

U.S. Army FRG Leader's Handbook



GETTING PREPARED, STAYING PREPARED



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Acknowledgements

U. S. Army FRG Leader's Handbook

Fourth Edition, 2010

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United States Department of Army Family Morale Welfare and Recreation Command:

Lynn McCollum, Director, Family Programs
Kathy Quinn Ledbetter, Family Readiness Division Chief
Peter Hepp, Social Science Program Specialist

Cornell University, College of Human Ecology, Family Life Development Center (FLDC):

Brian Leidy, PhD, Military Project Director
Marney Thomas, PhD, Military Project Director

Written and edited by staff of the FLDC:

Cindy Enroth, MSW, Program Manager
Dorothy Forbes, MA, Extension Associate
Tina McFall, Extension Associate

**OPERATION
READY**

Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

THE PURPOSE OF THIS FRG LEADER'S HANDBOOK is to provide direction to Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders who work to support Soldiers (also DA Civilians) and their Family members as they adjust to the long repeated separations. Perpetual preparation for deployment and redeployment is challenging for all Family members as a result of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). Because this process is a feature of meeting today's operational demands of Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN), FRG leaders, command, and Family program professionals, must remain vigilant in identifying the changing needs of Families as they prepare and RESET for deployment. From this, implications for how best to support them may be predicted.

This *Army Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook* is designed to be used by Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders in the Active, Guard, and Reserve Components. The handbook provides updated information regarding FRGs. A battalion commander/Rear Detachment Commander (RDC) oversees and supports all company FRGs directly and indirectly through company level commanders and a battalion FRG steering committee. When there is a battalion FRG, then the battalion commander/RDC works with the battalion FRG leader in the same manner as described above. However, if the Battalion commander chooses to have a single FRG for the battalion, the next higher level commander shall establish the advisory steering committee for the brigade's FRGs.

This handbook incorporates the guidance provided in AR 608-1, Appendix J, Army Family Readiness Group Operations and provides information and tips on how to run FRGs based on lessons learned and input from the field. It focuses on being able to respond to the needs of Soldiers, DA Civilians and Family members, which requires having a keen understanding of their key challenges. Long and multiple deployments are arduous and demanding, and are never easy. Similarly, although the role of the FRG leader can be very meaningful and satisfying, with each new deployment FRG leaders' continued "front line" support may bring on new challenges.

Organization of the Handbook

Part 1: Changes Impacting FRGs. Describes changes that are occurring in the military and with Family support that call for FRGs to work in new ways.

Part 2: What FRG Leaders Need to Know. Discusses key aspects of the FRG program that FRG leaders need to know. Information on the FRG mission as well as structure of FRG operations is provided. Tips on how to handle the FRG leadership role are also presented.

Part 3: Areas of FRG Leader's Responsibilities. Outlines the areas of the FRG leader's responsibilities. Details on the relationship with unit leadership, administrative matters, volunteer management, required FRG activities, and communication systems between the FRG and Families are given. Official guidance that pertains to these areas is included in this discussion. In addition, information on how to handle different types of situations the FRG leader (and FRG) may face is provided.

Part 4: Role and Activities of the FRG. Provides checklists of FRG activities that must be completed during each phase of the deployment cycle to support Families. These checklists highlight how the FRG leader will need to work with unit leadership and FRG volunteers to perform FRG activities in each deployment phase.

Part 5: Summary Highlights. Summarizes key highlights from the current handbook and includes a range of related suggestions. This is based on the key strategies and "best practices" FRG leaders use while preparing to manage issues and pressures surrounding FRG management.

Part 6: Common Questions—What to Know. Provides updated information and guidance regarding FRGs. It highlights information that will assist FRG leader's in managing the FRG to support Soldiers, DA Civilians, and Family members through the ARFORGEN process.

Part 7: Survey and Research Findings. Describes selective research and survey findings on FRG support and the deployment cycle.

Part 8: Resources. Outlines information on key resources and support available. There is a spectrum of Army resources to include Army Family programs personnel, especially Military Family Life Consultants (MFLCs), and Chaplains who can assist FRG leaders with helpful resources and ideas.

The *U.S. Army FRG Leader's Handbook* contents, Parts 1-4, remain unchanged in this revised 2009 Edition with the exception of minor editorial changes (e.g., updated acronyms, relevant Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) process guidance, FRG informal fund, volunteer records management).

Note: *The following terms are used throughout this handbook and are defined as follows:*

- **"Soldiers"** refers collectively to active duty, Guard and Reserve members of the Army. The information in the handbook also applies to DA Civilians who deploy.
- **"Families"** refers collectively to both immediate and extended Family members of Soldiers as well as other individuals identified by Soldiers.
- **"Deployments"** is used rather than deployment/mobilization and generally includes separations.

***We recognize—
The commitment and increasing
sacrifices that our Families are making every day.
The strength of our Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families...***

Army Family Covenant, 2007
George W. Casey, Jr., General U.S. Army Chief of Staff
Mr. Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army
Kenneth O. Preston, Sergeant Major of the Army

U. S. Army FRG Leader's Handbook

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PART I: Changes Impacting FRGs

Several significant changes are occurring that impact how FRGs need to operate today and in the upcoming years. It is no longer sufficient for FRGs to operate only during and/or for the purposes of deployment. FRGs are being called upon to play a more expansive role in Family readiness and in assisting units and Families of an Expeditionary Army.

Expeditionary Army and 21st Century Environment

The military force is being employed in many different ways due to global insecurity, Overseas Contingency Operations, and natural disasters. To meet the large demands, military missions involve all components (i.e., Active, Guard, and Reserve) of the force. As a result, Soldiers are experiencing more deployments and a wider array of missions. To address the demands on the force, the Army has reorganized to an expeditionary force comprised of modular units (see the next section on *Brigade Combat Teams*). In other words, units are configured in different ways when the force deploys. As a more flexible, rapidly deployable force, the Army can respond more effectively to the unpredictable nature of deployments and high operating tempo (OPTEMPO) demands.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR FRGS?

It means a high level of preparedness is required. Establishing the capability to respond and adapt to unforeseen situations that arise quickly is also needed. For an FRG to work effectively and support Families under these conditions, several actions are critically important:

- planning and preparation
- maintaining the infrastructure of the FRG and level of operation so the FRG can respond quickly to increased demands for information and support
- attending to the welfare of all FRG volunteers and taking other steps to sustain the FRG so the FRG can meet ongoing demands for high levels of support
- coordinating with others to ensure all Families are reached and supported regardless of geographical location
- revising FRG procedures and making other changes needed based on lessons learned.



Operating the FRG on an ongoing basis is necessary to support units and Families in today's environment

Brigade Combat Teams

The Army's force structure for meeting the Nation's demands is the Modular Force. The Army has created a modular "brigade-based" Army that is more responsive to regional combatant commanders' needs, better employs joint capabilities, facilitates force packaging and rapid deployment, and fights as more self-contained units in non-linear, non-contiguous battlespaces. Key reasons for change are:

- more rapidly deployable forces that better meet combatant commanders' requirements
- leveraging joint interoperability and interdependence
- acceleration in fielding a networked force
- generating increased capabilities for force rotation
- exploiting joint enablers at tactical level
- providing modular capabilities for future conflicts
- increasing headquarters flexibility
- improving capabilities to operate in dispersed, non-contiguous battle spaces
- accelerating behavioral change to achieve a joint and expeditionary mindset.

The Army Plan as of May 2006, called for the Active Component to field 42 brigade combat teams (heavy, infantry, and Stryker) (BCTs). There is ten modular divisions that are headquarters capable of joint operations, as well as a multi-functional and functional support brigades. The National Guard has also changed its structure to 28 BCTs (heavy, infantry, and Stryker) as well as eight modular divisions.

The restructuring is designed to enhance the capabilities of the entire Army for joint force operations and frequent contingency operations. In order for this to occur, brigades have already reorganized. For example, support elements from the division level have been shifted to and added to each BCT. Further, the design of each type of brigade has been standardized. A "heavy" brigade combat team has the same organizational design regardless of component or location. Each heavy BCT has two combined arms battalions, reconnaissance squadron, artillery battalion, brigade troops battalion, and a support battalion.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR FRGS?

1. All units need to be in a high state of readiness. Family readiness is critical to Soldier readiness and thus unit readiness. Hence, preparations for deployment need to be made well before alerts. FRGs need to be organized and running at all times to be prepared to assist units, Soldiers and Families with rapid deployments.
2. All units within a BCT may not deploy and/or an entire unit may not deploy. The FRG will need to support both Families of deployed and non-deployed Soldiers. Further, the BCT may consist of units from various locations. Thus, for FRGs to support BCTs, they need to operate in such a way that they can serve and cover different geographical areas.
3. Obtaining information and guidance from the brigade and battalion command levels will be important to support deployed BCTs and the Families involved.

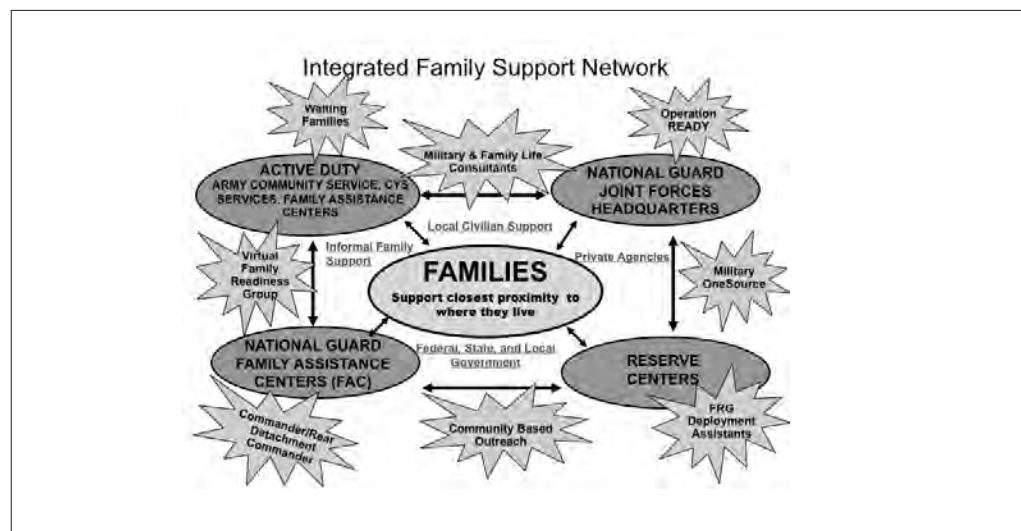
Perceptions of Soldier's "Family"

Today, there is greater recognition of the many different people involved in a Soldier's life who represent the Soldier's support network. Many of these individuals seek accurate and timely information about the Soldier's well-being from the military. Supporting these individuals can help Soldiers to focus on the mission as well as make them more effective sources of support to Soldiers. As a result, the FRG must now provide information to a large network of individuals to include parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other important individuals (e.g., caregiver of Soldier's children during a deployment, fiancée).

Army OneSource (AOS)—Integrated Family Support Network

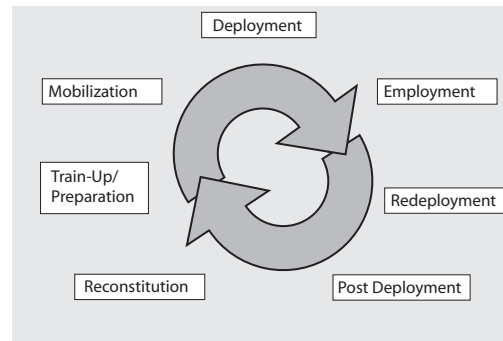
The Family support systems across the Active, Guard, and Reserve Components are also restructuring to a more integrated network to align with increasing joint force military operations. In addition, working relationships between the units (i.e., unit leadership and FRGs), military community support organizations, and civilian support organizations are being established. The diagram on this page reflects the integration of efforts that are intended to standardize and strengthen the quality of support so the needs of all Soldiers and Families are met. The various collaborative arrangements within communities and across states/regions will help the Army support Soldiers and Families where they live regardless of component. This outcome is important because Soldiers and Families are geographically dispersed and some Families do not live near a military installation or facility. FRGs are a vital component in that they support Families directly and connect Families to this network of resources.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR FRGS? FRGs can approach any of these agencies when assisting Families. There is another benefit. This Family support network allows individual organizations (such as FRGs) to have access to information and resources that can enhance their capability in supporting Families. For example, Army Community Service (ACS) and Reserve Component Family Programs offer training to FRGs.



Deployment As A Cycle

With the trend being back-to-back deployments, units go through a series of phases, as part of the ARFORGEN cycle. The FRG plays an active role in assisting units and their Soldiers and Families during each phase and in transitioning from one phase to another. Detailed information on the specific activities FRGs carry out in each phase is provided in Part 4 of this handbook. A brief explanation of the deployment cycle is provided here.



Train-Up/Preparation. Units complete the reset actions and begin to enter the traditional training cycle. Individual and collective training and readiness activities drive this phase. The Train-up/Preparation Phase begins with completion of reset activities resulting in a reconstituted unit that is prepared to enter the RESET/Train Force Pool of units and begin the training cycle. This phase ends when the individuals/units are fully prepared to deploy worldwide and conduct contingency operations.

Mobilization. Units or individuals are alerted for possible deployment and undergo preparation. The mobilization phase begins with receipt of a warning order and ends with the individuals/units' arrival at the MOB Station (RC) or home station (AA). This phase ends when individuals/units are prepared for deployment.

Deployment. Units or individuals deploy from the CONUS or OCONUS installations into the designated theater. The deployment phase begins with receipt of a warning order, proceeds through arrival at the port of embarkation and ends with arrival in theater.

Employment. Units or individuals perform their assigned mission in theater for a prescribed period of time. The employment phase begins with arrival in theater, continues throughout employment and ends with notification for redeployment.

Redeployment. Units/individuals reposture in-theater; transfer forces and material to support other operational requirements; or return personnel, equipment, and material to the home station or DEMOB station. The redeployment phase begins with receipt of a warning order, proceeds through arrival at the rear assembly area (RAA), continues through arrival at port of debarkation and ends with arrival at home station or DEMOB station.

Post Deployment. Personnel, equipment, and material arrive at home station or DEMOB station. The post deployment phase begins with units/individuals arriving at home station or DEMOB station, and includes personnel, equipment recovery, and demobilization activities.

Reconstitution. Soldiers and DA Civilians are reintegrated into their Families and communities. The reconstitution phase begins at home station after completing post deployment equipment recovery and administrative requirements. This phase ends when units have been reconstituted sufficiently to allow the start of individual and collective training.

PART II: What FRG Leaders Need To Know

2

Part 2 provides important information about the FRG program with tips on how to manage the FRG leader role. It is followed by Part 3 which reviews the specific responsibilities of the FRG leader.

2.1 FRG Program Mission

The FRG is an official Army program established pursuant to AR 600-20, Army Command Policy. Unit commanders at all levels are expected to establish and/or support FRG operations. FRGs are typically established at the company level with guidance and support from the battalion commander and his/her staff. Specific guidance on the definition and mission of FRGs has been established and is described below.

The FRG is an official Army program. Key legal and operational guidance is in AR 608-1, Appendix J.

Definition and Mission of FRG

As a company level operation, the FRG is a command sponsored organization of all assigned Soldiers (married and single), DA Civilians, volunteers and their Families (immediate and extended) that together provide mutual support and assistance and a network of communications among the Family members, the chain of command, and community resources. While all of these individuals are automatically considered to be members of the FRG, participation is voluntary.

The FRG plays a vital role in assisting unit commanders with military and personal deployment preparedness and enhancing Family readiness of Soldiers and Families. The FRG assists unit commanders in three ways. First, the FRG conducts activities that enhance the flow of information between command and Families. The FRG provides feedback on the state of the unit's Families to the command and disseminates information to Families received from the command.

Secondly, the FRG encourages resiliency among the members by providing information, referral assistance and mutual concern. Thirdly, the FRG provides activities and support that enhance the well-being and esprit de corps within the unit.

The FRG mission is to:

- act as an extension of the unit in providing official, accurate command information
- provide mutual support between the command and the FRG membership
- advocate more efficient use of community resources
- help Families solve problems at the lowest level.

Benefits of the FRG

For Family members, mutual support and care—The FRG provides a connection to the unit through which Families get important information, develop friendships, and receive moral support. In feeling connected and supported, Families are more likely to have positive attitudes about military life, the unit, and its mission. The FRG's efforts to educate and support Families also help Families become more resilient and able to cope with deployments.

For Soldiers, peace of mind—Soldiers can be assured that while they are deployed, the unit has provided an avenue for their Family members to get reliable information and help when needed. This support can help reduce Soldiers' stress and enable Soldiers to focus on the mission.

For commanders, force multiplier—The FRG leader's feedback, based on the FRG's connections and contact with Families, enables the command to keep a pulse on Family needs and issues so that command can respond in a timely manner. By being able to communicate with and support Families more effectively, the command can increase Family readiness and deployment preparedness.

For the military and civilian communities, an FRG that is able to refer Families to appropriate community service agencies in a timely manner can reduce the occurrence of crisis situations. Further, to the extent FRGs can learn about resources available in different communities, military and civilian communities can support Soldiers and Families wherever they live.

For the Army, successful FRG programs enhance Family readiness and deployment preparedness, thereby increasing unit readiness for military missions.



The FRG provides a connection to the unit through which Families get important information, develop friendships, and receive moral support.

2.2 Structure of FRG Operations

Typically, FRGs are established at the company level. However at the battalion level, the battalion commander, key staff, and their Families are members of the headquarters unit FRG. Occasionally, there is one FRG for the battalion rather than company level FRGs. The battalion and brigade serve in an advisory role to the company level FRG. As a FRG leader you may ask, "What do I do first?" The answer is meet with the Commander/RDC, FRSA, ACS or the Guard/Reserve Component Family Programs. If possible, also meet with the previous commander and FRG leaders to gather lessons learned. This will give you an idea of what else you need to do.

Company Level

A company level FRG leader works most closely with the company commander (or during deployment, the rear detachment commander). The commander is responsible for appointing the FRG leader, approving FRG volunteers (statutory volunteers only), authorizing resources, providing guidance and direction to the FRG, and ensuring training is provided to the FRG (i.e., FRG leader, volunteers and members). More detailed information about this relationship is provided in Section 1, Relationship with Unit Leadership, of Part 3 of this handbook.

Battalion Level

A FRG steering committee (sometimes called advisory committee) is typically established at the battalion level by the battalion commander. The FRG steering committee is comprised of the battalion commanders, company commanders, command sergeant major, senior FRG advisors, all company (and battalion) FRG leaders, and, when invited, ACS/ Family Programs Unit Service Coordinator. The purpose of the committee is to provide information and to advise company FRG leaders on the battalion commander's Family readiness plans and policies, FRG activities needed, and emerging FRG and Family issues.

Brigade Level

Brigade commanders have Family readiness goals for their command. Leadership at this level focuses mainly on policy issues and overall readiness of command. Thus, leadership at this level is seldom directly involved in company issues. However, brigade commanders advise battalion leadership on readiness issues which is then reflected in battalion guidance to company FRGs.

2.3 Tips On Handling FRG Leadership Role

Tips To Being an Effective FRG Leader

Leadership is a critical element to a well run FRG. It requires having the skills that enable the following to occur:

- Effective teaming relationships (with command, FRG volunteers, officer and enlisted membership, and community agencies)
- Accurate and timely flow of information between FRG and command, among FRG volunteers, and between FRG and Families
- Positive environment for FRG volunteers and members (i.e., individuals want to belong to the FRG and/or perceive the FRG as able to provide helpful information and assistance).

Everyone brings their own abilities, traits and styles to the FRG leadership role. This section offers information about things to consider that may enable an FRG leader to be more effective.

