplish the job. Recruiting volunteers without clearly defining the time commitment will ultimately result in failure. If you do not know the amount of time the job will take, say so. Ask for input from the volunteer. Agree to discuss the job after a short period (one or two cycles of the routine) to reevaluate the time required. This will show the volunteer that the supervisor is concerned about meeting the needs of both the volunteer and the project.

Include all of the qualifications necessary for the effective performance of duties, listing physical qualities as well as skills, experience, and abilities. Be careful not to over qualify the position. Once the qualifications are established, the agency or FRG should adhere to its written statements.

## **FAMILY RESOURCE LINK**

### **TOPIC: FRG Volunteer Expectations**

**Discussion:** FRG volunteers may encounter a wide range of inquiries and issues. Commanders of units, rear detachments, military communities, and posts should set realistic expectations on volunteer duties, recognizing that FRG volunteers are not professional counselors. For example, one volunteer was reportedly reprimanded for the way she handled a potentially suicidal caller.

**Lessons:** Commanders must involve themselves in defining the scope of volunteer duties and the training needed to produce the standards of performance expected of them. FRGs should not become surrogate parents, guardians, or social workers; become part of the casualty notification process; become a babysitting service; lend money, cars, or expensive items; divide into groups, such as enlisted versus officer wives; or duplicate the services of other support agencies.

- ◆ Volunteers need skills that enable them to screen and identify the category of inquiries and calls they receive, such as information calls, social calls, problem calls, crisis calls, unnecessary calls, and chronic calls.
- ◆ The focus of volunteer training should be on refining their assessment and referral skills. FRGs work well with little formal training but even better when members and leaders receive continuing training and support.

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Include the nature of required training, specific content of the training, the appropriate hours and timing of orientations, and any job-specific training. Orientations and training sessions should be carried out on a regular basis.

Be very specific about stating who does the supervising. Consider including a schedule of supervisory reviews. Feedback is essential for both the volunteer and the supervisor to perform their respective duties well. Since the job description should serve as a clear statement of a volunteer's duties, it should be used in volunteer-supervisor feedback sessions. This is the time to revise time requirements, distribute duties to another position, or create another job, if necessary. Job descriptions should be revised annually or as needed.

Actual volunteer job descriptions for positions in a typical family readiness program using FRGs are found on the following pages. They are not all-inclusive and should be modified as appropriate for use in specific programs and locations. Job titles and other terminology will vary, as will responsibilities, according to the needs and desires of local FRG participants. These samples illustrate the general idea, however. For additional information on these and others job descriptions, please see Chapter 4 of *The Army FRG Leader's Handbook*, which is a part of the Operation READY curriculum.

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** Battalion FRG Advisor

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Battalion Commander and Brigade FRG Advisor

**PURPOSE:** Organize battalion-level FRG structure

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Supports the commander's family readiness goals
- ◆ Serves on battalion FRG steering committee; may chair the committee, as well
- ◆ Provides guidance and support to all unit FRG leaders
- ◆ Fields specific family readiness problems and discusses them with steering committee
- ◆ Gathers and disseminates information on activities at the battalion level and above
- ◆ Delegates FRG projects to senior spouses for resolution
- ◆ Acts as liaison between battalion and unit-level FRGs
- ◆ Acts as battalion FRG spokesperson for communicating family members' concerns and ideas to the battalion commander

**TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to 20 hours a week, depending on unit deployment status and other scheduled activities; commitment usually for duration of the battalion commander's tour of duty

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Knowledge of family readiness programs, unit structure and procedures, and post agencies and services
- ◆ Ability to work well with steering committee and unit FRG leaders
- ◆ Ability to persuade people to get things done

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY classes
- ◆ AFTB Levels I-III
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Volunteer training and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

- POSITION TITLE:** Company FRG Leader  
(or battery/troop/detachment, etc.)
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company Commander
- PURPOSE:** Organize and lead company-level FRG
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- ◆ Supports the commander’s family readiness goals
  - ◆ Provides overall leadership of the FRG
  - ◆ Recruits other volunteers to serve on FRG committees
  - ◆ Delegates FRG responsibilities to selected volunteers as committee chairpersons, or presides over their elections
  - ◆ Serves as a member of the battalion-level steering committee
  - ◆ Identifies needs or unique problems of company families
  - ◆ Acts as company FRG spokesperson for communicating family members’ concerns and ideas to the company commander and, if needed, the battalion-level FRG leader
- TIME REQUIRED:** Six to eight hours a week, depending on deployment status and other scheduled activities; commitment usually duration of command
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- ◆ Knowledge of family readiness programs, unit structure and procedures, and post agencies and services
  - ◆ Ability to work well with soldiers and families and persuade people to get things done
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- ◆ Operation READY classes
  - ◆ AFTB Levels I-III
  - ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
  - ◆ Volunteer training and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** FRG Secretary

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** FRG Leader

**PURPOSE:** Maintain accurate minutes of meetings and distribute information and correspondence to FRG leader and newsletter editor

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Maintains a FRG binder with a calendar, to do list, current Chain of Concern roster, sign-in sheets, agendas and minutes, and after-action reports
- ◆ Ensures confidentiality and acts in a sensitive manner
- ◆ Updates the contact roster with telephone numbers of new arrivals and reports changes to the FRG leader

**TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately 10 hours per month; one-year commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Ability to take accurate notes and keep records
- ◆ Well organized

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY courses
- ◆ AFTB Levels I-III
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** FRG Treasurer and Alternate

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company/Battalion FRG Leader and Commander

**PURPOSE:** Serve as custodian for the FRG informal fund

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Obtains appointment letter from the commander
- ◆ Prepares form SS4 and applies to the IRS for an employee ID number for the bank account
- ◆ Sets up fund account at local bank
- ◆ Maintains FRG fund records and ledger; keeps it up to date at all times
- ◆ Receives and counts all funds submitted from fundraisers; prepares deposit slips, and deposits funds to FRG fund account
- ◆ Disburses checks in accordance with FRG leader and commander's guidance
- ◆ Reviews monthly bank statements and reconciles with ledger; calls bank bookkeeper about any unexplained discrepancies
- ◆ Prepares monthly reports and presents them to FRG leader and commander; also reads summary aloud at FRG meetings

**TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to twenty hours per month (depending on activity frequency); one-year commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Knowledge of banking procedures
- ◆ Good math skills
- ◆ Well organized
- ◆ Ability to work well with others

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY courses
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

**POSITION TITLE:** Phonetree Committee Chairperson

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** FRG Leader or Commander

**PURPOSE:** Provide personal contact to keep FRG spouses informed

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Prepares the unit telephone tree from the unit alert roster and information from first sergeant and FRG questionnaires
- ◆ Recruits and trains telephone points of contact (POC), at least one per platoon or, alternately, enough to assign 5–8 families each
- ◆ Assigns POCs to platoons or 5–8 family groups each
- ◆ Coordinates regularly with FRG leader and welcome committee chairperson, and updates phonetree with new families
- ◆ Supervises testing of the FRG phonetree at least monthly while troops are home and twice monthly while deployed
- ◆ Passes important information to POCs for families
- ◆ Fields calls from POCs with questions or reports of incidents
- ◆ Reports any significant incidents to FRG leader or commander
- ◆ Reviews POC phone logs, reports, and volunteer time logs
- ◆ Prepares monthly reports and submits to FRG leader
- ◆ Maintains confidentiality, and discourages rumors and gossip
- ◆ Keeps a careful log of calls received, made, and their results

**TIME REQUIRED:** Two to four hours per week; six-month commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Good telephone/communication skills
- ◆ Knowledge of community resources and crisis intervention
- ◆ Concern and empathy for others; calm under stress

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY courses
- ◆ AFTB Levels I-III
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience



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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:**                      **Phonetree Point of Contact (POC)**

**RESPONSIBLE TO:**                      Phonetree Chairperson or FRG Leader

**PURPOSE:**                                Gather and disseminate information

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Calls each of the assigned families on their POC phonetree branch; reports any discrepancies in the information on the list
- ◆ Passes important information to assigned families
- ◆ Telephones spouses occasionally when troops are in garrison and twice monthly during deployments
- ◆ Annotates the phonetree with any changes, and informs the phonetree chairperson or FRG leader
- ◆ Fields calls from assigned families, and answers questions or directs callers to appropriate resources; provides accurate, timely information
- ◆ Fields emergency calls and assists the families involved
- ◆ Welcomes new families assigned to the POC's phonetree branch
- ◆ Maintains confidentiality, discourages gossip, and dispels rumors
- ◆ Reports serious matters to phonetree chairperson or FRG leader
- ◆ Keeps a careful log of calls received, made, and their results

**TIME REQUIRED:**                              Two to six hours per week; six-month commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Good telephone/communication skills
- ◆ Knowledge of community resources and crisis intervention
- ◆ Concern and empathy for others; calm under stress

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY courses
- ◆ AFTB Levels I-III
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

- POSITION TITLE:** Battalion (or Unit) FRG Newsletter Editor
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Battalion (or Company) Commander and FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Publishes the battalion (company) FRG newsletter
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- ◆ Determines ground rules for official newsletters
  - ◆ Determines level of interest of FRG members in having a newsletter; discusses with FRG leader and commander
  - ◆ Organizes a volunteer newsletter staff (reporters, writers, editors, typists, illustrators, collators, mailers)
  - ◆ Designs newsletter and logo—gets input from members
  - ◆ Oversees gathering of information from all sources; organizes, writes, and edits material
  - ◆ Provides copies of draft newsletters to FRG leader and commander for editing
  - ◆ After final editing, does layout and pasteup; submits camera-ready copy for reproduction
- TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to twenty hours per month (depending on newsletter frequency); one-year commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- ◆ Editorial, spelling, grammar skills; ability to write articles
  - ◆ Managerial skills; knowledge of organization
  - ◆ Creativity, energy, artistic talent
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- ◆ Orientation at Information System Branch
  - ◆ Operation READY courses
  - ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
  - ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** FRG Special Events Committee Chairperson