Keys To Success

To have an FRG that effectively supports units and Families, the FRG leader (and FRG) must:

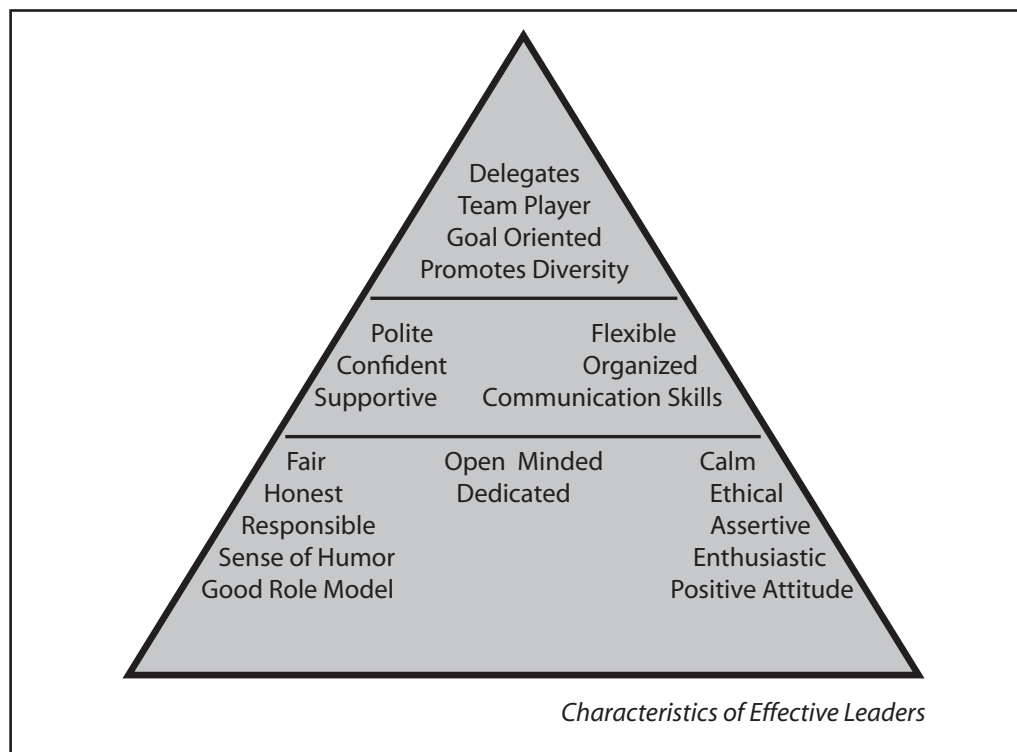
- ★ Maintain communication and work as a team with the commander/rear detachment commander.
- ★ Become familiar with Army and unit policies, including FRG Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Find out what support and resources your command will provide to the FRG and seek to obtain this support.
- ★ Use the resources available to Families. Know how to identify these community resources and which agencies to refer Families for specific assistance.
- ★ Get training and prepare for the different types of activities and situations the FRG may handle. This includes preparing for and knowing the procedures to follow in crisis and trauma situations.
- ★ Create a team of volunteers who will work with the FRG leader in conducting FRG activities. Assign responsibilities and manage the volunteer team.
- ★ Be prepared to adapt to changing demands on the FRG to be responsive to units and Families. Keep a pulse on Family issues and ensure steps are taken by the FRG to respond to these issues, as appropriate.
- ★ Use the tools and materials prepared for FRG leaders. (This handbook, the checklist in Part 4 of this handbook, and the Operation READY Smart Book, all provide valuable information and tools to assist FRG leaders as well as FRG volunteers in their efforts).

LEADERSHIP ABILITIES AND CHARACTER TRAITS The figure below identifies the characteristics of individuals who can be effective in influencing people to participate in the FRG and have a vested interest in the FRG's success.

LEADERSHIP STYLES Leading an FRG will involve using different leadership styles with different volunteer groups and/or on different activities:

- **Directing**—Leader is task oriented with little group input, especially when limited group experience or limited time is available.
- **Coaching**—Leader is both task and group oriented; directs and encourages the group's effort, but the group is more experienced and makes inputs to the process. The leader watches progress and coaches the group as needed to keep on track.
- **Supporting**—Leader is group oriented; sets the overall project goals and supports the group's efforts. The group has considerable experience and therefore makes major inputs on planning and decisions. The leader reviews progress at intervals and suggests changes.
- **Delegating**—Leader is more interested in group interaction than the outcome of the project. The group is highly experienced, and they define the project goals, plan, make decisions, and control their own work.

So, which leadership style should FRG leaders use? With critical tasks, coaching or directing style might be used. More routine tasks call for a mix of coaching and supporting styles. With certain groups such as FRG committee chairs, a delegation style might be used. The situation, experience of the group, and time needed to accomplish a task are all factors that determine the style to use.



How To Take Care of Yourself

Being an FRG leader is a demanding job and will no doubt be stressful at times. With lengthy deployments, an FRG leader is likely to retain this position for a considerable length of time (anywhere from 12 to 18 months). Keep the following considerations in mind as ways to avoid burnout and to help you manage the job effectively:

- First and foremost, FRG leaders should take care of themselves and their Families. FRG functions, socials, and obligations should never come before the needs of your own Family. A sick child, a marital problem, your job, and other basic issues take priority over FRG duties. Delegate when you need to change priorities.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Get help. Recruit and train good people; give them clear job descriptions and goals; treat them with respect and regard; and stand back—let them shine in the FRG! Committee chairpersons and other FRG members want to help, so let them! Remember to acknowledge these contributions during meetings and in your newsletters.
- Stick to your role as a leader.
- Leadership can be difficult, so don't try to please everyone. Demonstrate that you care and want to make things work for the FRG, and everyone should understand and support you.
- Don't be afraid to try new ideas.
- Learn resources for referring problems and follow through. When a Family takes up disproportionate amounts of time—refer them to the appropriate professional(s).
- Provide specific guidelines regarding rumors, chain of concern, information dissemination, and a tentative calendar of events to reduce confusion and lack of communication.

For tips on managing stress, see *Coping with Stress* fact sheet in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.



*Take care of
yourself
and
show
compassion
to others!*

Training and Resources for FRG Leaders

The *Operation READY Smart Book* contains important resource materials and sample forms to assist the FRG in its efforts. (For example, the *Operation READY Smart Book* includes an FRG leadership Checklist which may be used to assess strengths and weaknesses for the leadership role). If additional information or help with particular skills and tasks is needed, the FRG leader is encouraged to seek assistance from any of the following:

Rear Detachment Commander	for guidance
Battalion FRG Steering Committee	for guidance
Family Readiness Support Assistant	for logistical and administrative support
Army Community Service/ Army National Guard State Family Program Coordinator/U.S. Army Reserve Regional Readiness Command Family Programs Office	for orientation training for new FRG leaders, ongoing and skills training for FRG leaders, guidance on managing volunteers, and information on community resources; also coordinates FRG Forum (<i>see below</i>)
FRG Leader Online Course	for online FRG leader training that focuses on the management of FRG operations as well as addresses how to assist Families on a wide range of Family issues; the training is available on the web at www.myarmyonesource.com and a certificate is awarded upon completion
Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator (AVCC) or State/Region Family Program Director/Coordinator	for guidance on volunteer issues (including recruitment, training and recognition)
vFRG Web site	provides a secure web-based forum for FRG leaders
FRG Forum	a forum created by all FRG leaders on the installation for ongoing training and a support network
Talk with other individuals who have experience as an FRG leader	provides first hand information
Army Family Team Building/Guard Family Team Building	for online and classroom training on military culture and leadership in different skill levels

PART III: Areas of FRG Leader's Responsibility

3

As the new leader of the FRG, it is important to understand the responsibilities of the FRG leader and to assess how the company's FRG is functioning currently. Use the handbook to determine what is needed to: 1) build up FRG operations and 2) sustain FRG operations. In some instances, it will be necessary to develop many components because the company may not have had an FRG or may have had a poorly run FRG. The FRG leader is responsible for maintaining a working relationship with unit leadership, handling certain administrative tasks, obtaining and managing resources for FRG operations and activities, and providing leadership and direction on FRG activities. Because the FRG is an official program of the Army, regulations and guidance dictate certain aspects of the program. For each area of FRG leadership responsibility, the relevant rules are identified.

3.1 Relationship With Unit Leadership

Under AR 600-20 commanders are required to maintain, as appropriate to the needs of their units, an FRG to encourage self-sufficiency among its members by providing information, referral assistance and mutual support. Because the FRG is a command sponsored program, the company commander has oversight of the FRG and the FRG leader's role. When the company commander deploys with the unit, the rear detachment commander (RDC) takes on the role of supporting and assisting the FRG. If a rear detachment is not set up at the company level, then the FRG will work with the battalion rear detachment commander. Some battalions opt to designate a Family Readiness Liaison (FRL) to serve as a point of contact for the unit and thus the FRG may work with an FRL. Establishing an effective relationship with unit leadership (i.e., the company commander, RDC and FRL) is critical to supporting Families throughout the ARFORGEN cycle. (Note: When there is a battalion FRG then the battalion FRG leader works with the battalion RDC in the same manner as described in this section).

FRGs should also strive to appeal to both officer and enlisted Soldiers' Families. Commanders should seek FRG leaders who are particularly adept at energizing both officer and enlisted corps' Families. FRGs which do not reflect their unit's demographics should be re-evaluated to address any impediments which exist towards creating a balanced and representational FRG. Typical issues could be FRG meeting times, child care needs, and other Family support related issues.

Unit Leadership Responsibilities

Understanding unit leadership's responsibilities is important for an FRG leader to gain an understanding of the demands on command and to know what is and is not the FRG's task.

MISSION RESPONSIBILITIES The primary focus of unit leadership's attention is on mission preparedness and conducting successful military operations. Deploying brigade combat teams establish rear detachments (RD) at brigade and battalion levels. The battalion RDC may appoint RDCs at company, troop, and battery levels prior to deployment.

The battalion level RD leadership usually includes, at a minimum, the RDC and a Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC). The RD supports the deployed units, facilitates readiness of Soldiers who deploy, and supports the Families of deployed personnel. Specifically, the mission of the RD is to pick up the daily workload of the deployed unit and provide home-station support for the unit. The RDC is responsible for all the administrative operations of the rear detachment, to include maintaining command and control, accounting for unit property and equipment, and managing personnel. In short, the RDC and the rear detachment personnel keep the unit functional.

One of the most important rear detachment duties, however, is serving as a vital communications link between the deployed unit and Family members. The deployed commander's goal is to accomplish the mission while keeping the unit's Soldiers safe and then bringing them home to their Families and communities. The RDC's goal works in tandem with that of the deployed commander to help Families solve their problems at the lowest level position so that the problems and resulting anxieties do not overflow to the deployed Soldier or require the attention of the deployed commander.

During a deployment, the rear detachment commander performs the duties of the unit commander. These responsibilities are listed by command function. To address expectations of how the RDC will support Families, an emphasis is placed on Family matters.

Command and Control

- Establish and maintain two-way communication with forward deployed units to ensure timely and accurate information and to resolve issues. Also maintain communication with command supplying augmentees to the deploying unit.
- Serve as the official information source for Families. This includes conducting information briefings, preparing postings for vFRG web site, and reviewing FRG newsletters. Also ensure deployment-related information and FRG newsletters are published on regular basis.
- Maintain regular connection with Families and Family Readiness Groups (FRGs).
- Assist with Family Assistance Center (FAC) operations as requested by the garrison or National Guard.
- Coordinate with the FRG steering committee in conjunction with FRG leaders, the chain of command, and military and community resources to support Families.
- Oversee unit administrative functions.
- Carry out personnel actions.
- Submit required reports.
- Handle casualty notification, when appointed.
- Manage rumor control.
- Serve as a conduit for connectivity between the deployed unit and their Families.

Operations and Training

- Attend RDC and FRG courses.
- Develop staffing plan.
- Develop battle rhythm plan for RD operations.
- Conduct or coordinate mandatory training events with garrison/National Guard/Reserve Component agencies.
- Ensure RD and staff duty personnel are trained and sensitive to Family member calls and understand how to refer Families to the appropriate agency for assistance.
- Coordinate and support training for FRG volunteers and Families.

Logistics and Supply

- Maintain physical security and operations security.
- Maintain property and equipment. Conduct inventories.
- Ensure Family members have opportunities to maintain contact with deployed Soldiers (includes establishing or providing information on mail operations, video teleconference (VTC), and internet connection).
- Provide FRGs with access to facilities, equipment, and government vehicles for official FRG mission activities.

Family Support

- Maintain contact with Families in the command. This includes keeping in contact with Families that return to their home of record or otherwise leave the theater during their sponsor's deployment.
- Maintain regular contact with FRG leaders. Provide information on important unit news to FRG leaders. Ensure regular communication between FRG leaders and unit Family members.
- Attend and support FRG meetings and activities. Update FRG phone trees. Coordinate with FRG leader for FRG social or recreational activities on a regular basis to build and sustain morale and camaraderie.
- Answer questions and concerns from FRG leaders and Families. Resolve Family issues by referring Families to appropriate agencies.

Administrative

- Validate and maintain a copy of Family care plans (FCP) for deployed personnel and personnel preparing to deploy. Conduct FCP counseling as required.
- Maintain unit roster including augmentees during deployments. This roster will be provided to the FRG to ensure these Families receive communications and support.
- Coordinate with American Red Cross regarding emergency information on unit Soldiers and Family members. Log, track and process Red Cross emergency messages and notify forward unit of impending Red Cross message.
- Review RDC and FRG SOPs. Develop/revise FRG SOPs as necessary (*See AR 608-1, Appendix J*).
- Oversee FRG Informal Fund, per AR 608-1, Appendix J.
- Approve FRG requests for APF funds and supplemental mission funds intended for FRG use (*See AR 608-1, Appendix J*).

- Approve unsolicited donations and FRG fundraising requests after consulting with the unit's ethics counselor.
- Maintain record of contacts, actions taken and follow-up with Families.

FAMILY READINESS RESPONSIBILITIES Family readiness is an important aspect of Soldier readiness. The table on the next page identifies the unit leadership's Family readiness responsibilities and their role in supporting FRG operations. Keep in mind that the battalion RDC oversees and supports all company FRGs directly and indirectly through the company level RDC and the battalion FRG steering committee.

APPOINTMENT OF FRG LEADER The commander must approve the appointment of the FRG leader. When selecting an FRG leader, consider the following criteria:

- Understands commander's Family readiness goals and value of FRG
- Has the ability to work with command leadership
- Has an interest in helping the unit's Soldiers and Families
- Displays a caring and supportive personality
- Knowledgeable about military structure and procedures
- Knowledgeable about community resources (desired but not required)
- Is dependable
- Has leadership potential/skills
- Exhibits good communication skills
- Able to work with people and encourage diverse representation in FRG
- Willing to learn.

FRG Leader's Responsibilities to Unit Leadership

The FRG leader has a supportive role to command. The company leadership will be relying on the FRG leader to fulfill the following roles and responsibilities:

- Support commander's Family readiness goals
- Provide overall leadership of the FRG (which includes planning, managing, and supervising FRG activities)
- Establish effective communication systems with Families (which includes getting contact information for immediate and extended Family members and making sure phone tree is up-to-date)
- Ensure Families get timely accurate information from command
- Recruit the volunteers needed to conduct required FRG activities as well as those activities requested by command
- Ensure Families are referred to appropriate military and community agencies for needed assistance
- Identify important FRG and Family issues for the command
- Assist the command in maintaining contact information for Families, especially Family members that leave the area during deployment
- Ensure regular communication is maintained with geographically separated Families.

<p align="center">Company Commander Family Readiness Responsibilities</p>	<p align="center">Rear Detachment Commander (RDC) Family Readiness Responsibilities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares Family Readiness Plan and sets Family readiness goals for the unit. • Maintains appropriate SOPs for FRG operations. • Authorizes FRG's use of government facilities, supplies, vehicles and mail. • Authorizes an FRG informal fund for FRG's use. • Approves FRG leader and FRG informal fund custodian (treasurer) and alternate. • Reviews and approves FRG informal fund reports and FRG newsletters. • Approves content and users of vFRG. • Notifies FRG leader when a deployment is scheduled. • Encourages all Soldiers and Families to participate in FRG activities. • Ensures that Family readiness information sheets and/or rosters are provided to FRG leader. • Maintains flow of information with FRG so Families are kept informed. • Determines how to address Family issues. • Provides guidance and support to FRG leader in other ways as practical. • Plans and coordinates unit briefings, homecoming, and supplemental activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as unit commander during deployment. • Performs same duties as commander. • Maintains regular contact with deployed unit. • Maintains regular contact with FRG leader. Provides information on important unit news to FRG leader. This includes notifying FRG leader on all unit briefings, welcome home activities, and other unit activities. • Attends and supports FRG meetings and activities. Provides information to FRG leader to update FRG phone tree. • Coordinates with FRG leader for FRG social or recreational activities that build and sustain morale and camaraderie. • Authorizes resources and support for FRG when unit deployed. • Ensures regular communication between FRG leader and unit Family members. This includes keeping in contact with Families that return to their home of record or otherwise leave the area during their sponsor's deployment. • Helps resolve Family issues or identifies appropriate agencies to refer Families, especially for Families of killed or wounded Soldiers. • Handles casualty notification, when appointed.

Establishing and Sustaining a Relationship

Each relationship between a command and FRG leader is unique. Each commander has his/her own interests, areas of emphasis, and leadership styles which influence the commander's expectations of the FRG leader and the nature of the working relationship with command. Likewise, each FRG leader has particular strengths, personality traits, and knowledge and familiarity with the military which will influence the level and type of support sought from command. It is essential that the FRG leader find effective ways to work with unit leadership. Establishing and maintaining two-way communication is highly important and critical. For this reason, the FRG leader is advised to meet with the company commander soon after becoming the company's FRG leader. In this initial meeting, a discussion should be held about the FRG leader's role, FRG activities, ways in which the command wants to be kept informed on FRG activities and concerns, ways in which the FRG leader and command will communicate, and other pertinent issues. The FRG leader will then have an understanding of the commander's expectations on FRG activities and operations. Following this initial meeting, communications and meetings will need to be conducted as necessary to plan and to support Soldiers and Families throughout the ARFORGEN cycle.

Tips To A Successful Working Relationship

- ★ Understand each other's roles and responsibilities.
- ★ Define official military issues versus FRG issues.
- ★ Begin communication prior to deployment to develop relationship and to discuss important issues (including tough topics such as casualty notification).
- ★ Establish communication methods and maintain two-way communication.
- ★ Know the organizational structure (i.e., identify key FRG volunteers for RDC and have RDC identify chain of command within RD for FRG) and ensure each has appropriate contact information.
- ★ Aim to speak with one voice.
- ★ Promote mutual respect.



Maintain on-going communication.

3.2 Administrative Tasks and Resource Management

Running an FRG requires handling specific administrative tasks, obtaining needed resources, and managing FRG volunteers.

Administrative Matters

Certain documents are required for managing FRG operations. Additionally, certain training is necessary to implement FRG operations. It is important that the FRG leader ensures that the necessary documents are available and trainings conducted.

POLICY AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE The FRG leader needs to review and become familiar with relevant Department of the Army and unit policies and regulations related to FRGs. The most important regulations and SOPs are identified below. An expanded list with web links to other documents is provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.

AR 608-1, Appendix J, Army Family Readiness Group Operations. This regulation provides the commander and FRG with Army guidance on funding and managing FRGs. The details are summarized in the Resource Management section (*see page 27*). A copy is included in the *Operation Ready Smart Book*.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). FRG leaders are responsible for obtaining and familiarizing themselves with the following required unit SOPs related to FRG operations. In some instances, the FRG leader may need to provide information to the company commander (or RDC) in order for the required document to be prepared.

- **FRG Budget SOP**—This SOP, which is prepared by the commander, specifies the appropriated fund (APF) support available for FRG mission activities. This SOP should also address funding for volunteer support (i.e., travel and training expenses and reimbursement of incidental expenses for official statutory volunteers). In addition, this SOP should describe the procedures and request forms required for the FRG leader and FRG volunteers to obtain command approval for purchases and reimbursement. A sample FRG Budget SOP is provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.
- **FRG Informal Fund SOP**—If the company commander approves, the FRG can establish one informal fund. An SOP must be written for managing the informal fund. The SOP must include the following information:
 - the FRG name
 - description of the FRG's informal fund's purpose and functions and a summary of routine activities
 - the following statement, "This FRG informal fund is for the benefit of the FRG members only and is established exclusively for charitable purposes, and to provide support to Soldiers and Family members as the Soldiers and Families adapt to Army life. It is not a business and is not being run to generate profits. It is not an instrumentality of the United States government."

The SOP must be approved by the commander and a majority of the FRG membership. A sample FRG Informal Fund SOP can be found in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.

- **Unit SOP on FRG Newsletter**—The company must have a SOP on the preparation, printing, and distribution of FRG newsletters.

Appointment Letters. The FRG leader will need to obtain the commander's signature on the following letters.

- Appointment letter for FRG leader. It is essential that the commander appoint the FRG leader in writing.
- Appointment letter for FRG informal fund custodian. If the FRG establishes an FRG Informal Fund, the company commander must sign a letter designating a fund custodian and alternate.
- **FRG Checking Account Authorization**—If the FRG establishes an FRG informal fund, the company commander must sign a letter naming the person(s) authorized to sign checks on the bank account. A sample letter is provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.

RECORD KEEPING Limited record keeping is required. The RDC, ACS/Reserve Component Family Programs, and FRSA can assist the FRG leader in these efforts.

Volunteer Records. Under current Army regulations, certain forms and documentation must be kept in a volunteer administrative file. (See *Chapter 5 of AR 608-1*). Due to the turnover in FRG leadership, the company (i.e., unit) should maintain the volunteer administrative file rather than the FRG leader. However, the FRG leader is responsible for obtaining the appropriate forms from the files and distributing to FRG volunteers. The FRG leader can also prepare documents (such as job descriptions and letters of appreciation) as needed. The forms and documents that the company needs to have on hand include:

- volunteer position descriptions (*note: sample FRG volunteer job descriptions are provided in the Operation READY Smart Book*)
- blank volunteer forms (including all required forms for statutory volunteers in accordance with AR 608-1, NGR 600-12, and USARC 608-1, and in accordance with 10 USC 1588)
- volunteer agreement (DD Form 2793) (to be completed by all FRG volunteers)
- form for recording volunteer hours
- parental permission form (to be given to youth who volunteer)
- sample letters of appreciation
- requirements for awards
- sample letters of recommendation.

If the company does not have these forms, contact the local ACS, Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator (AVCC), National Guard State Family Program Coordinator, or Reserve Regional Readiness Command Family Program Office for assistance. Once appropriate forms are completed and submitted for command (or appropriate designee) signature, they need to be retained. Documentation on individuals' volunteer hours, record of service, and awards/ letters of appreciation must also be kept. Volunteers' work hours are to be submitted to the AVCC, National Guard State Family Program Coordinator, or Reserve Regional Readiness Command Family Program Office or they may be submitted using the active, Guard or Reserve volunteer management web sites.

FRG Rosters (Membership, Telephone Tree, Email Distribution Lists). The FRG membership roster—compiled from the company alert roster and completed Family readiness information forms—consists of names, addresses (mailing and email), telephone numbers, and other pertinent information on company Soldiers and Families (including other individuals identified by Soldiers). (Keep in mind it is important to get this same information for Soldiers detailed to the company for deployment who are not permanently assigned to the unit). The RDC and the Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) can assist in these efforts. If the FRG leader asks Soldiers or Families to complete a Family readiness information form, then the FRG leader needs to be aware of privacy regulations. When personal information is collected, the FRG leader is required to explain the purpose for collecting the information, how it will be used, and how it will be protected from unauthorized use.

People have the choice of having their information posted on a general roster and/or the confidential roster that is given to the FRG leader. If a spouse strongly resists giving the FRG important information, then it should be noted, signed by the spouse and Soldier, and the spouse instructed that the only contact made with the spouse will be by the military chain of command/rear detachment. In addition, a Privacy Act statement should appear on the Family readiness information form and every FRG roster. *(A sample Family Readiness information form is provided in the Operation READY Smart Book).*

As a rule, to protect Families' personal data from identity theft or unauthorized use, Social Security numbers and other sensitive information should be omitted. Further to ensure FRG lists do not "fall into the wrong hands," it is important that the FRG leader discuss with the commander (or during deployment, the RDC) who should have a complete copy of the FRG membership roster, phone tree list, and/or email distribution list. A decision may be made that the RDC and a few key FRG volunteers in addition to the FRG leader retain copies of these lists (or only FRG roster). *(Note: For emergency purposes, the RDC will need to have a copy of the FRG roster).* Whatever the decision, steps need to be made to ensure that FRG rosters and phone trees are not given to any third party. For this reason, obsolete copies should be destroyed (i.e., shredded). In addition, when a key FRG volunteer or you as the FRG leader leave a position or move out of the area, these individuals' copies should be turned in and/or shredded.

FRG Informal Fund Reports. If the FRG establishes an informal fund, the fund custodian must submit a report to the company commander monthly, and as requested. The fund custodian must also provide an annual report on the FRG informal fund activity to the first Colonel (O6) commander in the unit's chain of command no later than 30 days after the end of the calendar year. These reports will summarize the informal fund's financial status to include current balance; itemized list of income; and an itemized list of expenditures along with an explanation showing how the expenditures are consistent with the purpose of the FRG informal fund as established in the SOP.

TRAINING Training is essential to the FRG leader and volunteers being able to carry out their responsibilities. The FRG leader needs to ensure that all appropriate individuals (including the FRG leader) get the training needed. For information on training opportunities for FRG leaders, see section entitled "Training and Resources for FRG Leaders" in Section 2 of Part 2 of this handbook. For information on training available for FRG volunteers, see page 31 "recruiting and training." Much of the training available is free. However, if any costs are to be incurred, the FRG leader is advised to seek approval from the commander.

Resource Management

In planning and conducting FRG activities, consideration should be given to resources needed such as:

- Funding
- Volunteers (*see section on volunteer management*)
- Equipment
- Transportation
- Interpreters (*Note: Free translation services are available through Military One Source.*)
- Location(s) for FRG events
- Child care for FRG events
- Food for FRG events
- Materials and supplies for FRG events.

In accordance with AR 608-1, FRGs can obtain many of these resources from the unit they serve.

AUTHORIZED SUPPORT AND FUNDING

AR 608-1, Appendix J, helps commanders and FRG leaders legally and ethically manage Family Readiness Groups, an extremely important facet of the Expeditionary Army.

Appropriated funds (APF). Unit commanders are responsible for funding FRG mission essential activities. Because the FRG is an official Army program, the commander must use the unit's appropriated funds (APF) to support FRG mission activities. APFs are used to support both the FRG's volunteers and mission activities. The level of support provided at the company level will depend upon command approval and funding availability. The support that command is authorized to provide to the FRG (and statutory FRG volunteers) includes:

- Government office space and equipment (e.g., meeting rooms, telephone, fax, computer, email, copier, scanner, equipment, and administrative supplies for official FRG business)
- Government paper and printing supplies for FRG newsletters relaying information from command and to support FRG mission activities

TIP

Resource Options for Child Care:

★ Funding may be available from the unit so speak to the unit commander. [See authorized support and funding section].

★ Arrange a "kiddie corner" within the same room as the parents and provide TV/VCR/DVD, coloring materials, a craft project, and snacks.

★ Access Kids On Site (6 weeks-12 yrs). for short term hourly child care in a variety of on and off post settings. Contact your installation CYS Services Outreach Services Director or CYS Services Coordinator.

★ Set up a pool of trained child care volunteers at the battalion level. CYS Services can provide training through their program called Kids on Site.

- Official mail for mission-related purposes and as approved by the commander (e.g., FRG newsletter containing official information)
- Government owned or leased vehicles for official FRG activities (including transportation of FRG members for FRG mission-related activities)
- Child care for command-sponsored training
- Child care, education, and other youth services for needed Family support (applicable when the FRG's Armed Forces members are assigned to active duty or ordered to active duty in support of a contingency operation).

In addition, the company commander may at his/her discretion use the unit's APFs to support FRG volunteers in other ways such as:

- Pay for travel expenses of official statutory volunteers. With commander pre-approval, authorized FRG volunteers may travel to geographically dispersed members of the FRG to conduct official FRG activities.
- Pay for training expenses (i.e., enrollment, travel, and per diem) of statutory FRG volunteers to improve the volunteer's effectiveness in his/her assigned role or enable the volunteer to accept increasingly responsible challenges. Funding depends on command pre-approval and availability of funds.
- Reimbursement of official volunteer incidental expenses (out-of-pocket expenses such as child care, telephone bills, mileage, and other expenses in accordance with chapter 5 of AR 608-1, Army Community Service Center, and the Commander's FRG Budget SOP) for FRG volunteer with prior approval of the responsible commander. *(Note: Reimbursement is limited and the commander should inform the FRG leader on reimbursement in advance so that the FRG leader can manage FRG volunteers' expectations).*
- Official certificates of recognition for volunteers or volunteer incentive awards *(See NAF for authorized funds for volunteer recognition programs).*
- **A word of caution:** APFs may not be used for FRG's social activities.

Nonappropriated funds (NAF). The company commander is authorized to use NAFs for volunteer recognition programs based upon approval of Director, MWR. NAFs are to be used for annual volunteer recognition programs, awards, banquets and to purchase mementos. Most installations host an annual volunteer recognition program for all community volunteers rather than host several agency sponsored events. These annual volunteer recognition programs can be used to recognize FRG volunteers.

FRG informal fund. With the authorization of the company commander, the FRG can maintain one informal fund. No more than one FRG informal fund per unit is authorized. The informal fund is private monies which belong to the FRG members and must be spent to benefit the FRG membership. Use of the fund monies is limited to the specific planned purposes stated in the FRG's Informal Fund SOP. The table on the next page shows the intended use of FRG Informal Fund per AR 608-1, Appendix J.

FRG Informal Fund	
<p>Authorized Use</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRG newsletters that contain predominantly unofficial information • Purely social activities (such as parties, outings, and picnics) • Volunteer recognition • Refreshments/meals for FRG meetings 	<p>Unauthorized Use</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit's informal funds (e.g., augmenting the "cup and flower" fund) • Items or services which may be paid for using APFs • Traditional military gifts (such as Soldier farewell gifts) • Division Ball • Personal funds (i.e., cannot be deposited or mixed with the treasurer's personal funds)

1. **Specific regulations must be followed with an FRG Informal Fund.** FRGs may conduct internal fundraising, in compliance with AR 600-29, Fundraising within the Department of the Army, paragraph 1-5b, and DoD 5500.7-R, Joint Ethics Regulation. The Joint Ethics Regulation, paragraph 3-210(a)(6) authorizes official fundraising by organizations composed primarily of Department of Defense or Department of the Army employees and their dependents when fundraising among their own members or dependents for the benefit of their own welfare funds. Fundraising shall be approved by the appropriate commander after consultation with the Department of Army Ethics Official (DAEO) or designee.

According to the Office of Army General Counsel (Ethics and Fiscal Law) and the Army Standards of Conduct Office, an Army organization—including but not limited to units, installations, and Family Readiness Groups—may officially fundraise from its own community members or dependents and from all persons benefiting from the Army organization. For example, an installation may benefit from the Brigade or Unit FRG, thus the FRG may fundraise on the installation. Fundraising must be (1) for the organization's informal fund, as opposed to a private charity, particular military member or similar cause; and (2) approved by the unit commander and coordinated with the commander with cognizance over the location of fundraising if different from the organization area. Commanders shall consult with their SJA or Ethics Counselor and avoid all conflicts with other authorized fundraising activities.

Army Reserve FRGs may only fundraise on post or among their own members. They cannot fundraise off post, even if they work or train in an off post building. If the FRG leader has any fundraising questions, the FRG leader should consult the unit commander, who will consult with the appropriate ethics advisor. Funds should be collected for a specific planned purpose and earmarked accordingly in the FRG informal fund ledger.

A word of caution: FRGs may not—

- Engage in external fundraising.
- Solicit donations or gifts.
- Enter into commercial sponsorship agreements. (Commercial sponsorship is an agreed upon arrangement under which a business provides assistance, funding, goods, equipment, or services in exchange for public recognition or other promotional opportunities).

2. An FRG Informal Fund SOP is required and must be approved by the unit commander and a majority of the FRG members. Once approved, the SOP is signed at a minimum by the unit commander, FRG leader, fund custodian (treasurer), and the alternate fund custodian. A sample FRG informal fund SOP is provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.

3. A fund custodian (treasurer) and an alternate, who will manage the FRG informal fund, must be designated in writing with the commander's signature. Once the custodian is appointed, a bank account in the FRG's name can be opened under the authorization by the company commander. The annual gross income of the FRG informal fund is not to exceed \$10,000 per year to avoid tax liability. At the same time, the FRG informal fund balance should not exceed \$10,000 at any time. *(Note: In overseas locations, local policy may require a lower fund balance be maintained. If this is the case, the commander should include the correct limits in the informal budget SOP).* Other pertinent information related to the FRG informal fund follows:

- The commander authorizes opening of a bank account for the FRG fund and prepares a letter naming the persons authorized to sign checks drawn on the account. *(Note: The bank account is to be set up under the FRG's name and not the custodian's name).* For additional protection of FRG informal funds, the commander may require the FRG fund be bonded in accordance with the procedures of AR 210-22, Private Organizations on Army Installations, paragraph 3-2 b, Fidelity Bonding.
- Custody, accounting, and documentation of the FRG informal fund are the responsibility of the fund custodian or alternate. Accounting or record keeping on the FRG informal fund may be maintained like a personal check register.
- The FRG's informal funds cannot be placed in either an interest or dividend bearing account. This is necessary to avoid potential tax liabilities.

FAMILY READINESS SUPPORT ASSISTANT (FRSA) The Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) is a paid position supervised by the unit commander. In the active component, FRSAs are assigned on a permanent basis to the Augmentation Table of Distribution of Allowances (AUGTDA) down to deployable battalions. They are typically assigned to support brigade, and sometimes battalion, units with a high number of deployments. In the Guard, there are two FRSAs per Brigade element or a minimum of one FRSA per state where there is no Brigade. In the Reserve, the FRSAs are assigned on a permanent basis to the AUGTDA based on one Department of the Army Civilian per 1500 to 2000 assigned Soldiers per functional and operational Command.

The role of the FRSA is to provide administrative and logistical support to both commanders and FRG leaders in support of Family readiness programs and activities. *(Note: The FRSA is not to impinge on the FRG leader's role and responsibilities. Further, the FRSA is not*

an intermediary but works in a triangular relationship with commanders and FRG leaders). This administrative support is intended to lighten the administrative burden on FRG leaders. The actual tasks performed are dependent upon unit needs, command direction (i.e., Rear Detachment Commander [RDC] during deployment), FRSA's position description, and number of FRGs, but may include:

- Assisting with scheduling/coordinating unit pre-deployment and reunion activities
- Scheduling and coordinating Family readiness training or unit sponsored training for Soldiers and Families
- Working with RDC to provide FRG leaders with timely and accurate information (e.g., email all FRG leaders)
- Helping develop and distribute unit newsletters, announcements, and flyers
- Coordinating video teleconferences between deployed Soldiers and Families
- Maintaining a list of FRG leaders in the division
- Assisting in establishing and updating FRG rosters
- Coordinating FRG events across corps/division/brigade
- Identifying POCs and obtaining information on community resources
- Providing referrals to community agencies (such as ACS, Chaplains, Social Work Service, etc).
- Helping FRGs with producing newsletters, flyers, and activity calendars; submission of volunteer forms; scheduling and coordinating FRG meetings and events; arranging guest speakers for FRG meetings or events; and FRG mailings.

Volunteer Management

Leading an FRG is not expected to be a one-person job. A team of dedicated, caring volunteers will be needed to support the FRG leader in operating a successful FRG and supporting Families. The key is to find creative ways to get everyone involved and excited about participating in the FRG at some level.

IDENTIFYING VOLUNTEERS

FRG Volunteer Positions. To determine what positions are needed to run the FRG, consider the command's vision for Family readiness, deployment timetable, company's specific needs, scope of FRG operations to be carried out, and geographical dispersion of Family members. The following is a suggested list of volunteer

TIP

★ Co-Leader Option

In these times of rapid, unpredictable and lengthy deployments, leading an FRG for an extended period of time can be overwhelming and an FRG leader can easily burn out. One option to managing the role is to have a co-leader. A co-leader can assist in providing leadership of the FRG, oversee particular FRG activities, help get individuals involved in FRG activities, or serve as an advisor or assistant, depending upon how the co-leadership role is defined. This help in sharing the burden can reduce some of the stress.

Splitting leadership can have some drawbacks, unless steps are taken to define and create a working partnership relationship. With a co-leader it is important to talk to each other regularly. Agree on what areas and activities each of you will supervise and how decisions on important issues will be made.

positions and chairpersons for committees that can help an FRG run smoothly and effectively. All of these individuals would report to the FRG leader except where noted:

- **FRG Fund Manager and Alternate**—(treasurer), serves as custodian of the FRG's informal fund. *(Note: This is a required position). (Reports to FRG leader and company commander).*
- **Phone Tree Chairperson**—organizes the phone tree and email list, identifies and supervises phone tree key callers.
- **Phone Tree Key Callers**—maintains regular contact with assigned Families; passes along official information and provides other information to Families. *(Note: These volunteers are essential). (Reports to Phone Tree Chairperson or FRG leader).*
- **FRG Recorder**—(secretary), maintains accurate minutes of meetings and distributes information and correspondence to the FRG leader and newsletter editor.
- **FRG Newsletter Editor**—coordinates newsletter preparation, publishing, and distribution. *(Note: In some cases, the newsletter may be handled at the battalion level). (Reports to company commander and FRG leader).*
- **vFRG Coordinator**—coordinates with FRG leader and other appropriate individuals to prepare postings on FRG activities, FRG announcements, and education information for Families. These postings are given to the command. *(Note: The command will prepare postings pertaining to information on deployed unit. The unit commander or RDC reviews all proposed postings and ensures the approved postings are made to the vFRG web site. In some instances, the FRSA may be assigned the administrative responsibility of putting the postings on the vFRG web site). (Reports to company commander and FRG leader).*
- **Special Events Chairperson**—plans, organizes, and executes FRG activities and special events.
- **Hospitality/Welcome Committee Chairperson**—contacts and welcomes all new Soldiers and Families to the company, helping them find needed resources.
- **Publicity Chairperson**—informs Soldiers and Family members of upcoming FRG activities.
- **Fundraiser Chairperson**—manages internal FRG fundraising activities for FRG informal fund. *(Reports to FRG leader).*
- **Childcare Chairperson**—ensures acceptable childcare for FRG meetings and special events.

Based on the needs of the FRG and the number of volunteers willing to help, other volunteer positions may be created such as food committee chairperson, youth committee chairperson, or FRG co-leader.

FRG Committees and Other Activities. While the previous section mostly talked about volunteers who will serve in important leadership positions providing oversight on specific FRG operational activities (or committees), volunteers are also needed to serve on committees and to carry out other FRG activities. For example, volunteers willing to help with special events will be needed.

A word of caution: All individuals who volunteer to help do not need to register. For example, a FRG member who volunteers to bring food to an FRG event does not need to register. Job descriptions and registration should only be conducted for those individuals who want to serve in a key official capacity and seek credit for their volunteer hours.

RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

There are many ways to recruit volunteers, but the most effective way is simply to ask individuals to volunteer. On the Family readiness information sheet, Family members have an opportunity to indicate what areas or ways they would be willing to assist the FRG. Another direct approach is to decide who might be best suited to handle a particular task and ask the individual about performing the task. However, remember that individuals who are not located in your geographical area can perform important functions such as serving as newsletter editor.

During recruiting, individuals may ask "What do I need to do?" and "How long do I need to do it?" Be prepared to provide this information. Present a written description so that individuals will know what their duties will be if they accept. For key FRG volunteer positions, sample FRG volunteer position descriptions are provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book* or may be found in Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS).

For ALL volunteers serving in the key FRG leadership positions, the FRG leader must ensure the volunteer does the following:

1. completes a Volunteer Agreement (DD Form 2793)
2. receives a position description
3. in processes with the local Army Community Service, Family Programs Office, or Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator and Mobilization and Deployment Program
4. maintains a record of volunteer hours on the Volunteer Management Information System or on a form for recording volunteer hours, and
5. completes training as needed (*See training resources box on page 33*). (*Note: If a minor volunteers, then a parental permission form must be completed*).

For forms and guidance on these volunteer matters, consult AR 608-1 as well as one of the following offices:

- the Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator at a military installation
- the National Guard State Family Program Coordinator
- the Army Reserve Family Program Office.

Information is also available from the Army Volunteer Program, www.myarmyonesource.com, www.arfp.org, and www.guardfamily.org. FRG volunteers who register as statutory volunteers are eligible for reimbursement of authorized incidental expenses, following the procedures established in the unit's FRG Budget SOP.

Once volunteers have been recruited, it is important to inform volunteers of the company commander's and FRG leader's expectations. When discussing expectations, be clear about the parameters regarding to what degree, and when, volunteers may act independently. Address important issues such as punctuality, attitude, dealing with command and Families, attire, confidentiality, communication with FRG leader and committee chairpersons, communication between FRG leader and FRG volunteers, and reimbursement of volunteer expenses.

A word of caution: All individuals who volunteer to help do not need to register (e.g., and FRG member who brings food to FRG event). Job descriptions and registration should only be conducted for those individuals who want to serve in a key official capacity and seek credit for their volunteer hours.

In addition, identify the training volunteers need and provide them with the appropriate materials from the *Operation READY Smart Book* and/or refer them to the appropriate resource.

Sample Talking Points on Expectations of FRG Volunteers

- **Be punctual and dependable.** Volunteers need to be on time and dependable. This is particularly important for key callers, who need to make calls to Families in a timely manner. When you, as a volunteer, cannot carry out a commitment, notify your supervisor or FRG leader. Keep in mind that you are not expected to make commitments that will put your own Family's needs at risk.
- **Be friendly and courteous.** Be helpful and maintain a courteous attitude when dealing with the chain of command, Soldiers, Family members, and other FRG volunteers.
- **Be flexible.** Given the high and changing demands on the military and unpredictable nature of deployments, we need to be able to adapt to change with understanding and calmness.
- **Know your role.** The FRG (and in particular key callers) is not expected to solve all problems, but is expected to provide accurate information and/or referrals. Know when to refer individuals to the appropriate agency. Also do not hesitate to seek guidance and assistance with referrals when trying to assist with issues outside your professional knowledge. Follow-up to ensure individual's needs were met.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** FRG volunteers deal with problems of a highly personal nature. Be professional with personal information. Gossiping is taboo.
- **Be nonjudgmental.** Treat others with respect and dignity, regardless of rank. When assisting individuals, it is important to respect individual's decisions.
- **Notify FRG leadership of important issues.** While it is important to be respectful of individual's privacy and sensitive to Family problems/issues, keep the FRG leader informed of any important issues. By doing so, the FRG can address common and emerging issues of concern to Families. The FRG leader can also bring certain issues to the attention of command or community agencies, as appropriate.
- **Take care of yourself.** There will likely be times when you may feel great stress or overwhelmed. Take the time to take care of yourself and your Family. Maintain a balance in your life.

Training Resources for FRG Volunteers

- **Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator (AVCC).** Offers general skills training to volunteers. (Note: ACS and Family Programs Mobilization and Deployment managers and assistants provide skills training for specific FRG activities).
- **Operation READY Smart Book.** The *Operation READY Smart Book* contains training materials that may be used by the FRG leader to provide specific training to FRG volunteers such as key callers. In addition, there are resource materials and information sheets which can be given to appropriate FRG volunteers. For example, the *Operation READY Smart Book* contains a Key Caller Handbook. Another example is a Coping with Stress tips sheet that might be given to all FRG volunteers.
- **Army Community Service (ACS).** ACS provides FRG volunteer orientation training through the Mobilization and Deployment Program. Volunteers serving as key callers or FRG co-leader can also receive training through a garrison ACS. Handbooks will be distributed at their training. Those FRG volunteers who are in leadership positions (i.e., committee chairpersons) can seek guidance on managing volunteers.
- **Child, Youth, and School (CYS) Services.** Through their Kids On Site program, they can provide training to volunteers so that the FRG can offer child care at FRG events.
- **Army National Guard State Family Program Office and Army Reserve Regional Readiness Command Family Programs Office.** Volunteers serving as FRG leaders, co-leaders and key callers can get training from these sources to become familiar with issues and resources related to Guard and Reserve Families.
- **Army Family Team Building Program/ Guard Family Team Building.** This three-level training program comprises 43 classes that help individuals learn about military culture and adjust to military life. Level I is designed for new Soldiers and spouses. Level II focuses on basic leadership skills whereas Level III offers advanced leadership. This training program is available online and as classroom based training. FRG volunteers can use this training to become familiar with the military and develop particular skills.