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company FRG Leader

**PURPOSE:** Plan, organize, and execute FRG activities and special events

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Solicits FRG members' ideas and interests about fun events they would like the FRG to plan
- ◆ Discusses proposed events with FRG and unit leadership
- ◆ Recruits other volunteers to help with event details; checks the unit training schedule; agrees on date, location, etc.
- ◆ Establishes committees for the event and brainstorms needs
- ◆ Coordinates financial needs with FRG leadership, treasurer, and fundraiser chairperson
- ◆ Ensures that desired location is available the day of the event
- ◆ Coordinates with publicity and newsletter chairpersons to advertise the event
- ◆ Supervises the planning sessions and completes event planning
- ◆ Coordinates with commander or first sergeant to arrange for single soldiers to help with decorations and other tasks
- ◆ Meets at intervals with committee chairpersons to ensure that all necessary preparations are in place

**TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to 20 hours per month (depending on event frequency); six-month commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Enthusiasm and energy
- ◆ Positive leadership traits
- ◆ Good knowledge of recreational opportunities on post and elsewhere
- ◆ Organizational ability

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY courses
- ◆ AFTB Levels I-III
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

**POSITION TITLE:** Hospitality/Welcome Committee Chairperson

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company FRG Leader

**PURPOSE:** Welcome all new members and families

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Keeps up with news of incoming families, newly married couples, new babies, single soldiers, illnesses, injuries, hospitalizations in the unit
- ◆ Calls new spouses and welcomes them to the unit; invites them to upcoming FRG events; provides an ACS welcome packet
- ◆ Gathers information on the number and ages of children in each family and their special interests
- ◆ Informs the FRG leader and phonetree committee chairperson of incoming families
- ◆ Ensures that new families have been assigned sponsors and phonetree POCs
- ◆ Sends flowers and cards to home or hospital as appropriate
- ◆ Attends unit/battalion planning meetings and FRG events

**TIME REQUIRED:** Three to five hours a week; six-month commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Enthusiastic people person
- ◆ Helpful and compassionate attitude
- ◆ Well organized

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Operation READY Courses
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

- POSITION TITLE:** FRG Publicity Committee Chairperson
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company/Battalion FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Inform all soldiers and family members in the FRG of all activities (ongoing and upcoming)
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- ◆ Coordinates with hospitality/welcome committee chairperson to learn of new families' addresses and phone numbers
  - ◆ Informs new members of the purpose and structure of the FRG
  - ◆ Coordinates with FRG leader and special events chairperson to determine advertising needs for upcoming FRG events
  - ◆ Coordinates with phonetree chairperson about the need for POC assistance with notifying families, with first sergeant to make sure soldiers are informed, and with newsletter chairperson
  - ◆ Disseminates information about FRG events through phonetree POCs, newsletters, flyers, mailings, public announcements at meetings, unit bulletin boards
- TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to 20 hours per month (depending on activity frequency); one-year commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- ◆ Outgoing personality
  - ◆ Ability to work well with others
  - ◆ Good command of language
  - ◆ Well organized
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- ◆ Operation READY courses
  - ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
  - ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

**POSITION TITLE:** Fundraiser Committee Chairperson

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company/Battalion FRG Leader and the Commander

**PURPOSE:** Manage FRG fundraising activities

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Coordinates with FRG leader and special events coordinator on upcoming events and financial needs
- ◆ Coordinates with commander or first sergeant on training schedule and open times for fundraisers
- ◆ Canvasses membership about types of fundraisers desired
- ◆ Coordinates with commander about proposed fundraiser(s)
- ◆ Prepares fundraiser permission letter and delivers to FRG leader
- ◆ Works with publicity and phonetree chairpersons to get the word out about upcoming fundraiser
- ◆ Complies with Army regulations and post rules
- ◆ Works with fundraiser committee to plan the fundraiser
- ◆ Recruits volunteers and delegates to work
- ◆ Supervises the fundraiser on the appointed day
- ◆ Safeguards funds and turns them over to the treasurer or alternate as soon as practicable
- ◆ Reports fundraiser results to FRG leader and membership

**TIME REQUIRED:** Ten hours per month; one-year commitment

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Knowledge of fundraising regulations
- ◆ Excellent leadership traits—works well with people

**RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**

- ◆ Contact the Financial Management Branch
- ◆ Operation READY Courses
- ◆ Environmental Health & Preventive Medicine
- ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

- POSITION TITLE:** FRG Childcare Committee Chairperson
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Ensure acceptable childcare for FRG meetings and special events
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- ◆ Makes acceptable arrangements for childcare during FRG meetings and special events
  - ◆ Ensures that caregivers have received the required training prior to their employment
  - ◆ Ensures that an adequate number of caregivers are on hand for the numbers and ages of children present
  - ◆ Ensures on-site adult supervision at all times during the parents' absence
  - ◆ Provides actual spot checks on the childcare providers used for meetings and special events
  - ◆ Ensures that the childcare facility meets post safety and sanitation standards before use
  - ◆ Ensures activities (VCR tapes, coloring books, and organized games) appropriate for the children are provided
  - ◆ Pays caregivers when applicable
- TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately one day per month for meetings, preparation, and actual events; one-year commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- ◆ Willingness to develop a working knowledge of the unit's Family Readiness Plan
  - ◆ Interest or experience in the FRG program
  - ◆ Well organized
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- ◆ Operation READY courses
  - ◆ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
  - ◆ Similar courses and/or past experience

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** Chairperson

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Unit Commander

**GENERAL STATEMENT:** The chairperson of a Family Readiness Group within the Army National Guard is the leader of the group and its spokesperson. The chairperson presides at FRG meetings and maintains regular communication with the affiliated organization's commander or authorized unit Point of Contact to keep participating families informed of unit activities and policies. She or he also communicates regularly with the State Family Program Coordinator and the State Volunteer Representative on plans for FRG activities, family-member concerns, and requests for assistance.