MANAGING AND SUPERVISING FRG VOLUNTEERS As the supervisor to FRG volunteers, it is important to maintain contact and oversee volunteers' performance. Maintaining ongoing communication with FRG volunteers and committees is also important to monitor how well specific activities are being carried out and how well the FRG is supporting Families. If key FRG volunteers are not co-located with the FRG leader, the FRG leader will need to manage volunteers by telephone (both individual and conference calls), email, and forum on vFRG web site. If FRG volunteers are co-located, then a combination of meetings and telephone and email communications can be used.

RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERS Recognizing volunteers is an important aspect to maintaining a group of enthusiastic and committed volunteers who support the FRG. Creating an environment in which FRG volunteers are well recognized and feel supported by the FRG and company leadership can also be a motivating factor for Family members to be inclined to volunteer in the future. Recognition needs to be provided in different ways that includes both formal methods (e.g., certificates, pins, and awards) and informal methods (e.g., saying “Thanks!” or “I’m glad you’re here,” or “You really did a great job.”). Suggestions on ways to recognize volunteers include:

- public praise
- newsletter articles
- thank-you notes
- honoring volunteers at a special luncheon, party, or FRG meeting
- announcements on bulletin boards or via email
- media coverage—local and post newspapers
- certificates of appreciation.

Remember copies of certificates and awards and volunteer service records need to be maintained as discussed in the Administrative Matters section (see page 20).

MENTORING FUTURE FRG LEADERS During the course of working with different FRG volunteers, it may become apparent to you who might be a good FRG leader in the future. Consider mentoring this individual. Alternatively, spend some time talking with and helping the next FRG leader that the company commander assigns. It is important to pass on the knowledge gained and lessons learned to ensure a smooth transition and to assist the next FRG leader in their efforts.

TIP

★ All volunteers need to be recognized!

Volunteers like to be appreciated for what they do for the FRG. When recognizing an individual, it is important to point out something of importance such as the job/task performed, quality of performance, accomplishment, or desirable character trait or ability. It is a wonderful boost to a volunteer’s self esteem. Recognition is easy to give so give it often. Also take advantage of annual volunteer recognition programs.



Recognition is easy to give, so give it often!

3.3 Management of FRG Activities

This section specifies the required FRG activities, per Army guidance. Procedural details on how to perform these activities are provided here. However, the specific information and assistance provided when these activities are performed in each phase of the deployment cycle are presented in Part 4 of this handbook. This section also addresses the following issues: referrals, FRG participation, and several situations that FRGs may encounter.

Identifying FRG Activities Needed

Army guidance stipulates that certain FRG activities are essential. Further, FRGs are known to conduct other activities, some of which are identified here.

The type and scope of activities an FRG conducts depends on a large number of factors, including:

- commander's budget for FRG mission activities
- identified needs of unit Soldiers and their Families
- command interest and emphasis
- number of FRG members
- time, energy, and creativity of FRG membership
- make up of the FRG (e.g., the percentage of single Soldiers, number of years Soldiers and their Family have served with the military, number of Families with young children, and other Family composition factors)
- unit's training and deployment schedule (i.e., whether the unit is in pre/post deployment, deployed, or in a train-up/preparation phase).

For these reasons, it is important to determine with command what activities (or level of effort in each area) your FRG will provide. Keep in mind that the FRG may be serving Family members who are geographically dispersed across a wide area or a number of states. Also remember that the FRG is providing information to a broader array of Family members than just spouses and children. For these reasons, the FRG's communication systems will need to be strong and will likely be the primary focus of support activity with certain Family members.

TIP

★ In a time where there is high media coverage of many military missions, keeping the lines of communication open and sharing accurate information in a timely manner can greatly help to control stories or rumors. In addition, the FRG leader will need to convey the message to both FRG volunteers and Family members that gossip and rumors have no place in the FRG. It will be important to emphasize to individuals not to pass on stories that have not been confirmed with a person in authority (RDC, company commander, military leadership).

A word of caution.

The FRG does not serve as a:

- babysitting service
- taxi service
- financial institution
- professional counseling agency
- part of the casualty notification process
- religious activity
- social club/rumor mill.

Communicating With Army Families

Ongoing communication with Family members during all stages of the deployment cycle is important to maintaining the flow of information from command to Families. Working with company leadership (including the RDC) will be critical to obtaining important news from the unit that the FRG leader can then pass on to Family members through these communication activities. Guidance on each of these activities is detailed in this section. Using multiple communication methods is encouraged and is necessary to reach all Family members. Discuss with the company commander to what extent each of these methods will be used based on the number of FRG volunteers available and geographical dispersion of Family members.

FRG MEETINGS FRG meetings are an opportunity to share important information with Family members, provide education on important topics, and foster connections with Family members. Meetings are also an opportunity for getting Family readiness information forms completed. However, with Families being geographically dispersed, working outside of the home, and for other reasons, keep in mind that Families may not be able to attend meetings. It is therefore important to determine early on the degree to which meetings should be held.

Here are some general guidelines on conducting meetings:

- Identify whether there are any issues of concern that need to be addressed; consult with company leadership as appropriate prior to the meeting to determine how this issue will be addressed by the company or FRG
- Assess FRG needs (e.g., discuss need for volunteers, brainstorm to get input from participants on topics or activities of interest to FRG membership)
- Identify FRG activities to be publicized (e.g., vFRG, newsletter, holiday party)
- Establish the purpose of the meeting
- Develop an agenda
- Determine how long the meeting will be and establish a timeline for the different segments of the meeting (e.g., welcome, guest speaker, announcements, concluding remarks)
- Determine what resources will be needed (e.g., interpreters, child care, food, pens and other supplies, music, equipment, transportation, parking)
- Determine what the "social" component will be (e.g., potluck dinner, award ceremony, set aside time for people to talk amongst themselves)
- Select a location
- Publicize the meeting
- Identify what materials will be distributed or need to have on hand (e.g., Family readiness information forms, FRG newsletter, sign in sheets, community resource directory, door prizes if desired)
- Arrange for company or military leadership to speak, if desired or a guest speaker, if needed.

★ TIP

Asking and/or surveying FRG membership periodically to identify issues and activities of interest is important to finding out what needs to be done at FRG meetings (and other activities). When FRG members are given the opportunity to provide input, then they will feel more involved and engaged in the FRG. Further, when FRG meetings meet membership's needs, FRG members are more likely to view FRG meetings as worthwhile and thus be more inclined to participate. Both are critical to sustaining the FRG.

FRG NEWSLETTER The purposes of an FRG newsletter are to relay information from the commander, highlight military and community resources, advertise upcoming FRG events, address issues of concern, and build camaraderie. Given that FRG newsletters relay information from the command, they are done under the direction of, and must be approved by, the company commander (or during deployment, the rear detachment commander). The company commander decides how frequently the newsletter will be published. Further, according to AR 608-1, Appendix J, the FRG newsletter must be conducted according to the company's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on the preparation, printing, and distribution of FRG newsletters.

Preparation of FRG Newsletter. While the company's SOP will address preparation of the FRG newsletter, here are some important things to know. The company commander (or RDC) determines what official information can be included and will provide this information. Some official information, such as training or deployment schedules though of interest to Families may be classified; thus, the company commander (or RDC) will not allow this information to be included. When mailing the newsletter, the FRG will need to state whether the newsletter contains official, unofficial, or both types of information. For this reason, the table below is provided so that FRG volunteers working on the FRG newsletter can be advised accordingly.

PREPARATION OF FRG NEWSLETTERS	
<p>Official Information</p> <p><i>Definition: relates to command and mission essential information that the commander believes Families should have to be better informed. Official information relates to unit mission and readiness.</i></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training schedule information • upcoming deployments • unit points of contact and the chain of concern • new Army programs or benefits available to Families • upcoming garrison events for Families of deployed Soldiers • educational information (such as information on the military community, how to budget, where to find medical care or legal assistance, how to prepare for emergencies) 	<p>Unofficial Information</p> <p><i>Definition: Non-mission related information</i></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal information (e.g., phone numbers, addresses, birth or adoption announcements, birthdays) • accomplishments by Soldiers or Family members • FRG member job changes, promotions, and awards • FRG fundraisers • recipes

Printing the FRG Newsletter.

Government paper and printing supplies are authorized for use to publish FRG newsletters that relay information from command.

Distributing the Approved Newsletter.

FRG newsletter may be distributed by mail using the Army or installation Post Office, email, and/or posted on the company's page on the battalion vFRG web site. For those Families who do not have access to a computer or internet connection, mailing the newsletter is essential.

KEY CALLERS Establishing and maintaining a current telephone tree is essential to providing timely and accurate information to Families. Reasons for using the telephone tree range anywhere from planning social functions, passing on information about meetings, deployment training, homecomings, or emergency information. To support this activity it is also essential to have a roster of volunteers who will serve as key callers. When taking on the FRG leader role, it is important to find out and monitor the status of the telephone tree operations and issues of concern or problems experienced and then take the appropriate actions necessary.

Telephone tree roster.

Maintaining an accurate roster of the company's Family contact information is important and needs to be done on an ongoing basis. Phone tree lists can be developed from these rosters in a number of different ways in order to group Family members according to platoons, geographical area, or alphabetically. To make the key caller's task manageable,

Guidance on Mailing FRG Newsletters

Postal Regulations limit how much unofficial information may be included in an FRG newsletter. As long as the inclusion of unofficial information does not increase the cost to the Government in printing and mailing the FRG newsletter, does not exceed 20 percent of the printed space used for the official information, and does not include personal wanted/for sale advertisements, some unofficial information may be included in an official FRG newsletter. The FRG newsletter must state whether it contains only official or both official and unofficial types of information. If the newsletter contains both types of information, it should include the following statement: "The inclusion of some unofficial information in this FRG newsletter has not increased the costs to the Government, in accordance with DoD 4525.8-M, Official Mail Management Manual." If the inclusion of unofficial information in the FRG newsletter has increased the costs to the Government, the FRG must use the FRG's Informal Fund to cover the costs.

A word of caution.

Copyright laws pertain to original works such as books and novels, poetry, songs, sheet music, photographs, computer software, graphics-anything created that exists as a "tangible medium." Using any portion of an author's published or unpublished work without permission is a copyright infringement and subject to lawsuit. Keep in mind that simply giving the author credit does not give protection from copyright infringement. Under the "fair use" rule of copyright law, you may use limited portions of someone's work (including quotes) or reproduce works without getting permission for such purposes as commentary or criticism, a summary of an article or address with quotes for news reporting, teaching, and research. However, material that is in the "public domain" may be used freely. [For example, Army materials and many government publications and web sites can be used without permission and are not covered under copyright laws.] For more information, check the U.S. Copyright Office at: www.copyright.gov.

consider setting up the tree such that each key caller is responsible for contacting a small number of Families (i.e., between five and 10) and preferably in the same geographical area to minimize the volunteer's phone expenses. Information for the initial set up of the roster should come from the FRG Soldier/spouse questionnaire. People should have the choice of having their information posted on a general roster and/or the confidential roster that is given to the FRG leader. If a spouse strongly resists giving the FRG important information, then it should be noted, signed by the spouse and Soldier, and the spouse instructed that her only contact will be with the military chain of command/rear detachment. Spouses need to be instructed not to use the roster for any type of recruitment for "business" parties or other purposes (Mary Kay, Tupperware etc). A Privacy statement should be printed on every type of roster (AR 340-21, Para. 4-3).

At the company level, updating the telephone tree roster is a task that can be delegated to the FRG phone tree chairperson if one has been assigned. (The RDC or FRSA can provide the phone tree chairperson with a regularly updated copy of unit rosters). In general, the telephone tree list can be updated using the following sources: vFRG web site (*see this section*), company commander or first sergeant, FRG volunteers who have been in regular contact with Family members (i.e., key callers), and completed Family readiness information forms. Examples of a phone tree diagram and chain of concern responsibilities can be found in the *Operation Ready Smart Book*.

Roster of Key Callers. The FRG leader in coordination with the FRG phone tree chairperson, if assigned, should review the roster of key callers to identify when new key callers need to be recruited. The recruitment of these volunteers can be delegated to the phone tree chairperson, if available. The responsibilities of the key caller are to: provide accurate information, maintain confidentiality, assist Families in resolving problems, communicate with FRG leader (or chairperson) issues of concern, and maintain phone records (e.g., phone tree log form, Family contact form). A Key Caller Handbook and sample forms are provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book* to assist volunteers in this role. Additional training should be arranged and offered to these volunteers as necessary.

How Does a Phone Tree Work?

Phone tree operations, procedures and tools should be revised and adjusted based on company needs and experiences.

The FRG leader calls the phone tree chairperson (or each of the key callers if a chairperson is not available) to relay command or FRG information. The phone tree chairperson, in turn, contacts each key caller and passes on the message. When all calls are completed to their branch of the phone tree, each key caller contacts the phone tree chairperson or FRG leader and reports the outcomes of the calls.

The process is reversed when Family members contact their key callers. For guidance on handling a crisis call, key callers can use the Decision Diagram for Helping a Distressed Person, which is included in the Operation READY Smart Book. If a key caller can't answer a question or concern, the key caller contacts the phone tree chairperson or FRG leader.

The key caller logs every call on a phone tree log form (a sample of this form is located in the Operation READY Smart Book) and, when appropriate on the Key Caller Family Contact Form, for record keeping purposes. The key caller is to report any significant event or information to the phone tree chairperson or FRG leader.

FRG Email

Just as creating and maintaining a telephone tree list is important to being able to communicate with Families, so too does an email distribution list need to be created and maintained. Email provides another easy way to provide timely and accurate information to Family members, including extended Family members that Soldiers have identified. Email can also be used as a way to publicize or provide information related to FRG meetings and social events.

Email distribution list. Like with the telephone tree, information from the company roster should be used to create an email list for the FRG. Creation and maintenance of the email distribution list can be delegated to the telephone tree chairperson or a key caller. (If the company has access to a battalion vFRG web site, then this web site provides an easy means for doing this task).

Email protocols. Like with telephone calls, protocols also need to be in place. It is advised that any emails sent out on behalf of the FRG contain important company or deployment-related information be approved by the Commander or RDC. The FRG leader can then elect to send the email or forward to a designated person (e.g., telephone tree chairperson, key caller, vFRG coordinator) for distribution to all individuals on the email list. However, a message about FRG meetings and social events can be prepared by other FRG volunteers as appropriate, but should be approved by the FRG leader.

VIRTUAL FAMILY READINESS GROUP WEB SITE (vFRG) The Army web site for FRGs, <http://www.armyfrg.org>, allows units to provide some of the FRG functions online thereby enabling units to meet the needs of Family members where they live. The web site provides a secure means by which FRGs can have two-way communication with Family members as well as provides a secure means for Family members and Soldiers to communicate while Soldiers are in theatre. In addition, commanders can post updates on the deployed unit. This is a powerful tool for FRG's use and a helpful way to provide timely accurate information to unit Family members who are geographically dispersed as well as a Soldier's other Family members such as parents. The FRG can use the vFRG to post newsletter, articles, and other information. The vFRG web site also enables telephone tree and email lists to be updated, allows for email communication, two-way instant messaging, and the posting of pictures, articles and downloads. However, the unit commander (and when deployed, the rear detachment commander) controls and approves all content and users, who must be registered to access the information, and manages postings to the web site.

The FRG leader should promote and encourage access to this resource. The vFRG web sites are established at the battalion level but may include separate pages for each company. An instruction book as well as start-up and technical support is available on the web site.

A word of caution: FRGs are encouraged to use either AKO or the vFRG for their web sites. Both of these web sites are secure. Register for a vFRG site at www.armyfrg.org.

Referring Families To Military and Civilian Community Support Services

One of the functions of the FRG is to assist Families in their abilities to cope with deployments and to help them solve problems. The FRG will need to refer Families to military and civilian organizations for assistance. Knowing all the resources in every community where Families live is too much to expect an FRG to know. For this reason, the Army has developed web sites as an avenue for Families to find the assistance they need.

Additionally, a wide array of installation and other military organizations can provide information and assistance to FRGs. Although learning about available support services will be an ongoing effort, here is where the FRG can start:

- **Military OneSource (MOS) (www.militaryonesource.com)**—a 1-800 telephone number and web site where Soldiers and Families can self refer for confidential counseling at any time.
- **Army OneSource (AOS) (www.myarmyonesource.com)**—an official Army web site offering information on programs available for Soldiers and Families; also serves as a “one-stop” knowledge center providing access to a variety of information including downloadable documents such as select Operation READY materials.
- **Rear Detachment Commander**—for identification of appropriate agencies for referring Families for needed assistance
- **Key Caller Handbook (*in the Operation READY Smart Book*)**—for identification and description of different types of services available to Families
- **Installation and community directories**
- **Garrison Army Community Service (ACS)**—primary resources for all Soldiers and their Families. ACS can assist Soldiers and Families through a myriad of services and activities (including pre-deployment and reunion planning). ACS can also assist the FRG in referring Families to military and civilian community agencies. To locate the nearest ACS, go to www.myarmyonesource.com.
- **Army National Guard State Family Program Coordinator**—in each state, the National Guard has a Family Program Office that can provide assistance with and guidance on Guard issues and community resources for Families. To locate a State Family Program Coordinator, go to www.myarmyonesource.com
- **U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) Regional Readiness Command (RRC) Family Programs Office**—can provide assistance and guidance on Reserve issues and locating community resources. To locate a Reserve Regional Readiness Command Family Programs office, go to www.arfp.org.
- **Family Assistance Center (FAC)**—set up as a one-stop shop where Families can get information and assistance from a diverse range of agencies during the initial months of a large-scale deployment, natural disaster, or mass casualty event
- **Chaplain**—provides counseling, offers religious support, and conducts training and workshops for Soldiers and Families on wide range of issues.
- **Official FRG web site**—The vFRG web site includes the official Army web site for FRGs. FRG leaders must register online to gain access to the site.
- **Child, Youth, and School (CYS) Services**—provides child care and youth programs on military installations as well as has established partnerships and arrangements to offer these services in communities. CYS Services can provide assistance in locating child care and youth services available to Army Families in the communities where Families live.
- **Army School Support Services**—Child, Youth and School Services provide support, transition assistance and advocacy for children. As subject matter experts for garrison command, parents and educators there are School Transition Specialists and School Liaison Officers located on each Army Garrison serving Army Families. Other services worth looking into are mentoring and intervention, individualized on-line tutoring programs, homework centers and computer labs available in youth centers and the Parents as Teachers and Strong Beginnings programs.

- **Operation Military Child Care**—A Department of Defense initiative to help Families/child care guardians of geographically dispersed active duty personnel and mobilized National Guard and Reserve service members find affordable child care options in their local communities. Under this initiative, reduced child care fees are offered at licensed child care providers. To locate child care options, contact the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) at 1-800-424-2246 or on the internet at www.childcareaware.org.
- **Operation Military Kids**—Army CYS Services has, and is continuing to establish, partnerships with youth serving organizations in targeted states with high deployment rates to set up local support networks that connect and support the youth of mobilized Army National Guard and Reserve service members. Through these community support networks, military youth receive a wide range of recreational, social and educational programs in communities where they live. For further information, visit the Web site www.operationmilitarykids.org.

Sustaining The Family Readiness Group

Getting Family members to be aware of and connected with the FRG are important efforts. While all of the FRG staff (including the publicity chairperson) and members can play a role, the FRG leader, can be instrumental in increasing the visibility of the FRG. As the FRG leader, it is important to assess and continually evaluate publicity and participation. Participation in the FRG is very important but how well the FRG provides timely accurate information to support Families when needed are valued measures of success. For that to happen, getting connected to Families is necessary.

There are two reasons Soldiers and Family members participate in FRGs:

- because they think their NEEDS will be MET
- because they get their NEEDS MET.

To attract and keep FRG membership high, take time to determine who needs what from the FRG:

- identify differences between individuals (ages, ranks, Family structure, experience in the community, location, income)
- identify the challenges people face
- identify the resources people need (activities, information, training/skills, help/support)
- consider how resources and needs can be matched throughout the deployment cycle (pre, during and post)
- brainstorm a list of challenges with FRG members —prioritize and dedicate a FRG meeting to addressing each one.

Once the needs and demographics of the FRG membership have been identified and addressed, there are a variety of opportunities and ways to get connected to encourage involvement in the FRG by Families who have not been attending meetings. Use different opportunities to make Soldiers and Families

TIP

★ The FRG should strive to appeal to both officer and enlisted Soldiers' Families. The FRG should reflect the company's make-up.

aware of the FRG such as by speaking at briefings, introducing yourself informally to Soldiers and Family members at events, and encouraging company leadership to talk about the FRG to Soldiers. Other ways to encourage participation are:

- Use word of mouth, the vFRG, and other ways to get the word out to all Soldiers and spouses.
- Survey Soldiers and Family members to determine needs and interests to shape FRG communications and activities for Families.
- Be personable and approachable.
- Invite individuals to participate. Let individuals know what opportunities to help are available. Accept any offer to help.
- Plan practical and fun activities.
- Keep meetings brief and enjoyable.
- Communicate with newcomers on their arrival. Tell them about FRG activities and help them feel welcome.
- Create a positive reputation of the FRG. Ensure that the FRG provides timely and accurate information and doesn't become a rumor mill. Maintain control of FRG meetings and take steps to ensure they do not become a forum for political or personal agendas, Army bashing, and especially gossip!
- Promote a friendly community environment where everyone is treated as equals. Be careful not to allow the FRG to polarize into separate factions.
- Offer child care and publicize that child care will be available at FRG meetings and events, if funded/approved by the unit commander.
- Provide food at FRG events, using FRG informal funds or supplemental mission funds intended for FRGs.
- Use the media to publicize FRG activities and events. Installation and/or local newspapers and television (e.g., community channel on cable television) are a way to reach large number of Families. For guidance, check with the Public Affairs Office.
- Use incentives.
- Recognize volunteers' contributions. It is another way of creating a positive and warm friendly environment.
- Identify barriers and resolve as many as possible.

Handling Traumatic Situations

Every deployment is unique. Yet, certain Family issues are typically seen during every deployment. Handling these situations requires knowing the appropriate referral agencies for these "typical" issues. (*See the military and civilian community resource information in the Operation READY Smart Book*). However, some issues or situations cannot be anticipated. This section discusses approaches for dealing with other anticipated and emergency situations. Planning and preparing for all types of situations are important in being able to respond effectively.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT An FRG leader (and key callers) can expect to handle Families in "crisis." Here is information on what can create a crisis for Families, how they cope, and ways to deal with individuals in a crisis. An individual is in crisis when he/she experiences an event or series of events that temporarily cause the individual to feel unable to cope. There is a diverse range of events that can create a crisis for Soldiers and Families. These events include:

- Unexpected and unplanned events (e.g., accident, natural disaster, act of terror, loss of Soldier or Family member, illness of Family member)
- Life or development events (e.g., death of an elderly parent and birth of a child). A deployment can be considered in this category because deployments are a part of military life
- Functional crisis occurs in Families that are not coping or experiencing individual or Family problems such as financial problems/crisis, substance abuse, Family violence, and infidelity
- Caregiver crisis occurs when something happens to the caregiver, such an injury, illness or death, or for some other reason, the caregiver can no longer care for the children of deployed Soldiers and DA Civilians. In essence, the Family Care Plan is no longer valid.

An individual's reactions to a crisis often proceed through distinct stages.

- Denial ("This can't be happening.")
- Recognition (i.e., the person sees what has happened but still has not accepted reality)
- Reminiscence (i.e., how things used to be)
- Adjustment ("What do I need to do?")
- Resolution (i.e., the situation is accepted, and life goes on).

Tips for Dealing with Individuals in Crisis

- ★ Understand what coping stage the individual is in when he/she contacts the FRG as it gives an indication of the individual's receptivity to help and type of support needed.
- ★ Recognize that an individual will be experiencing a range of emotions. An individual will most likely be expecting to get information or assistance that will solve the problem.
- ★ Treat the individual with care. Listen carefully and speak calmly.
- ★ Do not make promises that can't be kept. Assist when able and refer when a situation or issue is not your area of expertise. For example, do not handle individuals who are suicidal or may harm themselves or others, refer them to Chaplain, Mental Health or immediately call the Military Police or 911.
- ★ Address the presenting problem(s). If an individual rambles when talking, try to identify a major issue of concern that can be solved easily. Solving an "easy" problem first can help to calm the individual and win trust.
- ★ Refer to ACS, Reserve Component Family Programs, Social Work Service, Military One Source, or other community agencies if the individual does not respond to your intervention.
- ★ Follow up to ensure the individual is getting the assistance needed.

TRAUMA SUPPORT There is a diverse range of trauma situations that can occur including:

- Death of a Soldier
- Death, illness or injury of a leader
- MIA/POW
- Mass casualties
- Suicide
- Death of a spouse or child.

These are very difficult times for units and Families. It is important for the FRG leader to be clear about the role of the FRG in these situations and how it can support the unit and Families.

Battalion Care Teams. The battalion commander decides whether to have the Battalion Care Team available for casualty or trauma situations. If the battalion commander chooses to have these teams, then FRG leaders advertise to its members that a cadre of care team volunteers is needed and provide information on the training available to all interested individuals. Training is conducted by either unit or garrison chaplains, Army Community Service or Reserve Component Family Programs. Once individuals have completed training, a care team roster is prepared by the care team coordinator and made available to the battalion commander, RDCs and FRG battalion advisor PRIOR to deployment. In the event of a casualty incident, the chaplain or Casualty Notification Officer (CNO) will ask the Family if they want assistance from a care team. If requested by the Family, the CNO or chaplain will contact the battalion RDC, who will determine the 3-6 individuals from the roster

Tips for Handling Trauma Situations

- ★ In most instances, the RDC will contact the FRG leader. However, in all instances, the FRG leader should contact the RDC for guidance and direction. If the RDC determines there is a need for an information briefing, then the RDC will provide the specific message to be given by FRG key callers when contacting Families about the briefing. Regardless of whether there is a briefing, the RDC will provide the information that can be conveyed to FRG membership.
- ★ The FRG can support the Battalion Care Team who help coordinate support for Families. In some instances, other units may also help coordinate support efforts.
- ★ Families will be experiencing a range of emotions as they go through the grieving process. Encourage FRG members to be patient and supportive of grieving Families. Remind FRG members to acknowledge and support grieving children.
- ★ Provide FRG members with guidance on what to say and what not to say. Invite PAO to talk about how to deal with the media. Invite the Chaplain to talk about the grieving process and acceptable responses. Help FRG members also deal with the unit loss.
- ★ Remind FRG membership to respect Family's privacy.
- ★ The grieving process takes a long time, often years. Further, grieving Families often do not reach out for help. The FRG can provide emotional and logistical support as needed. Encourage FRG members to listen to grieving Families. It is a simple thing that can be very helpful. Have the FRG call, send cards, visit, and take other steps to let the Family know that people care and are thinking of them.

that will form the “team” sent. The battalion RDC may seek input from the commander’s spouse, battalion FRG advisor or care team coordinator in determining the team’s make-up and/or role based on the Family’s wishes (including the individuals with whom the Family feels comfortable). As a result, care teams can be comprised in different ways and may include any of the following individuals: key spouses from the brigade, battalion, and/or company; FRG leader, or spouses from the same platoon or company. The RDC may appoint one individual of the team to serve as the care team leader. The care team reports to the RDC and not the FRG leader.

FRG Support. A company level FRG can provide valuable support to care teams assisting a Family in their company. (For ideas and additional information, see “Casualty and Trauma in the Unit” Section 2 of Part 4 of this handbook or the Operation READY Trauma in the Unit Handbook). In addition, the FRG leader may need to take action to help manage the FRG membership’s reaction to the situation.

FRGs can refer Families to the following resources for additional support:

- **Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO)**—for assistance in accessing services and benefit information
- **Chaplain**—for counseling
- **Army Community Service**—for short-term emotional support
- **Military Family Life Consultants**—for short-term emotional support
- **Battalion Care Team**—for short-term emotional and logistical support
- **Military One Source**—for counseling services, information, and referrals
- **Army Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operation Center (CMAOC)**— assists Families in times of bereavement (1-866-272-5841)
- **Family Assistance Center—Mass Casualty**—set up on adhoc basis in the event of a high number of war wounded, mass casualty, natural disaster, or terrorist attack to provide information and support services to Families of Soldiers who are inpatients or outpatients at a military medical treatment facility (MTF)
- **Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)**—provides personal support, advocacy and follow-up to severely disabled (i.e., categorized as Special Category or SPECAT) Soldiers and their Families, accessed via web at www.AW2.army.mil or telephone at 1-800-237-1336
- **Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO)**—helpful information can be accessed on their web site at www.dtic.mil/dpmo/Family/index.htm
- **Community Based Health Care Organization (CBHCO)**—helps Guard and Reserve Soldiers on medical hold locate medical services in their local community
- **Army Family Assistance Hotline** (1-800-833-6622).

MEDIA GUIDANCE The news media like to attend certain events such as farewells and welcome home ceremonies when Soldiers deploy and return from deployment. These are occasions when media frequently seek to interview Family members. In addition, with round the clock news on television, radio, and the internet, Families can hear things very quickly. In fact, the media may release information before it is officially released by the Army/ Department of Defense. This is another time when media may want to interview military Families. If the FRG leader or member is approached by the media for an interview, contact Public Affairs and request that a public affairs officer (PAO) be present. The PAO can also provide guidance on what you should and should not say. Keep in mind that speaking with the media is an opportunity to present information about the FRG to the public. It is also a chance to tell the Army story and to emphasize the important role of the Family. Here is additional information about dealing with the media, especially for unplanned interviews.

Tips for Dealing with the Media

- ★ Complete garrison or Reserve Component scheduled public affairs training.
- ★ All individuals (FRG leader and Family members) have the right to refuse an interview.
- ★ Know with whom you are talking. Write down the reporter's name, telephone number, and name of the media organization.
- ★ Anticipate what questions reporters are likely to ask. Determine response to questions.
- ★ Listen carefully to the question. Think before speaking.
- ★ Know your limitations. If you do not have first-hand knowledge, do not speculate. Provide explanation when you cannot answer a question.
- ★ Be brief in answer and just answer the question. Be cautious about questions that lead to only "yes" or "no" responses.
- ★ Avoid acronyms.
- ★ Know what not to discuss or say. Know how to respond to specific types of questions. Do not say "off the record." Never give sensitive information that could jeopardize the safety and security of either Soldiers or Family members.
- ★ Be positive. Do not argue. Be yourself.
- ★ Notify PAO, if you have not already done so.

RUMOR CONTROL

It is inevitable that at some point(s) during a deployment, rumors will surface. In some cases, news media coverage of military operations will provoke Families to seek information related to what they may have seen or heard. When Families do not receive timely information, this can create panic or lead to gossip or rumors running rampant. It is essential that Families receive timely and accurate information from the RDC to curtail rumors. The FRG needs to convey to Families that the RDC and other military leaders serve as the official source of information.

Tips for Managing Rumors

- ★ Discuss questions/issues that Families have in a timely manner with RDC. This may help to prevent rumors.
- ★ When there are rumors, contact the RDC to discuss the steps that need to be taken. Determine what information the RDC wants the FRG to give to Families.
- ★ Disseminate the information to Families that has been provided by the RDC to the FRG leader. Ensure official information is passed on using multiple communication systems (e.g., FRG telephone tree, email, and vFRG).
- ★ Have the RDC attend and speak at an FRG meeting or event to provide "official" information to Families.
- ★ Notify Families of any information briefings scheduled.

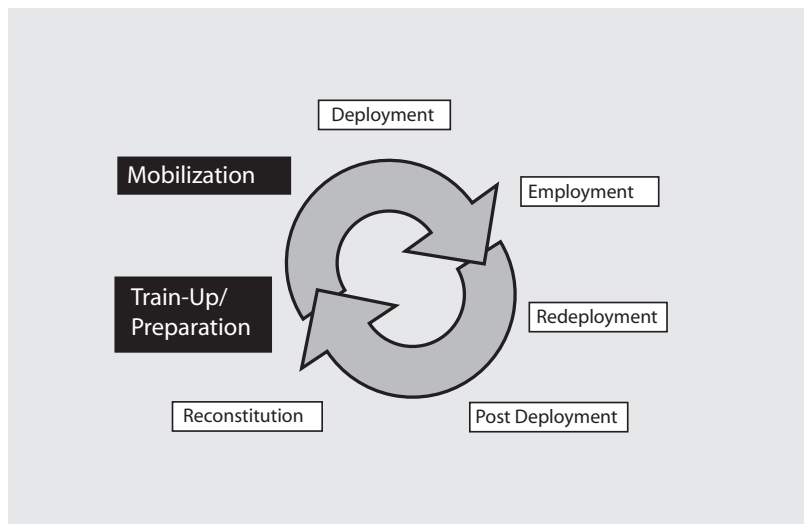
Bottom line: It is essential that Families get accurate information in a timely manner. This will help to avoid rumors.

PART IV: Role and Activities of the FRG

The following information is written for company level FRGs for active, National Guard, and Reserve Components. However, the information is applicable to FRGs at all levels. This part of the handbook provides suggestions on the specific activities the FRG should perform during each phase of deployment. Each section is divided into two checklists. The first checklist focuses primarily on the activities the FRG leader needs to conduct with command and FRG staff. The second checklist focuses on FRG activities for Families. For official guidance on FRG activities, see section 3 entitled Management of FRG Activities in Part 3 of this handbook. Procedural information on communications systems to be used with Families also appears in Section 3.3 of Part 3 of this handbook.

4.1 Train-Up/Preparation and Mobilization Phases

Once the reset activities after a deployment are complete and the unit is reconstituted, the company begins the train-up preparation phase. The focus of the train-up phase is to reestablish unit and Soldier readiness and prepare for the next mission. During this time, there are often changes in unit leadership, Soldiers and Family members, and/or FRG leadership due to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or other reasons. Certain activities need to be performed to sustain the FRG and to plan for the next deployment cycle. Given these times of high OPTEMPO and ongoing rapid deployments, FRGs need to operate on an ongoing basis rather than starting from scratch with each deployment. Work to preserve what the FRG has done so that new FRG leadership can build on the systems (e.g., telephone tree), procedures (e.g. key caller protocol, newsletter), and programs in place and thereby effectively support the company mission. In addition, it is important to embrace new Soldiers and Families into the company and to maintain communications with them.



Assisting Command With Family Preparations and Ensuring FRG Readiness

FRG LEADER'S TRAIN-UP/PREPARATION AND MOBILIZATION "PRE-DEPLOYMENT" CHECKLIST

4

- Meet with the company commander to:
 - be introduced to and establish relationship with RDC
 - develop a plan of action for preparing Families for deployment and for supporting Families during deployment (i.e., specifying responsibilities of FRG and RDC)
 - discuss with the company commander and RDC the process to be followed in the event of casualties in the unit and the role and use of Battalion Care Team to gain an understanding of casualty notification procedures
 - determine methods by which command and FRG leader will maintain communication during deployment
 - set up company Web page on the Battalion vFRG web site
 - obtain particulars (i.e., date, time and location) about pre-deployment briefings and Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) in order to notify Families
 - ensure that children's issues are addressed in pre-deployment briefings and that age appropriate activities are conducted with children
 - discuss at-risk Families and how to refer them for assistance.
- Recognize all volunteers.
- Promote smooth transitions of FRG leadership and individual FRG volunteers into new roles. Recruit volunteers, ensure they are enrolled with the ACS Volunteer Corps Coordinator or Reserve Component Family Programs and have attended FRG training.
- Review FRG operations and make adjustments as needed to be prepared for next deployment even if the deployment date is not known.
- Write lessons learned and submit to RDC for inclusion in unit after action report.
- Communicate to command any Family questions or issues that become known to the FRG.
- Make sure the FRG phone tree is current and active. Work with RDC to get updated roster information and Family information data.
- Ensure key callers are aware of resources so they can provide appropriate referrals to Families.
- Assist in getting volunteers trained for the Battalion Care Teams.
- Attend pre-deployment briefings. *(Note: Attending briefings is important because it provides the opportunity to obtain important information to pass on to Families, introduce the FRG leader and co-leader, collect accurate Family information on company Families as well as for Soldiers who are assigned to the unit for deployment, and meet Soldiers and Families).*
- Meet with ACS Mobilization and Deployment Program Manager and/or Guard/Reserve Component Family Programs staff to identify deployment support available. Discuss what support they can provide to both the FRG and Families. This discussion should address programs, services, and support available for the FRG, FRG volunteers and/or Families; educational and information materials available; registration of FRG statutory volunteers; and assistance with referrals and coordination of services; Obtain helpful information materials that will be distributed to Families, such as:
 - *Operation READY Soldier/Family Deployment Handbook* available from ACS and Guard/Reserve Component Family Programs
 - Military and civilian community phone directories of important resources.

Getting Families and Soldiers Ready

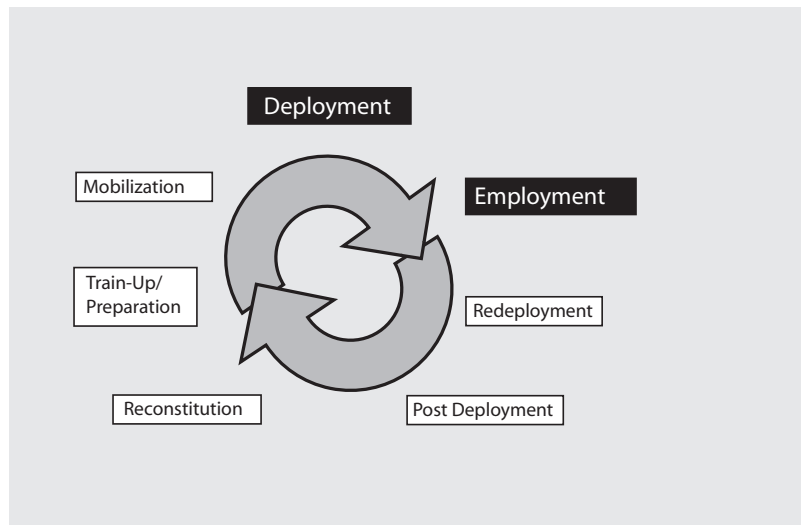
Remember, the FRG is established by the commander to assist in military and personal deployment preparedness and enhance the Family readiness of Soldiers and Families. The FRG can play a vital role in preparing Families and Soldiers for deployment.

FRG'S TRAIN-UP/PREPARATION AND MOBILIZATION "PRE-DEPLOYMENT" CHECKLIST

- Disseminate information about company pre-deployment briefings (including childcare arrangements), mission and schedule information (if allowed), Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) schedule, and FRG meetings to Soldiers and Families using the phone tree, vFRG web site, and email.
- Ensure Families all understand the process of notification in case of casualty or injury.
- Encourage Soldiers and Families to attend pre-deployment briefings, if possible. Provide important information disseminated at pre-deployment briefings to Soldiers and Families.
- Encourage Soldiers and Families to provide contact information for all desired loved ones (i.e., immediate Family, extended Family/relatives, and fiancés/fiancées). *(Note: This information will be obtained by the RDC, FRG and ACS).* Also get information on Families' interest in participating in FRG activities or vFRG. Ask the Soldier to provide a form authorizing Family members' access (by name and relationship) to the RDC or vFRG system administrator.
- Ensure Family members know how to access the unit's vFRG web system and MyArmyOneSource.com for up-to-date information.
- Provide information on how Families can contact Soldiers while deployed, if known.
- Coordinate with PAO to provide information to Soldiers and Families on how to deal with the media.
- Remind spouses to check that they have access to important personal documents (e.g., power of attorney), safe deposit box, car keys, checkbook, etc. and Family care plans if an emergency arises during deployment.
- Distribute information on Military OneSource and Community Mental Health resources.
- Give all FRG members a pocket guide list of emergency phone numbers on their post including RDC, RDNCO and FRG POC.
- Provide Families with appropriate information and education materials such as:
 - a copy of the Operation READY Soldier/Family Deployment Handbook available from ACS and Guard/Reserve Component Family Programs
 - a copy of military and civilian community phone directories of important resources.
 - copies of Operation READY children and youth parenting information.
- Introduce yourself (FRG leader) to Soldiers and Families at pre-deployment briefings, FRG meetings, and other opportunities that arise. *(Note, if time and space permit, a short FRG meeting can be conducted following a pre-deployment briefing).* These occasions are an opportunity to talk about the FRG and explain the benefits of participation. Keep in mind, this is a brief sales presentation. The first impression the FRG leader conveys and what is said will influence whether Families choose to participate or not; so it is important to plan and execute well.
- Provide Families with point of contact information for both command and FRG.
- Make sure Soldiers are told specifically to add any person (such as fiancée's, significant others, parents, etc.) on their information sheet that they would like the FRG to contact.
- Make sure all FRG member's have an FRG member on emergency pick up on school information for children in case of emergency.
- Advise members to share with school counselors that their spouses are being deployed so that schools may support or at least be aware of home situation.
- Make sure all spouses have AKO accounts.
- Ascertain whether Families have any questions, especially after pre-deployment briefings, and address Family questions as appropriate.
- Conduct social activities to build Family camaraderie.
- Encourage Families who are considering leaving the area to notify the unit and provide the FRG and RDC with new contact information.

4.2 Deployment and Employment Phases

The FRG is responsible for keeping critical information from command flowing to Families, a very important task during deployment. Supporting Families, especially during long and dangerous deployments, is another focus of the FRG's efforts at this phase of the deployment cycle. To support Families effectively, the FRG must remain connected with Families, help Families solve problems and become resilient, and provide social activities and other means to reduce stress and boost morale. In addition, the FRG (in particular the FRG leader) will need to work closely with the command staff and establish and maintain connections with key military and community individuals and agencies who can serve as a resource and support to the FRG.