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Plans and conducts FRG activities that support family well being and preparedness of the unit, consistent with the goals of the State Family Program
- ◆ Keeps the affiliated unit informed of FRG activities
- ◆ Keeps information flowing between family members, the unit, and the State Family Program Office
- ◆ Presides over FRG meetings, which are held as needed
- ◆ Meets annually with other chairpersons throughout the state to share ideas
- ◆ Helps identify volunteer spouses for local projects
- ◆ Encourages family members to become active FRG participants

**TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately 6 to 8 hours per month, depending on level of FRG activity; one-year duration (renewable)

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING:** One annual training workshop at government expense

**COMPENSATION:** No pay; reimbursement available for use of private vehicle while on FRG business

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Must believe in and support the National Guard Family Program
- ◆ Must have a family member in the National Guard
- ◆ Must have good listening skills
- ◆ Must like to help people
- ◆ Must enjoy being with other National Guard family members
- ◆ Must be able to organize others
- ◆ Must be able to communicate with and on behalf of the families and the unit



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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** State Volunteer Representative

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** State Family Program Coordinator

**GENERAL STATEMENT:** The State Volunteer Representative (SVR) assists the State Family Program Coordinator in the management and oversight of the Army National Guard Family Program, provides training and assistance in program development to unit Family Readiness Groups, and acts as liaison with appropriate state and National Guard Associations.

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Assists State Family Program Coordinator
- ◆ Coordinates family member volunteer efforts
- ◆ Serves as point of contact for FRG and family members for information, referral, and follow-up
- ◆ Serves as “Team Leader,” State Family Program Council (“The State Team”)
- ◆ Assists in management and coordination of special projects
- ◆ Participates as the Volunteer Representative of the Family Program at conferences and workshops at local, regional, and national levels
- ◆ Assists in planning, preparation, and presentation of family-member briefings
- ◆ Acts as liaison with the National Guard Association and the National Guard Association of the United States
- ◆ Exchanges ideas with volunteers from other states
- ◆ Maintains familiarity with both civilian and military family readiness services available throughout the state

**TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately 16 to 24 hours per month; some travel required at government expense; normally a one-year commitment that may be extended by the State Adjutant General

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING:** State Family Program Coordinator provides training in use of State Family Program Office management systems; outside training sessions, conferences, and workshops may also be available at government expense.

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Must believe in and support the National Guard Family Program
- ◆ Must have a family member in the National Guard
- ◆ Must have good listening skills
- ◆ Must like to help people in need
- ◆ Must have strong verbal and written communication skills
- ◆ Must have good organizational skills

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** Member, State Family Program Council

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** State Family Program Coordinator and “State Team” Leader

**GENERAL STATEMENT:** The State Family Program Council (“The State Team”) is formed by direction of the State Adjutant General in order to increase family member involvement in the National Guard Family Program. Membership is voluntary and limited to those appointed by the Adjutant General. All geographic locations and the parent and retiree populations are represented.

**JOB DESCRIPTION:** **Advisory roles:** (on behalf of constituency)

- ◆ Brings family-member concerns to the state level for appropriate action
- ◆ Reviews and comments on the effectiveness of the Family Program; makes recommendations for improvement
- ◆ Takes an active role in the Family Program’s strategic planning process covering the next two to five years

**Action roles:**

- ◆ Organizes and provides leadership for the accomplishment of approved Family Program objectives and approved special projects and events
- ◆ Facilitates the regular flow of information among Family Program participants in leadership roles

**TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately 8 to 12 hours per month, with some voluntary travel offered; State Team meets quarterly (in January, April, July, and October), with additional Adjutant General-approved special meetings called as needed. Normal term is two years, and appointments are generally made in September of each year; extension or release from service is at the discretion of the Adjutant General

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING:** Training sessions, conferences, and workshops (both in and out state) may be available at government expense.