Assisting Command With Family Communications and Managing FRG Activities

FRG LEADER'S DEPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

- Maintain communication with RDC to:
 - obtain support and assistance for FRG activities
 - obtain company information that is to be relayed to Families via FRG newsletter, telephone tree, email, vFRG, and FRG meetings
 - discuss content of FRG newsletter and obtain company commander's (RDC's) approval
 - ensure that children's issues are addressed and that age appropriate activities are conducted with children
 - coordinate video teleconference (VTC) time for Families to communicate with deployed Soldiers, if available
 - review assistance provided to Families and discuss the Family problems/issues/questions the FRG is unable to address and identify appropriate referrals for these issues
 - assist Families of wounded or injured Soldiers when asked.
- Take care of yourself and FRG volunteers.
- Attend briefings. (Attending briefings is important because it provides an ongoing opportunity to obtain important information to pass on to Families, introduce the FRG leader and FRG, collect accurate Family information on both company Families and Families of Soldiers who are temporarily assigned to the company, and meet Families).
- Maintain communication with other key military and civilian community representatives including:
 - FRG Deployment Support Assistant
 - Family Readiness Support Assistant advisor or steering committee leader
 - Chaplain
 - Army Community Service
 - Army National Guard State Family Program Office
 - Army Reserve Regional Readiness Command Family Programs Office.
- Arrange guest speakers from ACS, Guard/Reserve Component Family Programs Office and other agencies to talk or to conduct briefings for Families at FRG meetings that address issues such as coping with separation, dealing with loneliness, securing home/safety, dealing with the media, and other issues of interest to Family members.
- Manage gossip and rumors. Ensure there is a set diagram of how and when and from whom official information will be distributed. Explain only official chain of information is valid.
- Make weekly phone contact with FRG members.
- Adjust the breadth and frequency of FRG activities throughout the deployment period to address Family needs and based on command direction. Plan and conduct social activities.
- Take steps to encourage and sustain participation in FRG meetings and activities. (*See section entitled Sustaining the FRG in Section 3 of Part 3 of this handbook*).
- Attend regular meeting or briefing sessions with the garrison commander and rear detachment commander.
- Maintain communication among FRG staff to plan, coordinate, and conduct FRG activities; monitor activities and FRG procedures (e.g., key caller protocol); and identify emerging Family issues.
- Ensure accurate information is distributed in a timely manner. This is important throughout the deployment and will be very important if something happens to the unit. Help dispel rumors when possible.
- Notify FRG members of community programs of interest. These programs can be identified by checking out key web sites (such as www.myarmyonesource.com and www.armyfrg.org), reviewing military publications (such as newspapers, MWR newsletter), and through communications with military and community individuals and agencies.
- Attend installation/community FRG Forum meetings to discuss and seek help from other FRG leaders on how to address FRG and Family issues.

Maintaining Communications With Families

Providing accurate timely information to Soldiers' Families (immediate and extended) is the FRG's primary role throughout the months of deployment. To help families cope with the stresses of deployment, a variety of efforts should also be made to get families out, reduce isolation, and help family members connect with each other. Don't forget to contact and involve new family members as new Soldiers are added to the company. Additionally, try to assist families in solving issues to reduce demands on company leadership.

FRG'S DEPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

- Disseminate information about the company and FRG to Families using the phone tree, virtual FRG web site, email, FRG newsletter, and FRG meetings.
- Encourage Families to attend briefings. Provide important information disseminated at briefings to Families.
- Encourage Families to provide the FRG with contact information if they move.
- Provide information on how Families can contact Soldiers while deployed. Encourage frequent contact with Soldiers. Coordinate with RDC to provide VTC time for Soldiers and Families.
- Maintain communication and connection with Families. Use a variety of methods such as telephone calls, FRG newsletter, FRG activities, and vFRG web site. Don't forget to maintain contact with caregivers who are taking care of children of single parents and dual-military couples and those Family members who are geographically displaced from the group.
- Provide Families with appropriate information and education materials available. Give out resource information so Families can get help when needed and pass information on to other Families with whom they may be in contact. Have guest speakers at FRG meetings and events.
- Refer Families to the appropriate resource when needed. For a list of resources, see the *Operation READY Smart Book*.
- Provide information and refer Families to programs of interest that are being offered by the community.
- Introduce yourself (FRG leader) to Families at briefings, FRG meetings, and other opportunities that arise.
- Ensure Families have point of contact information for both command and FRG.
- Ascertain whether Families have any questions, especially after briefings, and address Family questions as appropriate.
- Coordinate or refer Families to activities for children.
- Conduct social activities as needed to provide stress relief and reduce Family loneliness.
- Explain the importance of contacting someone from the FRG ANY-TIME Family members go out of town and be sure to have a cell phone number/emergency contact number for all FRG members.

Deployment Issues

Each deployment is unique. While some issues typically occur with each deployment, unusual issues can also arise during a deployment. Having information and guidance are essential to being able to respond effectively. This section highlights three issues that are increasingly important and call for specific actions to be taken. Additional information on these issues is available in the *Operation READY Smart Book* and in other Operation READY materials.

CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND REACTIONS TO DEPLOYMENT Children react to deployments and the separation from parents in different ways. They need to be supported as well. The FRG can plan age-appropriate events for children and/or arrange special speakers at FRG meetings to address issues Families are experiencing. The FRG can also disseminate information to Families to help deal with children's issues pre-, during, and post deployment. The Operation READY materials promote training on Children and Deployment. A module on children's issues during wartime is available online or from Army Community Service. In addition, a variety of Child, Youth, and School (CYS) Services' materials and programs are available to help children and parents.

Helpful information can also be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.militaryonesource.com>

<http://www.myarmyonesource.com>

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>

<http://www.nmfa.org>

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>

<http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/myom>

CASUALTY AND TRAUMA IN THE UNIT One of the most difficult situations to deal with in any unit is trauma, whether the injury or death involves a Soldier or a Family member. Notification and assistance is not a function of the FRG, but the FRG can play a role in helping both individuals and the unit.

Supporting the Family. In the event of a serious injury or death of a Soldier, the military is responsible for casualty notification and helping Family members. The notification process depends upon the casualty status and location of the next of kin. Typically, the incident is first reported by the commander to the Casualty Operations Branch, Human Resources Command. Once the Casualty Area Command (CAC) has confirmed the incident, it produces an initial casualty report. If the Soldier is wounded in action (WIA), then notification is made by telephone. If the Soldier is deceased, Duty status—Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN), or MIA, a casualty notification officer, generally accompanied by a chaplain, visits the primary next of kin (PNOK) to notify the Family in person. Following notification, a casualty assistance officer (CAO) visits the Family to assist with survivor benefits, funeral arrangements, personnel-related matters, and emotional support. The Public Affairs Office may also contact the Family to offer assistance in dealing with the media. The Casualty Notification Officer or Chaplain will notify the brigade or battalion RDC who will send out a care team if the Family requests assistance.

The Battalion Care Team offers short-term emotional and logistical support to Families of injured and deceased Soldiers. The care team can also serve as a facilitator to all the well-intended outside support until the Family's own support system begins to work. The support provided and the ways in which the care team assists a Family will depend on the Family's requested needs. The services care teams can provide include:

- call support (e.g., screen calls per Family's wishes, keep phone log of calls to Family, help Family identify whom THE Family needs to contact)
- home care assistance (e.g., arrange for help with laundry, lawn care, pet care or boarding, and other household matters in which Family may need assistance; keep log of cards/flowers sent to Family; stop mail and newspaper while Family on travel to medical facility; reschedule appointments; run errands)
- keep log of questions the Family wants to ask the Casualty Assistance Officer
- meal support
- baby sit or make temporary child care arrangements
- assist visiting Family members and friends with installation access, lodging and transportation, as needed
- house sit (or arrange MP/civilian police to check on house) while the Family visits a hospitalized Soldier.

The care team can provide these services themselves or coordinate the services needed (e.g., get individuals to assist with meal support). The team provides only what the Family requests. This short-term care is generally provided for 7 to 14 days. However, support may be provided for a longer period, especially for Families of injured Soldiers. The length of time the care team serves will depend on the Family's needs and support network.

Support to the unit. Once the Family has been notified, the RDC communicates with the FRG leader to arrange a briefing for all other spouses and Family members in the unit. FRG key callers are to contact Family members about the briefing

By definition, a casualty is any person lost to the organization by reason of having been declared beleaguered, besieged, captured, dead, diseased, detained, Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown, injured, ill, interned, missing, missing in action or wounded. There are seven casualty statuses:

- Deceased
- Duty status—Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN)
- Missing in Action (MIA)
- Very Seriously Injured or Ill (VSI)
- Seriously Injured or Ill (SI)
- Not seriously Injured (NSI).

A word of caution.

The spouse of the deceased Soldier identifies who she/he would like to provide comfort to the Family. The rear detachment commander will identify and assemble the care team from a list of trained care team volunteers, based upon the spouse's request. When a unit sustains several casualties at once, the battalion commander may request other battalions' care teams to assist. Care teams report to the RDC and not the FRG leader. The care team may need to be debriefed by someone who is experienced in trauma. Often school districts near bases have crisis response teams trained and in place for crisis intervention. School districts are often very open to helping with crisis intervention by supplying trained professionals to debrief Care Teams assisting a casualty's Family. Army Community Service Family Advocacy Specialists or Chaplains can also debrief the care team.

date and location. A scripted message will be provided by the RDC to be used when contacting Families. No other information is to be given out during the phone calls. Be sure the affected Family is not called and that rumor control is emphasized. In addition, it is helpful if the RDC and/or FRG leader can arrange to have the Chaplain talk with Families (or FRG) about the grieving process and appropriate responses.

Additional information related to care teams and casualty situations is provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book* and addressed in the *Operation READY Trauma in the Unit Handbook* and training materials.

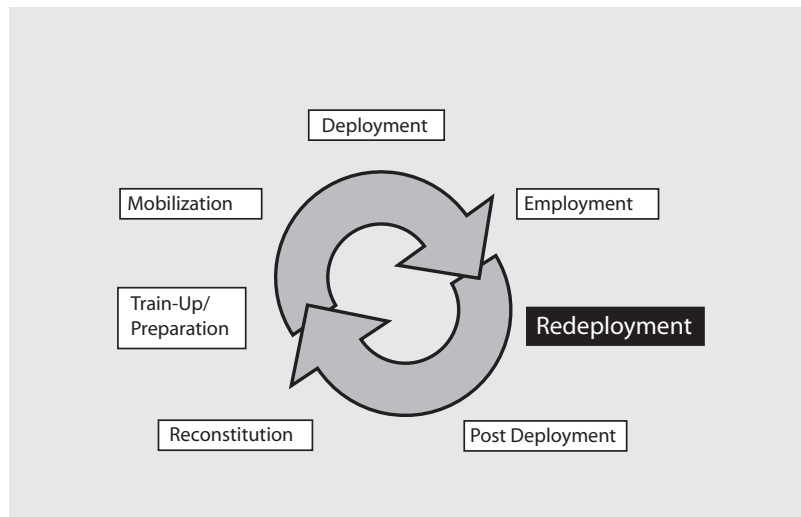
TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND FRG VOLUNTEERS Given the high level of demands placed on an FRG leader and FRG staff, it is important to take steps to reduce stress and maintain personal well-being. For tips, consult the Coping with Stress fact sheet in the *Operation READY Smart Book*. If there is a casualty or trauma in the unit, it is important to allow yourself and the members of the FRG to grieve. Know the resources in the community and use them.

Tip

Keep in mind the care team members will need support too. FRG members can support the care team with an occasional meal and child care when possible.

4.3 Redeployment

Redeployment is the point in the deployment cycle when Soldiers prepare to return and out-process at deployment site or in the theatre of operations. It is generally a brief period of time ranging anywhere from five to 30 days. Redeployment also refers to individual Soldiers who return mid-tour for an approximately two-week period known as "R&R". This is a key time to prepare (if this has not been done in the last month of the "deployment" phase) or continue preparing Families for Soldiers return and reintegration into the Family. Spouse and Family education is an important activity in this phase.



Assisting Command With Reunion Preparations and FRG Planning

FRG LEADER'S REDEPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

- Contact or meet with the rear detachment commander to:
 - obtain particulars (date, time and location) about return of company and individual Soldiers, reunion briefings, and company (and installation) homecoming activities in order to notify Families per command approval AND to discuss how the FRG can and will support company activities, particularly welcome home events. (*Note: Homecoming ceremonies/activities are a company and installation responsibility.*)
 - get information on reunion and reintegration training conducted for Families by ACS, Reserve Component Family Programs, Chaplains and other military agencies; also assist in coordinating meetings/activities held specifically for the company to help prepare Families for reunion issues
 - get information on briefings and information for Families by Behavioral Health Services on health symptoms and potential signs and symptoms of distress
 - ensure that children's issues are addressed in reunion briefings and that age appropriate activities are conducted with children
 - identify at-risk Families and Families who have experienced significant problems during the deployment. Also identify potential Family issues to advise company commander.
- Arrange guest speakers (such as Chaplain or ACS) to talk at FRG meetings about reunion and reintegration issues, including such topics as stress management, marital issues, children's reactions to a returning parent, returning to work issues, combat stress and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and benefit changes. Also consider having the PAO talk about dealing with the media since the media may be present at welcome home events.
- Review plans of how the FRG will support Soldiers and Families during the post deployment phase.

Preparing Families For Reunion and Supporting Families of Soldiers on R & R

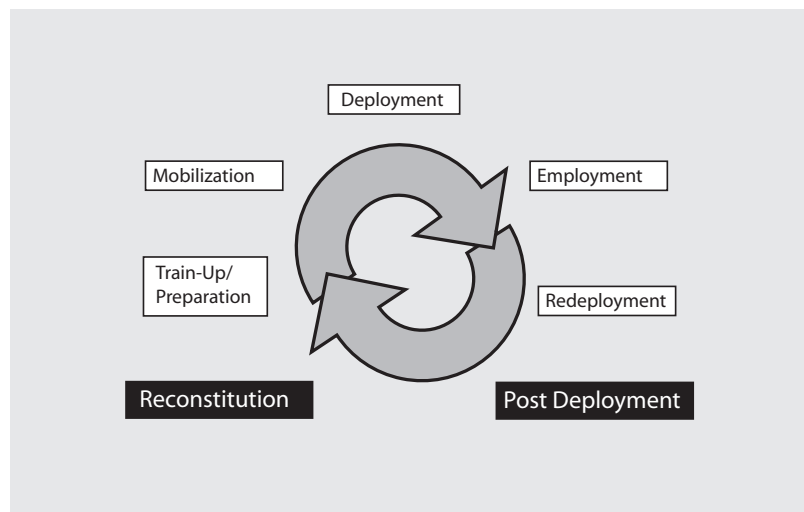
With limited time available, the FRG's efforts in this area are likely to start during this phase and continue into the post deployment phase. Preparing Families for reunion and reintegration of Soldiers needs to begin prior to Soldiers' return. Within this phase, do not forget to support the subgroup of Families who are having a brief reunion with Soldiers home on R & R. These Families may be experiencing issues in which the FRG can offer support.

FRG'S REDEPLOYMENT CHECKLIST

- Announce to Families redeployment dates once RDC authorizes information for release. *(Note: The RDC may elect to call or have the FRSA call all Families).* State that often dates and times of redeployments change at the last minute; emphasize flexibility.
- Provide Families with tentative post deployment schedule (i.e., mandatory reintegration training schedule, block leave information, etc). Let Families know what to expect and have a meeting with an open floor for questions regarding redeployment. Have RDC and RDNCO and Battalion FRG leader there to answer questions.
- Notify spouses that the chaplain can conduct a marital assessment to help spouses identify and prepare for potential relationship issues during reunion.
- Disseminate information about upcoming reunion briefings and homecoming activities to be held once the Soldiers return. Use the phone tree and email to notify Families and encourage attendance.
- Provide Families with appropriate education and information materials about reunion and reintegration issues. Use FRG newsletter, vFRG web site, and guest speakers at an FRG meeting as forums for talking about these issues. When presenting this information, be sure to identify resources where Soldiers and Families can get help if needed.
- Have PAO provide Families with information on how to deal with the media.
- Arrange to have Military Family Life Consultants on hand at reception site for those Families or Soldiers who may need support.

4.4 Post Deployment and Reconstitution Phases

In the post deployment and reconstitution phases, Soldiers return to home station, complete redeployment and demobilization processing (i.e., reverse SRP and medical screening), and begin the process of reintegrating into Family life and the community. (The Army refers to the reintegration process as reconstitution phase). Guard and Reserve also face readjustment to their civilian jobs. Both Soldiers and Family members go through an adjustment period. The length of the adjustment period varies across Soldiers and Families. It is important to monitor Soldiers and Families' well-being for many months to ensure Soldiers and Families receive the support needed with transition issues. Information and referral are important FRG activities during the post deployment phase, especially for Guard/Reserve Component Soldiers who may not live near a military installation. The FRG should distribute information on how to access post deployment resources such as Military OneSource and Military Family Life Consultants.



Assisting Command With Post Deployment and Reconstitution Tasks

FRG LEADER'S POST DEPLOYMENT AND RECONSTITUTION CHECKLIST

- Communicate with the rear detachment and/or company commander to:
 - obtain particulars (date, time and location) about return of company and individual Soldiers, reunion briefings, and company (and installation) homecoming activities in order to notify Families
 - assist in coordinating trainings/classes by Military Family Life Consultants, ACS, Reserve Component Family Programs, Chaplains, and other agencies to help Soldiers and Families with reunion and reintegration issues; ensure attention is given to the transition issues of Guard and Reserve Soldiers
 - ensure that children's issues are addressed in reunion briefings and that age appropriate activities are conducted with children
 - discuss Family problems/issues/questions that FRG is unable to address and identify appropriate referrals for these issues
 - identify at-risk Families and Families who have experienced significant problems during the deployment. Also identify potential Family issues to advise company commander
 - identify Families with high levels of reported stress/separation issues after Soldiers return.
- Arrange guest speakers to talk at FRG meetings about reunion issues, including such topics as stress management, marital issues, children's reactions to a returning parent, returning to work issues, and combat operational stress reaction and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Participate in the company's Soldier and Family welcoming events and official homecoming events based on FRG leader's discussions with command.
- Attend briefings and homecoming events.
- Ensure key callers are aware of resources so they can provide appropriate referrals to Families.
- Start thinking about lessons learned and preparing the after action report.

Supporting Families with Reunion and Reintegration

Preparing Families for reunion and supporting Families during reunion and reintegration are important since this is another challenging time for Soldiers and Families. While the level of FRG activities will decrease after reunions, it is important to maintain periodic communications with Families to monitor their well-being and to sustain camaraderie.

FRG'S POST DEPLOYMENT AND RECONSTITUTION CHECKLIST

- Disseminate information about reunion and other briefings, Family day activities, homecoming activities, and important materials using the phone tree, virtual FRG web site, email, FRG newsletter, and FRG meetings. (Briefings and information materials for Soldiers and Families need to address a variety of topics including finance, benefit changes, Tricare benefits, health care, transition entitlements, legal rights, reemployment rights, distress symptoms, job assistance to Reserve Component Soldiers, children's adjustment, domestic violence, and other deployment-related problems).
- Encourage Families to attend reunion and homecoming events. Provide important information disseminated at briefings to Families.
- Encourage Soldiers and Families to participate in helpful programs such as marriage enrichment and counseling through Military OneSource.
- Provide Families with appropriate information and education materials. Use FRG newsletter, vFRG web site, and guest speakers at FRG meetings as forums for talking about issues of concern. When presenting information, be sure to identify resources where Soldiers and Families can get help if needed. Refer Families to helpful resources such as Military OneSource, Military Family Life Consultants, Chaplain, ACS, and JAG.
- Maintain communication and connection with Families. Provide referrals when necessary.
- Coordinate or refer Families to activities for children.
- Conduct social activities as needed to relieve stress and for camaraderie.

Post Deployment Issues

This section highlights issues that demand careful attention during post deployment. These issues are increasingly more prevalent given the nature of the Army's missions in the 21st century. Often, there is a reluctance of Soldiers to ask for help. The FRG can help Soldiers understand that asking for help is a sign of strength, not of weakness. Fact sheets and additional information are provided in the *Operation READY Smart Book*.

COMBAT OPERATIONAL STRESS REACTION:

"BATTLE FATIGUE" Service members may experience combat operational stress reaction (COSR) in combat and other dangerous missions. The FRG, through the speakers and classes offered, can help Family members become aware of the physical, mental, and emotional symptoms of COSR. These signs are normal for a person in combat situations and should fade with time. If symptoms become extreme, the Family should seek help for the Soldier. For more information, contact the Social Work Care Manager Program at the nearest military medical facility, the nearest Veteran Administration hospital or clinic, or the local Veteran Center. All have counselors available to assist. Additional help is available through Military OneSource, <http://www.militaryonesource.com> and <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/documents/TG/TECHGUID/TG240.pdf>.

Signs of Combat Operation Stress Reaction

Physical

- Aches and pains
- Fidgeting
- Pounding heart
- Light-headedness
- Tingling of fingers and toes
- Stomach and bowel upsets
- Lack of energy

Mental and emotional

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Inability to focus or remember details
- Sleeplessness
- Grief
- Anger
- Loss of self esteem

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

In a time of war and/or lengthy dangerous missions, it is particularly important to be aware of the causes and symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder to ensure Soldiers get the counseling and support needed. The FRG can make information available to Family members that will foster awareness of PTSD symptoms and the resources that are available for help.