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Must believe in and support the National Guard Family Program
- ◆ Must have good listening skills
- ◆ Must like to help people in need
- ◆ Must have strong communication skills
- ◆ Must have good organizational skills

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## **FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POSITION TITLE:** Family Sponsorship Coordinator

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** FRG Leader

**PURPOSE:** Organize and maintain a communication link between the FRG and new family members of the unit

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

- ◆ Prepares welcome packets to alleviate the stresses associated with relocation and joining a “new” family
- ◆ Coordinates with the family readiness liaison and unit administrator to obtain the names and phone numbers of newly assigned personnel and makes contact
- ◆ Matches each incoming family with an existing family for mutual support and assistance
- ◆ Notifies the FRG leader of any particular family problems or needs that are identified through conversation or during a visit that the FRG can offer assistance with
- ◆ Adds new family members (including newly married spouses) to the phonetree and newsletter mailing list

**TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately two days per month

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING:** Unit orientation and attendance at a Family Program Academy. Other training will be offered as the budget allows

**QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**

- ◆ Willingness to develop a working knowledge of the unit’s Family Readiness Plan
- ◆ Interest or experience in the FRG program



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- AR 25-30        The Army Publishing and Printing Program
- AR 25-51        Official Mail and Distribution Management
- AR 27-3          Legal Assistance
- AR 37-104-4     Military Pay and Allowance Procedures
- AR 37-104-10   Military Pay and Allowances Procedures for Reserve Components of the Army
- AR 40-3          Medical, Dental, and Veterinary Care
- AR 55-46        Travel of Dependents and Accompanied Military and Civilian Personnel to, from, or between Overseas Areas
- AR 55-71        Transportation of Personal Property and Related Services
- AR 135-210      Order to Active Duty as Individuals during Peacetime
- AR 140-1        Army Reserve Mission, Organization, and Changes
- AR 140-145     Individual Mobilization Augmentation Program
- AR 210-7        Commercial Solicitation on Army Installations
- AR 210-50      Installation Family Housing Management
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- AR 500-5        Army Mobilization
- AR 600-8-1      Army Casualty and Memorial Affairs and LOD Investigations
- AR 600-8-3      Unit Postal Operations
- AR 600-8-101   Personnel Processing: In- and Out- and Mobilization Processing
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- AR 600-20      Army Command Policy and Procedures

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AR 600-29	Fund Raising within the Department of the Army
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AR 608-10	Child Development Services
AR 608-12	Reimbursement of Adoptive Expenses
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- DA PAM 600-41 Military Personnel Managers Mobilization Handbook
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## USEFUL MILITARY-RELATED WEB RESOURCES

- 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division:** <http://www.1id.army.mil>
- 63<sup>rd</sup> RSC Homepage:** <http://www.usarc.army.mil/63rsc>
- AAFES:** <http://www.aafes.com>
- ACSIM (Installation Management):** <http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/homepage.shtml>
- American Red Cross:** <http://www.redcross.org/>
- Area 1 Support Activity:** <https://www-area1.korea.army.mil/>
- Arlington National Cemetery:** <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.com>
- Armed Forces Recreation Centers:** <http://www.armymwr.com/mwr/afrcs/>
- Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA):** <http://www.asymca.org/>
- Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES):** <http://www.aafes.com>
- Army Athletics Online:** <http://www.usma.edu/athletics>
- Army Awards and Decorations:**  
<http://www-perscom.army.mil/TAGD/TIOH/ribbons.HTM>
- Army Broadcasting Service:** <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/abs/>
- Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP):** <http://www.acap.army.mil/>
- Army Chief of Staff:** <http://www.army.mil/leaders/csa/default.htm>
- Army Civilian Personnel Online:** <http://www.cpol.army.mil/library/index.html>
- Army Community and Family Support Center MWR:** <http://armymwr.com>
- Army Community Service:** [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org)
- Army Continuing Education System:** <http://www.armyeducation.army.mil/>
- Army Correspondence Course Program (ACCP):** <http://www.atsc.army.mil/accp/aipd.htm>
- Army Emergency Relief:** <http://www.aerhq.org>
- Army Family Action Plan:** <http://www.armymwr.com/mwr/afap/>
- Army Family Liaison Home Page:** <http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/family/family.htm>
- Army Family Readiness Group Information:** <http://www.armyspouse.com>
- Army Family Team Building Home Page:** <http://www.aftb.org/home.asp>
- Army Family Team Building Net Trainer Site:** <http://www.aftb.org/home.asp>
- Army Financial Management:** <http://www.asafm.army.mil>
- Army Insignia Home Page:** <http://www.inxpress.net/~rokats/armyhome.html>

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**Army Link (U.S. Army Chief of PAO):** <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/>

**Army Lodging:** <http://www.armymwr.com/lodging/travelers.htm>

**Army Magazine:** <http://www.ausa.org/www/armymag.nsf>

**Army Material Command (AMC):** <http://www.amc.army.mil>

**Army Medical Department (AMEDD):** <http://www.armymedicine.army.mil/armymed/default2.htm>

**Army National Guard (ARNG):** <http://www.arng.army.mil/>

**Army Physical Fitness Research Institute:** <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/apfri>

**Army Reserve Benefits:** <http://www.army.mil/usar/>

**Army Reserve Magazine:** <http://www.army.mil/usar/>

**Army Signal Command:** <http://www.asc.army.mil>

**Army Teen Panel:** <http://www.redstone.army.mil/armyouth/>

**Army Times:** <http://www.armytimes.com>

**Army Wives:** <http://www.armywives.com>

**Association of the United States Army (AUSA):** <http://www.ausa.org>

**Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA):** <http://www.avaintl.org>

**Awards:** <http://www-perscom.army.mil/tagd/awards/index.htm>

**BAH (Basic Allowance for Housing) Information:** <http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/bah.html>

**BAH Rates:** <http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/bahform.html>

**Bosnia Link - Operation Joint Guard:** <http://www.dtic.mil/bosnia/>>

**Calculator:** <http://www.calculator.com>

**Center for Army Leadership:** <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/cal/index.htm>

**Center for Army Lessons Learned:** <http://call.army.mil/call.html>

**Center for Military History:** <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg>

**Combat Studies Institute:** <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/csi/index.htm>

**Combined Arms Center, Ft. Leavenworth, KS:** <http://leav-ftp.army.mil>

**Community and Family Support Center, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR):**  
<http://www.armymwr.com>

**Congress (House):** <http://www.house.gov>

**Congress (Senate):** <http://www.senate.gov>

**Consideration of Others Handbook:** <http://www.odcsper.army.mil/default.asp?pageid=29f>

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**CONUS Per Diem Rates Homepage:**

<http://www.policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/travel.shtml>

**Crossroads, U.S. Air Force:** <http://www.afcrossroads.com/>

**DECA:** <http://www.commissaries.com>

**DEERS E-mail:** <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil>

**Defense Finance and Accounting:** <http://www.dfas.mil>

**Defense Link:** <http://www.defenselink.mil>

**Defense News:** <http://www.defensenews.com/home.php>

**Demographics, Army Soldier and Family:** <http://www.armymwr.com/mwr/soldier.html>

**Department of Commerce National Technical Information Center:** <http://ntis.gov/>

**Deployment Link:** [http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/deploy/prep/prep\\_intro.shtml](http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/deploy/prep/prep_intro.shtml)

**Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (Heidelberg):** <http://www.per.hqusaureur.army.mil>

**DoD Addresses:** <http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/pis>

**DoD Dictionary of Military Terms:** <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddic>

**DoD Forms:** <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/icdhome/DDEFORMS.HTM>

**DoD Glossary of Healthcare Terminology:** <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/references/acroterms.html>

**DoD Inspector General:** <http://www.defenselink.mil/ig>

**DoD Job Search:** <http://www.dod.jobsearch.org>

**DoD TransPortal:** <http://www.dodtransportal.org>

**DoD Worldwide Installations List:** <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/installations/>

**DoDDS Europe:** <http://www.dodds-e.odedodea.edu/>

**DoDEA:** <http://www.odedodea.edu/>

**Educational Resource Information Center:** <http://www.accesseric.org>

**Eighth U.S. Army:** <http://www.korea.army.mil>

**E-mail the President, Vice President, or First Lady:** <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

**Engineer Enlisted Branch:** <http://www-perscom.army.mil/EPeng/englinks.htm>

**FAMNET:** <http://famnet.com>

**Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund:** <http://www.feea.org>

**Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan:** <http://www.opm.gov/insure>

**Federal Tax Information:** <http://www.treas.gov>



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**Federal Voting Assistance Program:** <http://www.fvap.ncr.gov/>

**“FEDreport” Weekly Newsletter:** <http://www.fedreport.com>

**Financial Management Regulation:** <http://www.dtic.mil/comptroller/fmr/>

**Fisher House:** <http://www.fisherhouse.org>

**FORSCOM Homepage:** <http://www.forscom.army.mil>

**Frequently Asked Questions:** <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/faq>

**Ft. Benning Home Page:** <http://www.benning.army.mil>

**Ft. Bliss Home Page:** <http://www.bliss.army.mil>

**Ft. Bragg Home Page:** <http://www.bragg.army.mil>

**Ft. Detrick:** <http://www.armymedicine.army.mil/detrick>

**Ft. Gordon Home Page:** <http://www.gordon.army.mil>

**Ft. Hood Home Page:** <http://www.hood.army.mil>

**Ft. Huachuca Home Page:** <http://www.huachuca-usaic.army.mil>

**Ft. Jackson Home Page:** <http://www.jackson-www.army.mil>

**Ft. Knox Home Page:** <http://www.knox.army.mil>

**Ft. Myer Military Community MWR:** <http://www.fmmcmwr.com>

**Ft. Sill Home Page:** <http://sill-www.army.mil/>

**Ft. Stewart Home Page:** <http://www.stewart.army.mil/homepage.htm>

**General Services Administration (GSA):** <http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/home.jsp>

**GEO Cities (“for the brats”):** <http://geocities.com/SoHo/7315/>

**GI Bill Information:** <http://www.gibill.va.gov>

**Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups:** [http://www.usapa.army.mil/pdf/files/p608\\_47.pdf](http://www.usapa.army.mil/pdf/files/p608_47.pdf)

**HOOAH 4 Health:** <http://www.hooah4health.com>

**House of Representatives:** <http://www.house.gov>

**How the Army Runs:** <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/dclm/linkedtextchapters.htm>

**HQDA Link:** <http://www.hqda.army.mil>

**HQ USAREUR:** <http://www.hqusareur.army.mil>

**Inspector General Directories:** <http://www.ignet.gov/igs/homepage.html>

**Institute of Heraldry:** <http://www-perscom.army.mil/tagd/tioh/tioh.htm>

**IRS Forms and Publications:** [http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/forms\\_pubs/index.html](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/forms_pubs/index.html)