PTSD is an extremely debilitating condition that can occur after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. When individuals are exposed to events or objects reminiscent of the trauma, many people with PTSD frequently re-experience the ordeal in the form of flashback episodes, memories, nightmares, or frightening thoughts. Anniversaries of the event can also trigger symptoms. PTSD is a medical diagnosis and is often diagnosed when symptoms last more than one month.

Symptoms typically begin within three months of a traumatic event, although occasionally they do not begin until years later. Once PTSD occurs, the severity and duration of the illness varies.

For additional information on PTSD and PTSD resources, see *Operation READY Smart Book* and the spectrum of services in the Resources section.

Signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Emotional numbness
- Sleep disturbances
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability or angry outbursts
- Guilt
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- Immune system problems
- Dizziness
- Chest pain or discomfort in other parts of the body
- Alcohol or substance abuse

PART V: Summary Highlights

Here are the key points for FRG leaders to take away from this handbook:

- ★ In today's environment with frequent back-to-back deployments, the FRG needs to be operational at all times. Both the FRG leader and company commander need to ensure an FRG leader and staff are maintained even when the unit is at home. With the unpredictability of when the next deployment will occur, the FRG needs to be ready to assist command whenever an alert occurs. It is no longer feasible "to start from scratch" with each deployment.
- ★ The FRG is an official Army program. It is important to become familiar with the policies and guidance pertaining to FRG operations and activities. (See AR 608-1, Appendix J).
- ★ The FRG is a command sponsored program. Running an effective FRG requires establishing a relationship with command leadership (which includes the Rear Detachment Commander when the company deploys), maintaining two-way communication, and working together as a team. During deployment, the RDC is the official source of information and vital resource for an FRG. Maintaining communication is essential for ensuring Families get timely and accurate information and that the RDC and FRG can effectively support Families together.
- ★ Supporting Soldiers today involves supporting Soldiers' immediate and extended Family members as well as other individuals identified by a Soldier. An FRG needs to serve and support this broader Soldier "Family".
- ★ The FRG leader is not expected to be "the FRG" and to do FRG activities alone. Recruit the volunteers needed to carry out the required FRG activities as well as those requested by command.
- ★ Success is determined by effective teamwork at many levels, with the RDC, garrison commander, and military and community agencies. Sharing of responsibilities will maximize the use of available resources and avoid burnout.
- ★ The FRG is not on its own. Work with company leadership on how to assist Families. Learn about and use the various Army resources for FRGs and Families. Use this handbook and other Operation READY materials, which have been specifically designed to assist the FRG in its efforts. Get information and assistance from ACS/Family Program Offices and the battalion FRG steering committee. Both of these groups are prepared to support FRGs.
- ★ FRGs must reach out to all Soldiers and Families (immediate and extended) attached to the unit, no matter where they live. Special attention should be given to ensuring geographically dispersed Active, Guard and Reserve Families have the information and support they need to successfully manage Army life.

Recommended FRG Activities and Guidance

These recommended tips highlight a range of "best practices" for FRG leaders to use while preparing to manage and sustain FRGs.

- ★ Coordinate and plan regularly with leadership and steering committee regarding FRG activities and events, unit training schedules, and missions.
- ★ Embrace leadership and ensure that they are kept in the loop. Sometimes the FRG leader will find out information before the RDC/leadership knows about it.
- ★ Attend FRG training and pay special attention to the unit on preparing for crisis and trauma situations [coordinate with Army Family program mobilization and deployment staff and use Operation READY].
- ★ Organize the FRG so that all key tasks are adequately covered. *[Refer to Part 4 for details on specific tasks in the DCS process].*
- ★ Supervise planning and running of FRG events and communicate and coordinate with the FRSA.
- ★ Prepare and submit FRG fund spending plan to membership.
- ★ Identify and work with others to learn about the challenges Soldiers/Civilians, and Family members face to be able to assist them. Be prepared to make referrals to other agencies/groups in order to provide the assistance that is needed.
- ★ Create an environment that prevents barriers and polarization among members, promoting that all brainstorming and ideas are treated equally.
- ★ Keep a pulse on Family issues and ensure steps are in place for FRGs to respond quickly. Also, keep leadership informed.
- ★ Recognize that just as the problems experienced by Families vary so do the severity and consequences of these problems.
- ★ Learn from those Families who appear to manage with fewer problems.
- ★ Bear in mind the limited capabilities of volunteers and military and civilian volunteer-based resources (e.g., VFW organizations, local faith-based groups, etc).
- ★ Keep in mind that of those who do not participate in FRGs that no one demographic stands out as they cross all age groups, ranks and backgrounds.
- ★ Plan fun and practical social activities as needed to relieve stress and for camaraderie, especially welcoming newcomers.
- ★ Take care of personal health and well-being—a key ingredient that contributes to the success of the FRG.

PART V: Summary Highlights

- ★ Keep a continuity book or similar account of lessons learned for FRG successor.
- ★ Provide Families with appropriate information and education materials. Use FRG newsletter, vFRG website, and guest speakers at FRG meetings as forums for talking about issues of concern. When presenting information, be sure to identify resources where Soldiers and Families can get help if needed. Refer Families to helpful resources such as Military One Source, Military Family Life Consultants, Chaplain, ACS, and JAG.
- ★ Keep connected to Families and maintain open lines of communication.

Whether starting an FRG or planning activities for an existing one, there are a range of management strategies that contribute to successful FRGs.

- ★ A **“phone tree,” key caller roster** is one key way to communicate with Soldiers and Family members. *[Refer to section 3.3 for details].*
- ★ **Open houses** help welcome newcomers and promote social networking.
- ★ **Family Days provide social activities** that involve everyone in the unit and community (Spur Ride or Iron Spouse Day).
- ★ **Sponsorship programs** help Families and Soldiers/Civilians “settle in” when joining a new unit.
- ★ **Fitness activities** are fun for service members and all Family members to include children and youth (e.g., an event where spouses put on ACUs, go through obstacle courses, Physical Training (PT) tests, paint ball, etc).
- ★ **Trips** provide opportunities for camaraderie and can facilitate stress reduction.
- ★ **Community projects** reach out to people outside the unit.
- ★ **Visits to training sites, bases and armories** allow a closer look at the Soldier’s/Civilian’s job and surroundings.
- ★ **Employer programs** help employers understand and support the requirements of military life.
- ★ A **newsletter** can help everyone stay informed about unit news and FRG events. *[Refer to section 3.3 for details].*
- ★ **Workshops and classes** provide important information, helpful advice, and opportunities for personal development.
- ★ **vFRGs** offer especially geographically dispersed Families support.

[Refer to Part 4 for guidance on the level of effort to conduct essential activities in the stages of the DCS, based on demographics of the unit, FRG budget, and volunteer support available].

What does a new (or experienced) FRG leader do first?

Whether you are a new or experienced FRG leader, it is essential to assess the current level of functioning of the FRG. Given the high operating tempo with multiple deployments for many Soldiers/Civilians this translates into a high state of readiness for the FRG. Readiness requires maintaining the infrastructure and operation of the FRG at all times. In some instances, it may be necessary to “build up” some operations that may not have worked smoothly. In other instances the FRG operations may need to be retooled from the “ground up.” All FRGs however, with each new deployment will have different, unusual, and unforeseen issues that may develop which need to be addressed.

Remember, the FRG is established by the commander to assist Soldiers/Civilians and Family members throughout the deployment process, and FRG leaders play a vital role providing information and assistance.

[Refer to Parts 1-4 of the handbook for overall operational and procedural details].

What is the primary activity that the FRG performs for Soldiers/Civilians and Family members?

The primary focus of the FRG is ongoing communication with Family members. There will need to be a strong communication system in place across all the stages of the deployment cycle, especially for those Soldiers/Civilians and Family members that are geographically dispersed. Required FRG activities include key caller activation, newsletters, email, and virtual FRGs, which continue to provide timely and accurate information.

In recent interviews with Soldiers and Families (*RESET, 2008), it was reported by a high percentage of leaders, Family members and Soldiers that FRGs (and the Rear Detachment Command) are the “go-to” source of support for most Family members during deployment. Most respondents acknowledged that they probably had heard about Family programs and other resources through print media and flyers, but felt that “word of mouth” was the most powerful information source (RESET, 08). Comments about FRG communication highlights the importance of timely and accurate information flow (RESET, 08 unless indicated):

Word of mouth is a powerful information source. FRG’s are always at the center.

FRG newsletter—best way to get info out. —After action review, 2008

vFRGs —Very positive—keep it going.

The time of day that FRGs hold meetings prevents working wives from attending.

[Refer to section 3.3 of the handbook, “Communicating With Army Families,” for other details. In Part 4, the FRG checklists indicate the FRG’s role.

RESET: The specific purpose of the RESET pilot evaluation sponsored by Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC) was to conduct a series of sensing sessions with unit leaders, Soldiers, Family members, Army Community Service (ACS), other installation staff, and volunteers to find out how Army Family Programs are supporting the reintegration of Soldiers into their Families and communities. Some of the quotes in the handbook are taken from the RESET sensing groups.

Army RESET is defined by the execution order (IMCOM Reset Pilot, FY08, 14 Dec 07). *The purpose is to ensure Soldier and Family programs, as well as installation facilities and ranges, support the implementation of Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN). The end state to this three phase operation is: Soldier and Family readiness conditions are set for reintegration and deployment, transitional Family and single Soldier issues are mitigated, and Soldiers, and affected DA Civilians have resumed their regular duties and responsibilities.*

RESET is a balanced six-month process that systematically restores deployed units to a level of personnel and equipment readiness that permits resumption of training for future missions... RESET is predicated on the concept of allowing Soldiers and Families the opportunity to recover in order to reverse the cumulative effects of sustained operational tempo (Army Posture Statement, 2008).

What about transfer of FRG leadership?

FRG operations that are “up and running” are helpful for the incoming FRG leaders. It is much easier to find out what support systems and resources are in place, and to determine the needs and desires of command. Although some coordination may be hampered when forward command rotates out, the incoming FRG leader can reduce the confusion by seeking and obtaining support from former FRG leaders, volunteers, and command. The ideal situation is when FRG leaders can “handoff” their FRG leadership. The continuity book provides a welcomed handoff for incoming FRG leaders.

[Refer to section 3.3 of the handbook, “Sustaining the FRGs” that provides related information].

Continuity Book

The continuity book is a collection of vital information that FRG leaders can pass on to the incoming FRG leader. Information in the continuity book will help guide the new FRG Leader in their daily responsibilities and provide important points of contact. This recording process can improve the author’s own familiarity with their responsibilities, help to identify Family and FRG needs, and clarify best FRG practices. The individual preparing the continuity book should keep several things in mind during its development. Here are a few guidelines for preparing an FRG Continuity Book.

- **Start shortly after assuming the FRG leader position.** Record information in the continuity book as it happens to ensure that important and accurate details are documented. This recording process can reinforce the author’s own familiarity with their responsibilities and overtime help determine what worked and what did not work.
- **Add to it daily.** Treat this book like a journal or diary recording common tasks, key events/trainings, and relevant information about FRG management and functionality. Some common questions to examine: How well did the event address needs? What problems were experienced on the telephone/delivering services? Did Soldiers/Civilians/Families feel that the information/assistance provided met their needs? What are the most important things to remember when planning and preparing future activities/events?

- **Incorporate common tasks.** This is one of the key sections of the continuity book. It should provide a step-by-step instruction on how common FRG functions are accomplished. This can be done with worded instructions or through pictures and diagrams, such as flow charts.
- **Make it relevant so that it is easy to use.** Include key documents as follows: Important telephone numbers that the author has found particularly useful, published training schedules, and a calendar that highlights upcoming and past events. This affords the incoming leader the opportunity to review past events. Add flyers or memorabilia that might have been used. Organize all the information into sections—ensure Family activities are in one section, fundraising in another, and contact information in a separate section. Add a table of contents for a quick reference. The continuity book could be filed on the computer. Add a table of contents to give the reader a quick reference to all the information in the book.
- **Use it as a reference.** When planning and scheduling a new activity the continuity book can be referred to as a reference to past events, and operational information. A key advantage is that it can serve as a reference that was tested by the author on a regular basis, and the knowledge gained and recorded will assist an incoming FRG leader.

FRG leaders will have pride in handing over the Continuity Book. Keep in mind what would be nice to receive when taking over as an FRG leader!

Source: Adapted from Nascimento, L (n.d).

What is the benefit of co-leadership of the FRG?

The buddy system allows for division of tasks, ease of substitution as needed, and as a break for FRG leaders. Some FRG leaders indicate that it also helps to reduce stress and feeling overwhelmed. The idea that “two heads are better than one” when resolving issues that arise alleviates the workload and accompanying pressures. When the workload is shared between co-leaders both leaders take the initiative to complete tasks independently or together. It is still critical that co-leaders let other volunteers carry out other tasks to help lessen the workload. Most often volunteers will follow through and get the job done. Co-leadership is a way to use each person’s strengths that can lead to a more cohesive FRG.

While my husband was deployed, we had an awesome FRG. Since they have been back from OIF our commander has changed. Now our FRG leader is not as active as the prior one was. (Westhius, 2007: from SAF V)

How does the FRG Leader and the Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA)—the Team approach work?

Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSAs) work for command, usually at the battalion level, and their activities frequently interface with the duties of the FRG leader. The FRSA is expected to inform the RDC of issues or problems reported by Family members that he/she needs to be aware of. It is here that the FRG leader may be called upon to organize, assist, and provide support.

The table (on the opposite page), from the *FRSA Resource Guide* (p. 13) outlines the duties of the FRSA, and offers a framework of how FRG/FRSA teamwork can provide comprehensive support for Families. Role definitions are defined for each member of the team.

There are limitations to the FRSAs work with the FRG. For example, the FRSA should never handle the unit's informal funds. The FRSA can be helpful in providing support with fundraisers by assisting the FRG in having approvals obtained/papers signed but he/she cannot be directly involved in fundraisers or participate in the actual event. The FRSA also cannot hold any volunteer position in the FRG. The FRSA is allowed to participate in his or her spouse's unit FRG, but cannot hold an appointed volunteer position within the FRG.

Recommended FRG Team Approach

	CDR / RDC*	FRG Leader	FRL	FRSA	FRG Volunteers
Establish Family readiness policies, procedures	●			○	
Provide primary leadership		●			
Event planning (meetings, social events)	*	●		○	●
Provide information, updates to Family members	*	●		○	●
Assist FRG in obtaining supplies, logistical support	●		○	●	
Work with Soldiers in unit to provide Family info to Company-level FRG	*			○	
Volunteer coordination, records, recognition	●	●		○	●
Respond to crisis situations ICW CDR	●	●		○	● [2]
Fundraising, informal funds management	*	●		○	○ [3]
Refer Family members with military related concerns, i.e., Tricare, pay, passports, etc.	*	● [1]		●	
Coordinate for FRG Appropriated Funds support	●		●	○	

KEY

- Has Primary Responsibility / Lead
- Has Secondary Responsibility / Alternate
- Responsible for Providing Support
- * The CDR/RDC maintains oversight, awareness of all FRG activities; outlines delegated responsibilities in unit's FRG SOP and volunteer appointment orders. The FRL works for the CDR and receives all tasking from the CDR.

- [1] Take Q's; Provide Referrals
- [2] Appointed POCs
- [3] Appointed Treasurer

What information and guidance is there on FRG funding?

These points highlight key information on informal funds and supplemental mission activity donations.

Informal Funds. These funds belong to all members of the FRG and must be spent to benefit all membership.

- The FRG may accept unconditional donations of \$1000 or less into the FRG's Informal Fund from an individual, business or private organization, after getting approval from the unit commander and the unit or the garrison ethics counselor, AR 1—100.
- The FRG informal fund cannot exceed \$10,000 per year income and it cannot exceed that balance over any time.
- Donations may not exceed \$1000 and they count toward the maximum donation amount. The Garrison Commander may accept donations, including those over \$1000 for the ACS supplemental mission account.

TIP: The FRG leader must consult the unit commander regarding donations or fundraising. The commander shall consult with the appropriate ethics advisor (Staff Judge Advocate, Department of Army Ethics Officer, or designee).

Supplemental Mission Activity Donations:

- The FRG Supplemental Mission Activity donations are gifts that are given to the Army and are intended for FRG or military Family support.
- The funds do not have to be divided among all FRG's. They are divided among units based upon need.
- The first priority in using Supplemental Mission Activity Funds should be used in encouraging a larger turn out to the FRG meetings.

There are many common questions and answers that other FRG leaders have raised concerning funding. Here are a few sample questions that can be found at the Army FRG website: www.armyfrg.org. How can I provide Appropriated Fund support to my FRG? What actions are authorized and what funds can be used (e.g., meeting activities vs. refreshments)? Can the FRG accept a donation? What is the process to establish an informal fund? How are volunteer reimbursed?

[For information on funding see section 3.2, "Authorized Support and Funding" and refer to AR 608-1 Appendix J for further details].

How are FRG volunteer hours tracked?

Given that FRG leaders are volunteers, the existing Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) provides support to track the leader's service. VMIS tracks an individual's volunteer positions Army-wide; the hours contributed, training, work experience, and recognition received. All volunteers registered in the VMIS system are classified as statutory volunteers, and there are many benefits to registering.

In order to determine appropriate recognition and assignments, supervisors consult VMIS records. Additionally, statutory volunteers may receive reimbursement of certain expenses

connected with their volunteer work, provided that funds are budgeted and are available. Statutory volunteers are considered employees of the Federal Government in order to protect them from personal lawsuits incurred as a result of their volunteer work (except for gross negligence or activities engaged in that fall outside the volunteer's position description), and compensation for work-related injuries. The Volunteer Coordinator at the installation can assist the volunteer with registration procedures and paperwork. These records are portable and may be sent on to your next installation. Volunteers may request a duplicate record for themselves. This may be beneficial when seeking paid employment as it will attest to work history, training, and experience.

TIP: Forthcoming revisions to AR 608-1 will have the requirement that all statutory volunteers use VMIS.

What are the key reasons Family members participate in the FRG? Why is this information relevant for the FRG leader?

It is critical to build interest in the FRG so that Soldiers/Civilians and Family members get the information and support they need to be self-sufficient and to sustain a situational awareness given the increased deployments.

Participation in FRGs. Soldiers/Civilians and Family members report the fundamental reason they participate in FRGs is to "get their needs met." Recent survey findings have examined this in more detail, highlighting key messages from Families about FRG participation. Of the thirteen issues commonly responded to by spouses on the Survey of Army Families (SAF) V, many commented on satisfaction with FRGs (Westhous, 2006). Almost half of the spouses indicated being satisfied with the information and assistance obtained from the FRG (Orthner & Rose, 2006; Westhous, 2006). The following are examples of their comments about FRG support and getting the information they need (Westhous, 2006):

The only person I found I could rely on was the FRG leader...

...My husband deployed for 15 months and the FRG was one of the major things that kept me going and made it easy for me...I was pregnant for a lot of the deployment and the FRG was great in helping me with everything.

In a recent RAND study (2007) of National Guard and Reserve Families approximately 40% of the spouses reported use of the FRGs or Key Volunteer Networks, and 45% of the Service members self-reported that their Family participated. While only 13% of the spouses suggested improving the FRGs and Volunteer Networks, especially for Reserve Families, many suggested improved support for those Families living far from installations and other resources. The following comments from the Rand (2007) interviews supported this:

It's very lonely feeling to send your husband away for a year and to feel like you don't have any support. Again, it might be because of my situation where my husband was deployed with a unit on the other side of the country. Had he been deployed with people right here in my hometown, it could have been a completely different situation...

Well, we're probably a little different since we didn't have a unit nearby. When you don't (deploy with a unit) then those people just fall through the cracks. I know the military can do a good job. I've deployed with units before, and it's a big difference.

Reasons for not participating in FRGs. It is important to examine the reasons that Families/Soldiers do not participate in FRGs. The Survey of Army Families, V identified that 34% of the spouses indicated that the reason they did not participate in the FRG was because they were not contacted or were contacted late (Westhous, 2006). Others indicated that decreased attendance was inevitable when the Soldier returned home. Of those spouses whose Soldier was deployed, about one-quarter reported not having time to participate or that they preferred to keep their personal life separate from the military (Orthner & Rose, 2006).

The following comments provided by spouses from the SAF V highlight the varied reasons for not participating in FRGs (Westhous, 2006):

This particular FRG has last minute meetings and I have yet to receive a phone call even though I've given the leader my info and stated I want to be more involved but I have no ride.

My husband is stationed in Texas, currently deployed. The FRG's are set in Texas. I am aware that they are providing family support. However, since I live in NYC, I cannot physically participate.

Our group was mainly a nagging session instead of seeking improvements for each other. I did not like all the negativity.

I participated in FRG activities before my husband's deployment. I helped with childcare for family members of deploying Soldiers. He volunteered to deploy as an individual. I knew of the FRG group, but did not utilize it.

RESET (2008) comments regarding FRGs:

I think that personal phone calls from the Rear Detachment Commander (or at least the FRG leader) just checking in to ask Spouse or Family members if everything is okay, would work (to enhance support/participation in FRGs).

FRG leaders don't always understand or stay in their lane.

Overall, these findings continue to show that many spouses express appreciation for, the FRGs, and support from the Rear Detachment Commander (RDC).