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**“It Takes a Team”** (A Resource Guide for the Company Commander’s Spouse/Representative):  
<http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/dclm/take/index.htm>

**JAG Corps Family Connection:** <http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/>

**Joint Chiefs of Staff:** <http://www.dtic.mil/jcs/index.html>

**Joint Travel Regulations for Uniformed Service Members and DoD Civilians:**  
<http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/trvlregs.html>

**JROTC:** <http://www.usarotc.com/jrotc/jrotc.htm>  
<http://www.rotc.monroe.army.mil/jrotc/>

**JROTC Instructor Opportunities:** <http://www.dodtransportal.org>

**Legal Services:** <http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/legal>

**The Library of Congress:** <http://www.lcweb.loc.gov>

**Lifelines:** <http://www.lifelines4qol.org>

**Married Couples Program:** <http://www.perscom.army.mil/enlist/macp.htm>

**Military Analysis Network:** <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/index.html>

**Military and ACS Related Links:** <http://www.gordon.army.mil/acs/>

**Military Assistance Program “MAPsite”:** <http://dticaw.dtic.mil/mapsite>

**Military BRATS Online:** <http://militarybrats.com>

**Military Child Development Program:** <http://military-childrenandyouth.calib.com/index.htm>

**Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC):** <http://militarychild.org>

**Military City Online:** <http://www.militarycity.com>

**Military Clothing (new):** <http://www.forscom.army.mil/ocie/new.htm>

**Military Coins—Photos and History:** <http://www.militarycoins.com>

**Military Family Resource Center:** <http://mfrc.calib.com>

**Military History Institute:** <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi>

**Military Intelligence Corps Association:** <http://www.micorps.org>

**Military Living:** <http://www.militaryliving.com/>

**Military Post Information:** <http://www.maingate.com>

**Military Pay and Charts:** <http://www.dfas.mil/money/milpay/>

**Military Relocation Information Network (MRIN):** <http://www.militaryrelocation.com/>

**Military Review Journal:** <http://www.cgsc.army.mil/milrev>

**Military Spouse Net:** <http://members.aol.com/ARMYWIFE2/index3.html>

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**Military Spouses Page 3:** <http://members.aol.com/ARMYWIFE2/index3.html>

**Military Teens on the Move (MTOM):** <http://dticaw.dtic.mil/mtom>

**Military Traffic Management Command:** <http://www.mtmc.army.mil>

**Military Travel Guide:** <http://www.military.com/Travel/FrontDoor/0,11886,,00.htm>

**Military Women “Firsts” and Their History:** <http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/firsts.html>

**MWR Main Pages:** <http://www.armymwr.com>

**MWR Marketing:** <http://www.armymwr.com/kb/marketing.htm>

**National Archives and Records Administration:** <http://www.nara.gov>

**National Army Museum:** <http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk>

**National Cemetery Administration, Dept. of Veterans Affairs:** <http://www.cem.va.gov>

**National Guard:** <http://www.arng.ngb.army.mil>

**National Imagery and Mapping Agency:** <http://www.nima.mil>

**National Institutes of Health:** <http://www.nih.gov>

**National Military Family Association:** <http://www.nmfa.org>

**NCO Creed:** <http://www.hqda.army.mil/sma/ncocreed.htm>

**NCOER FAQ:** <http://www.vbnhq.com/sltk/>

**Noncommissioned Officer Training Centers:** <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/4227/ncoa.htm>

**OCHAMPUS/TRICARE:** <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>

**ODCSIM, USAREUR, Homepage (Regulations, Publications, Electronic Forms):**  
<http://www.odcsim.hqusareur.army.mil/>

**Office of Personnel Management (OPM):** <http://www.opm.gov>

**Office of the Asst Sec of the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs (OASAMRA):**  
<http://oasamra5.army.pentagon.mil>

**Office of the Secretary of Defense:** <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/almanac/osd.html>

**Online Promotion Point Worksheet (SGT and SSG):**  
<http://www.military-net.com/education/mpdbefore.html>

**Operation Doula Care:** <http://www.pioneerdoula.com/operationdoulacare/index.html>

**Operation Footlocker:** <http://www.tckworld.com/opfoot/>

**Overseas Brats:** <http://www.overseasbrats.com>

**PAO Camp Doha & Kuwait:** <http://www.kuwait.army.mil>

**PERSCOM:** <http://www.perscom.army.mil>

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**Perscom Hot Topics:** <http://www.perscom.army.mil/hot.htm>

**Personnel and Readiness, Undersecretary for:** <http://dticaw.dtic.mil/prhome/>

**Personnel Locator for Active Duty Army:** <http://www.erec.army.mil/wwl/>

**Points of Light Foundation:** <http://www.pointsoflight.org>

**“Profile, Life in the Armed Forces” Magazine:** <http://www.spear.navy.mil/profile/>

**Ranks:** <http://www-perscom.army.mil/tagd/tioh/rank/first.htm>

**Recruiting:** <http://www.goarmy.com>

**REDUX/High 3 Retired Pay Choice:** <http://pay2000.dtic.mil>

**Retiree Dental Plan:** <http://www.ddpdelta.org>

**Retirement Services Office:** <http://www.odcsper.army.mil/retire>

**Sgt. Mom’s:** <http://www.sgtmoms.com/>

**SITES (Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service):** <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/sites>

**Social Security Administration:** <http://www.ssa.gov>

**Soldier’s and Airmen Home:** <http://www.afrh.com/sol-airm.htm>

**Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act:** [http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/Relief\\_Act](http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/Relief_Act)

**Soldiers On Line:** <http://www.dtic.mil/soldiers>

**Sons and Daughters in Touch:** <http://www.SDIT.org>

**Space-Available Travel Info:** <http://www.militaryliving.com>

**Space Kids:** <http://www.spacekids.com/>

**Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service (SITES):** <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/sites>

**State Department Overseas Citizens Services (travel advisories):** <http://www.travel.state.gov>

**State Tax Information:** <http://www.1040.com/state.htm>

**Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP):**  
[http://www.odcsper.army.mil/Directorates/retire/survivor\\_benefit\\_plan/fact/facttoc.asp](http://www.odcsper.army.mil/Directorates/retire/survivor_benefit_plan/fact/facttoc.asp)

**TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc.):** <http://www.taps.org>

**Task Force Eagle:** <http://www.dtic.mil/bosnia/army/eagle.html>

**Third Culture Kids:** <http://www.tckworld.com>

**This Day in Korea:** <http://korea50.army.mil/history/thisday.html>

**Thrift Savings Fund (TSP):** <http://www.tsp.gov>

**TRICARE:** <http://www.TRICARE.osd.mil>

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**TRICARE Dental Plan (United Concordia):** <http://www.ucci.com>

**United Parcel Service:** <http://www.ups.com>

**United Services Organization:** <http://www.uso.org>

**U.S. Air Force Home Page:** <http://www.af.mil/>

**U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center:** <http://www.armymwr.com/>

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** <http://www.usace.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command:** <http://www.belvoir.army.mil/cidc>

**U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM):** <http://www.forscom.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Home Page:** <http://www.goarmy.com/index05.htm>

**U.S. Army Installations (Links):** <http://www.army.mil/public/installations.htm>

**U.S. Army Links:** <http://thearmylink.iwarp.com>

**U.S. Army Medical Command/the Surgeon General:** <http://www.armymedicine.army.mil>

**U.S. Army National Guard:** <http://www.1800goguard.com>

**U.S. Army National Guard Homepage:** <http://www.ngb.dtic.mil>

**U.S. Army NCO Academy, Ft. McCoy, WI:** <http://www.mccoy.army.mil/ncoa/checklist.htm>

**U.S. Army Pacific:** <http://www.usarpac.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Publishing Agency (USAPA) Home Page:** <http://www.usapa.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Publishing Agency Electronic Publications and Forms:**  
<http://www-usappc-hoffman.army.mil/gils>

**U.S. Army Research Institute:** <http://www.ari.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Reserve Home Page:** <http://www.army.mil/usar>

**U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command:** <http://www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil/>

**U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA):** <http://usasma.bliss.army.mil/>

**U.S. Army South:** <http://www.usarso.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (USASMDC):** <http://www.smdc.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Special Operations Command:** <http://www.soc.mil/>

**U.S. Army Total Army Personnel Command:** <http://www-perscom.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC):** <http://www.tradoc.army.mil>

**U.S. Army Training Support Center (ATSC):** <http://www.atsc.army.mil/>

**U.S. Army War College:** <http://carlisle-www.army.mil>

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**U.S. Battle Monuments Commission:** <http://www.usabmc.com>  
**U.S. Government Printing Office:** <http://www.gpo.gov>  
**U.S. Marine Corps Home Page:** <http://www.usmc.mil/>  
**U.S. Military Academy, West Point:** <http://www.usma.army.mil>  
**U.S. Navy Home Page:** <http://www.navy.mil>  
**USO (United Services Organization):** <http://www.uso.org>  
**U.S. Postal Service:** <http://www.usps.gov>  
**The White House:** <http://www.whitehouse.gov>  
**V Corps Headquarters:** <http://www.hq.c5.army.mil>  
**Veteran Student Affairs:** <http://www.dos.uci.edu/veteran/benefits.html>  
**Veterans Affairs (VA):** <http://www.va.gov>  
**Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits and Services:** <http://www.gibill.va.gov>  
**Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW):** <http://www.vfw.org>  
**VFW Operation Uplink:** <http://www.vfw.org/help/opul2t.shtml>  
**Virtual ACS:** <http://trol.redstone.army.mil/acs/index.html>  
**The Virtual Wall:** <http://www.thevirtualwall.org/>  
**Visible Women:** <http://visiblewomen.homestead.com/home.html>  
**World Class Athlete Program (Army):** [http://www.armymwr.com/mwr/army\\_sports/wcap/](http://www.armymwr.com/mwr/army_sports/wcap/)  
**Worldwide Locator:** <http://wwl.erec.army.mil>

*Please report any discrepancies to:  
Special Projects Officer  
Army Family Liaison Office  
ArmyFamily.Link@hqda.army.mil  
1-800-833-6622*

**For a complete listing of all references and audiovisual training devices, contact the nearest installation ACS or RC Family Program Coordinator's office.**