Implications for FRG leaders. The FRGs need to ensure that all Soldiers/Civilians and Family members are part of the information circle. Applying the characteristics and abilities of FRG leaders outlined in the handbook, helps to influence participation [See Part 2.2 Leadership Abilities]. For example, it is helpful for FRG leaders to stay abreast of recent Army survey feedback, FRG forums, and informal feedback from Soldiers/Civilians/Family members, so that responsiveness from the FRG remains current and timely. Also, key to successful FRG leadership is knowing that some Families' involvement is hindered due to work schedules and other personal and Family reasons. Given that a large percentage of comments indicated that they were "not contacted," those FRGs can improve their key caller networks, and initial contacts. FRG leaders need to maintain a positive mindset regarding their critical role in serving Soldiers/Civilians and Family members.

What about identified emotional stressors for FRGs?

There are times when emotional stress is elevated for FRG leaders and members. Undetermined deployment and redeployment times, the 1 year mark for 15 month deployments, main holidays, Soldier and Family member birthdays, adjustment periods (1-2 months after deployment, before redeployment and R&R), training leading up to deployment, any casualty, and Family disappointments or crises such as unexpected pregnancy or problems with children — all affect FRG members. This is especially the case for those members who have become closely supportive of each other.

FRG leaders will need to practice “self-care” in order to avoid stress or burnout that can affect them in other important areas of living. Behavioral health is an essential part of each person’s overall health and wellness and when behavioral health is challenged so is the entire body. Good emotional, physical, and spiritual practices can prevent problems, reduce their impact if they occur, and minimize the stress associated with them. When stress is not managed it can play a role in muscle tension, nausea, dizziness, headaches, feelings of despair, and changes in appetite, as well as contributing to long-term health issues. Some FRG leaders claim that coordinating “get-togethers” with other FRG leaders significantly helped them process daily management issues, as well as challenges (RESET, 2008). The participant’s attempts to relate to one another through positive communication and sharing of ideas converted what seemed to be tough challenges into opportunities. Others seek advice from senior spouses or experienced FRG leaders.

There are many resources that can enhance personal well-being including self-help and support groups, faith-based organizations, publications on physical and emotional wellness, and programs offered by a range of organizations and agencies. Military Family Life Consultants (MFLCs), Chaplains, and Army Family programs can assist with helpful resources and ideas.

[For additional information on resiliency, self-care, and compassion fatigue contact the Mobilization and Deployment Family program staff for information and training, and the Resource section of this handbook].

Ways to Optimize Health

- Take care of yourself and your Family first.
- Discover new skills and dare to try new things.
- Invest in good nutrition.
- Exercise regularly — it can even be a Family activity.
- Relax — deep breathing, yoga, reading inspirational books, listening to quiet music. Practice good sleep habits.
- Be resourceful by moving forward on personal goals.
- Have healthy conversations with friends, Family members and other helpful people.
- Laugh at unexpected situations or entertaining stories.
- Practice gratitude for what you have.
- Do things that you enjoy as often as you can.
- Recognize warning signs and get proper support and care.
- Be open to new solutions and mutual support. Ask for assistance!

There are also important cautions to consider.

- Avoid excessive stress. Recognize the first signs of stress and seek proper care.
- Avoid “multi-tasking” — it may appear to be more productive and efficient, but it actually induces feelings of being rushed and “stressed out.” Practice doing one thing at a time — even simple things.
- Avoid unnecessary caffeine or other stimulant/energy drinks that can add stress to an already stressed body.
- Avoid tobacco because of its negative effects on personal health.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol.

[Adapted from Reintegration Readiness Professional Handbook, 2009. Sources: American Psychological Association, 2009; CHPPM, 2009; Mental Health Association, 2009].

TIP: Advice from FRG leaders. Stick to caring, and let the Army do its part in delivering specific services—refer Families to professionals to get the right care! Don’t reinvent the wheel; use systems in place. Avoid overextending FRG tasks, and learn ways to delegate.

What do FRG leader’s need to know about crisis situations?

FRG leaders must learn to “expect the unexpected” when dealing with trauma situations or individuals in crisis. Although the key role for the FRG is to provide information on the spectrum of resource available to Soldier/Civilians and Family members, FRG leaders are on the front lines dealing with the stressful event in the moment and the long-term life changing circumstance. Ultimately, the FRG leaders need to plan and prepare for crisis. Most important is for the FRG leader to obtain guidance from the Rear Detachment Commander, and be clear about how the FRG can support the unit and Families.

The process of coping with each event that FRG leader’s experience becomes stronger from each experience. Strength and resiliency also comes from other members of the FRG, particularly when difficult situations arise. Open, informal communication during routine FRG meetings/events promotes group cohesion—when members feel valued and supported, know they will not be ridiculed by others in the group, and can count on one another for support. Communication among members is clear, frequent, and includes active listening. FRG leaders who focus on building a sense of trust within the FRG helps the group adapt to challenges. This approach allows members to test and shift into new roles as the need arises. Often the support provided is logistical and one of simply “listening” to those in crisis and referring to practical resources. Care teams are often in place to offer short-term support especially for Families of injured or deceased Soldiers/Civilians.

[For information on tips for dealing with trauma support, refer to section 3.3. Operation READY Trauma in the Unit materials also provide related information].

What is the FRG's role in R&R training?

The R&R period is like a miniature redeployment drill. The same stressors and preparations occur. Some FRGs provided reintegration training for the R&R, while others did not. This is a good practice drill for the FRG Leader and the Families. Use this time to find out what works and what to change to make it better. Get feedback from the spouses as to what they thought about the reintegration.

What is the primary role of Military Family Life Consultants (MFLCs)?

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) are licensed clinicians (e.g., Masters and Ph.D. level) who offer anonymous, short-term confidential support and non-medical situational counseling (up to twelve sessions). MFLCs augment existing Family program support working directly with Army Community Service (ACS), Guard Headquarters, and Reserve Regional Commands to compliment other services by providing outreach "on demand" to Soldiers/Civilians and Family members. They help Family members work through unresolved issues such as anger management, conflict resolution, communication, parenting, and related military lifestyle challenges. The goal is to prevent Family distress providing practical support, education, and information on Family dynamics, parent education, available support services, the effects of stress, and positive coping mechanisms especially regarding deployment and reintegration. Access is via Military OneSource (MOS) or locally through Family programs.

FRG leaders can invite MFLCs to meetings/activities/drill weekends not only to promote the MFLC's role, but also to offer information on range of life skills topics. They help Family members work through unresolved issues to find practical resolutions such as anger management, conflict resolution, communication, parenting, and related military lifestyle issues. Similar to Chaplains, they can assist in helping couples with relationship issues. They work directly with other consultants and professional who have specialized skills (e.g., financial, child and youth needs) to respond to installation and the Guard and Reserve Components needs. Their approach of not tracking the counseling sessions, "not writing anything down," contributes to their being very positively endorsed by Soldiers and Families. This is especially true for some Soldiers and Family members who believe there is a stigma to seeking counseling support whereby a "permanent record" is maintained. Surveys with Army Family members and Soldiers reinforce this (RESET 2008):

Most Soldiers prefer not to use on post counseling...Military OneSource gives up to six free sessions (recently changed to twelve sessions)... Military Family Life Consultants are helpful...military help has stigma.

Soldiers must get over the stigma of seeking mental health. It's not going to bust you or influence your promotion. Family members in particular find Military Family Life Consultants to be helpful.

What resources are important to identify at FRG meetings?

The spectrum of Army and community resources need to be reviewed at FRG meetings. It is helpful to solicit positive experiences of members who used these resources. A starting place is with Army Community Service (ACS), and the Army National Guard and Reserve Family Programs, Military Family Life Consultants (MFLCs) or Chaplains, as well as Behavioral Health, and related community agencies. A recurring theme from all of the RESET study groups (2008) was that if Soldiers and Family members know about and use services early in their military career then they will seek timely support before a crisis occurs, especially during a deployment.

Operation READY—Mobilization and Deployment

The Operation READY resources are available through coordination with ACS/Guard/Reserve Family programs mobilization and deployment personnel.

There are several handbooks that provide information for professionals, leaders, and volunteers. These describe how unit leadership and FRGs individually and in partnership work together. [Refer to the Resources section, under Operation READY—Mobilization and Deployment to review details]. Important handbooks for Soldiers/Civilians and Family members include the following: *U.S. Army Deployment Cycle Readiness: Soldier's, and Family Member's Handbook* and the *U.S. Army RESET Handbook For Soldiers, DA Civilians, and Family Members*.

Training is available in coordination with ACS/Guard Reserve Family Programs—Operation READY: Pre-deployment, RESET (reintegration) [redeployment, post deployment, reconstitution stages], deployment readiness regarding children and youth, and related specialty workshops. The Battlemind Training teaches Soldiers and their Families about readjustment issues and behavioral health problems they could face after a deployment, identifies warning signs, and indicates how to get help. This training for Soldiers reportedly has helped with the identification of post traumatic stress symptoms, and other mental health issues. The companion training for Family members is (OPREADY) Spouse Battlemind Training, Helping You and Your Family Transition From Deployment” (Available at: www.battlemind.army.mil) [For details on the spectrum of resources, refer to section on Resources].

What are some differences between CONUS and OCONUS FRGs?

The information below highlights a few differences between CONUS and OCONUS issues (Adapted from—After Action Review, 2008).

CONUS FRG

Off post alternative services (civilian agencies)
Can use house address for fund raising/sales deliveries
Family/friend support in the states often readily available
Buffer zone provided by higher security level

OCONUS FRGs

Services typically located on the installation
Cannot use APO to have unit shirts, etc. delivered
Cultural differences, lack of friends/Families overseas
“No escape”—the post becomes an “island”

PART VII: Survey and Research Findings

SOLDIERS, DA CIVILIANS AND FAMILY MEMBERS use their Army experiences and pull strength from each other in order to adjust to the long repeated separations that are a result of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). There is no doubt that they are affected by this ongoing cycle of deployments and redeployments, in and out of combat. The RESET phase of the ARFORGEN cycle is challenging for all Family relationships.

Family program providers also must have updated information about Soldiers' / Civilians' and their Family members' perceptions and experiences. From this, implications for how best to support them may be predicted. This section briefly highlights experiences of those who have returned from OEF/OIF and Operations Desert Storm. *(Source: Adapted from the U.S. Army Reintegration Readiness: Guide for Professionals).* Army Family program providers must continually optimize support to Soldiers/Civilians and Family members, which is exemplified in Army OneSource [AOS]. This is important to highlight because it defines a core set of services made available through coordination and partnerships between military and civilian agencies across Army components [i.e., Active, Guard and Reserve].

AOS restructures outreach and leverages technology, using a 3-pronged service delivery strategy, so Soldiers/Civilians and their Family members have access to baseline programs and services in the geographical areas where they live: Facility-based services available through walk-in to any Army installation and National Guard and Army Reserve facility/center; on-line resources that provide information and support; and telephone support available on a 24/7 basis (e.g., Military OneSource) *(See core AOS services).*

The Survey of Army Families (SAF) is one way to assess the effectiveness of the Army's support for Soldiers and their Families. SAF is an Army-wide survey conducted every 4-5 years by Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC), in conjunction with the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI). It provides data on the attitudes and behaviors of non-military spouses of active duty. Key findings from the SAF V are based on responses provided by the non-military spouses of Soldiers, not by the Soldiers themselves.

Core Army OneSource Services

- Information and referral [Military OneSource (MOS); Army OneSource (AOS) finding out where to go for services]
- Child care [Garrison/NG/AR Child care, Community Child Care, Operation Military Child Care, respite care or weekend drill, or deployment related child care]
- School Transition Services [Transition Institutes, CYS Services Transition or School Liaison Support Services, Partnerships in Education, Home Linkages]
- Youth Services [Garrison/NG/AR Youth programs, Operation Military Kids, Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H, Garrison/NG/AR programs]
- Employment Support of the Guard/Reserve [ESGR]
- Wounded Warrior Program/Survivor Disabled Soldier Support System [Soldier and Family Assistance Center or Virtual Soldier and Family Assistance Center]
- Transition Assistance Program [Army Career and Alumni Program]

- Managing Deployment [Family Readiness Group and/or Rear Detachment Commander/ Officer Training; Family Readiness Support Assistants, Operation READY, Family Academies—Yellow Ribbon]
- Getting Involved [Army Family Action Plan, Army Family Team Building, Army Volunteer Corps]
- Home & Family Life [Marriage Enrichment-Strong Bonds, Military Family Life Consultants, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, New Parent Support Program, Victim Advocacy, Mental Health support]
- Money Matters [Financial Training, Army Emergency Relief]
- Medical/Tricare [Entitlements]
- Legal [Wills, Living Wills, Powers of Attorney, Family Care Plan]
- Continuity of Services [Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System—DEERS, ID Cards].

Circumstances and Effects of Deployment

Insights for FRG leaders who support Army Families is that extra support is needed during deployment and especially during extensions and referral to appropriate resources should be given priority. *[For details on the spectrum of support, refer to the Resources section].*

What are the key findings about Soldier's and Spouse's/Family member's experiences regarding deployment?

Although there is limited research information on the effect of the Soldier's and Spouse's/ Family member's actual life skills functioning within the relationship there are findings about long combat deployments and multiple tours to a war zone. A few highlights are listed below.

- During OIF/OEF deployment, 50% of the spouses self reported on the Survey of Army Families (SAF V) that they did well (i.e., during a deployment between 2001 and 2004). In contrast, other findings indicate that only 39% of those spouses who experienced (or were currently experiencing) a lengthy separation of 18 months or more reported coping well (Orthner & Rose, 2006). These longer deployments seemed to lead to increased reporting of marital problems and more negative attitudes towards the Army (Orthner & Rose, 2006).
- Findings from this study suggest that because Families are carrying unresolved anxieties, extreme fatigue and more concerns about Family relationships, the impact of this situation is blurring the distinct deployment stages. This is evident when some Family members indicate that although there are different stages of deployment, it is difficult to reintegrate when the Soldier is already preparing for the next deployment (Orthner & Rose, 2006).
- Respondents to a National Military Family Association (2006) survey reported ongoing issues with reestablishing roles and sharing household responsibilities: "After the reunion stress—please consider adding something to the extent of learning how to share household responsibilities again. So many of us do it all while our spouse is deployed and get irritated when duties are shared again or if our spouse may unknowingly criticize the way we did something while he/she was deployed. Based on my own experience and talking with friends, this is a common experience post-deployment that many couples struggle with." (Army Spouse, NMFA, 2006, p. 8).

- When asked about their greatest challenges after the Service member's return, forty-three percent of the respondents cited concern that the service member would have to deploy again (NMFA, 2006).
- Three quarters of those who stated they were better able to deal with subsequent deployments found counseling services to be helpful (NMFA, 2006).
- Results from a Rand report (Karney and Crown, 2007) in review of 10 years of data on marital status found that those who marry younger and start Families sooner, are more likely to be separated from their extended Family network of social support and at least in some individuals be more at risk for marital distress and divorce. Another explanation for increased risk of marital discord/divorce is based on how well individuals respond to the military environment as well as other indirect factors such as health of Family members and spousal employment.

What are common concerns reported by Active duty and Reserve component spouses who had a deployed service member?

The results from a *2008 Survey of Active Duty Spouses (ADSS)*, across all branches of service, and the *2008 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses (RCSS)* highlight similar responses from military spouses.

Response from **Active duty spouses** who had a deployed member in the past 3 years are highlighted as follows (DMDC, 2009):

- The top five most common concerns reported during the deployed member's deployment included the following: loneliness (90%), safety of deployed member (84%), feelings of anxiety/depression (83%), difficulty sleeping (79%), and household repairs, yard work or car maintenance (75%).
- Less than 25% listed their top 2 concerns: not feeling a part of the military community and managing child care/child schedules.
- Forty percent reported that managing expenses and bills was a moderate to small concern.
- Thirty-five percent of respondents reported that other moderate concerns were the safety of their Family in the community and emotional problems.
- Thirty percent of respondents reported that their employment was seen as having both a positive and negative effect
- Adjusting to their deployed member's return home was reported by 37% of spouses as "finding it easy," and 28 % as "finding it difficult."
- The spouse's perception of the deployed member's emotional and behavioral changes after deployment were as follows: Almost half reported that the deployed member appreciated their friends and approximately 25% indicated that the deployed member got angry faster, had trouble sleeping, or was more emotionally distant.

The **Active duty spouse's** perceptions about the effect of deployments on the age of their one child who was most impacted by their parent's deployment are summarized here.

- The average age of the child most affected was 6 years old. The percentages of each age group were 14-18 y/o (38%); 6-13 y/o (36%), and 2-5 y/o (17%).
- The top two positive behavioral and emotional changes in response to deployment were: approximately half reported that their child became closer to Family members, followed by 39% having a degree of pride in having a military parent.

- For the most affected child, the top negative behavioral and emotional changes were increased levels of: fear/anxiety, problem behaviors at home, level of anger about the deployed parent's military requirements, and problem behavior at school.

Responses from **Reserve component spouses**, across all branches of service, who had a deployed member in the past 3 years, vary (DMDC, 2009):

- The top five most common concerns reported during the deployed member's deployment included the following: increase in stress level (94%), loneliness (92%), feelings of anxiety/depression (89%), difficulty sleeping (79%), and household repairs, yard work or car maintenance (88%).
- The most common expenses were household repairs, childcare, and reduction in earnings due their not being able to work as much.
- Approximately 75% of the spouses reported experiencing personal growth.
- Most spouses described adjusting to their deployed member's return home and 23% discovering problems in their marriage, with 6% acknowledging that they had problems prior to the deployment.
- The spouse's perception of the deployed member's emotional and behavioral changes after deployment were as follows: approximately 40% reported that the deployed member appreciated friends, and approximately one third indicated that the deployed member got angry faster, had trouble sleeping, or were "different in another way."

The **Reserve component spouse's** perceptions about the effect of deployments on the age of their one child who was most impacted by their parent's deployment are summarized here.

- The average age of the child most affected was 8 years old. The percentages of each age group were 14-18 y/o (46%), 6-13 y/o (36%), and 2-5 y/o (26%).
- The top two positive behavioral and emotional changes in response to deployment were as follows: approximately 66% indicated pride in having a military parent, followed by over half reporting the child's closeness to Family members.
- For the most affected child, the top negative behavioral and emotional changes were increased levels of: fear/anxiety, distress over discussion of the war, problem behaviors at home, level of anger about the deployed parent's military requirements, and problem behavior at school.

What are spouse reactions to reintegration?

Limited systematic research speaks specifically to reintegration challenges and deployment:

- The National Family Military Association (2006) reported that the most stressful stage is within the first 3 months of reintegration. Equally stressful is pre-deployment and mid deployment stages.
- The Survey of Army Families in 2005 indicated that 47% of the spouses reported that "reunion" adjustment was not easy, following a deployment between 2001-2004.
- Army surveys reported that most Soldiers and their Families did very well with their first deployment and many did well with the second, third and fourth mission, despite the many challenges, adjustments and concerns they experience (Orthner & Rose, 2006, NMFA, 2006). They have shown that it is possible to pace through life events, big or small, and cope successfully with them.

How do extensions of deployment affect military spouses? (SteelFisher, Zaslavsky, & Blendon, 2008)

This topic has not been systematically studied by scholarly research, with the exception of this recent publication. The researchers obtained the data for this project through anonymous telephone surveys of spouses of active duty Army living in or near ten major bases, which were conducted in January and February, 2004. Findings compare the 355 who experienced extended deployments with the 419 who did not:

- Spouses who experienced extensions reported higher levels of problems with mental well-being—more feeling of loneliness, higher levels of anxiety and more depression.
- In the area of employment, more spouses whose deployed Soldier experienced extensions scaled back their work hours or left a job.
- Considering problems in operation of daily life, spouses who experienced extended deployment reported greater
 - Difficulty in sending or receiving communication from their partner
 - Trouble with household or car maintenance and
 - Problems finding child care.

What are some key findings regarding mental health issues of Soldiers returning from combat?

The primary reasons Soldiers did not seek help, despite screening positive for mental health problems within the early months after returning from deployment include the following (Hoge et al., 2004, 2006):

- Soldiers surveyed reported concerns about “being seen as weak,” “might be treated differently by leadership,” “unit members might have less confidence in Soldier,” “leaders would blame Soldier for problems,” or “harm career”).
- Difficulties accessing services (i.e., difficulty getting time off work, difficult to schedule appointment).
- Negative perceptions of mental health services (i.e., don’t trust mental health professionals, mental health care does not work, costs too much money).

[Some of the information here is adapted from the U.S. Army RESET Guide for Professionals].

MILITARY ONESOURCE (MOS) AND ARMY ONESOURCE (AOS) strengthen the relationship between the Active Army, National Guard, Army Reserve, and community services to develop a Family support system that can offer Soldiers, DA Civilians, and Family members access to baseline programs and services in the geographical areas where they live. Army OneSource promotes outreach and leverages technology using a three-pronged service delivery strategy that promotes access to a “spectrum of resources.”

- Facility-based services available through walk-in to any Army installation and National Guard and Army Reserve facility/center
- On line services that provide information and support and
- Telephone support available on a 24/7 basis (e.g., MOS).

Army Spectrum of Support

The Army Spectrum of Counseling affords Soldiers/Civilians and Family members the opportunity to access varying degrees of information, support, education, counseling and treatment services. The information and illustration here describes this continuum of care and support.

Life Skills Education—Information and activities that facilitate self-potential to maintain a healthy and productive life; make informed decisions; communicate effectively; and develop coping skills.

Briefings, workshops, and information—literature and resources. Service providers are generally Bachelors degree level staff.

Supportive Counseling—Interpersonal education that provides tangible and emotional guidance throughout a short-term and situational life event, to help sustain well-being and productive life.

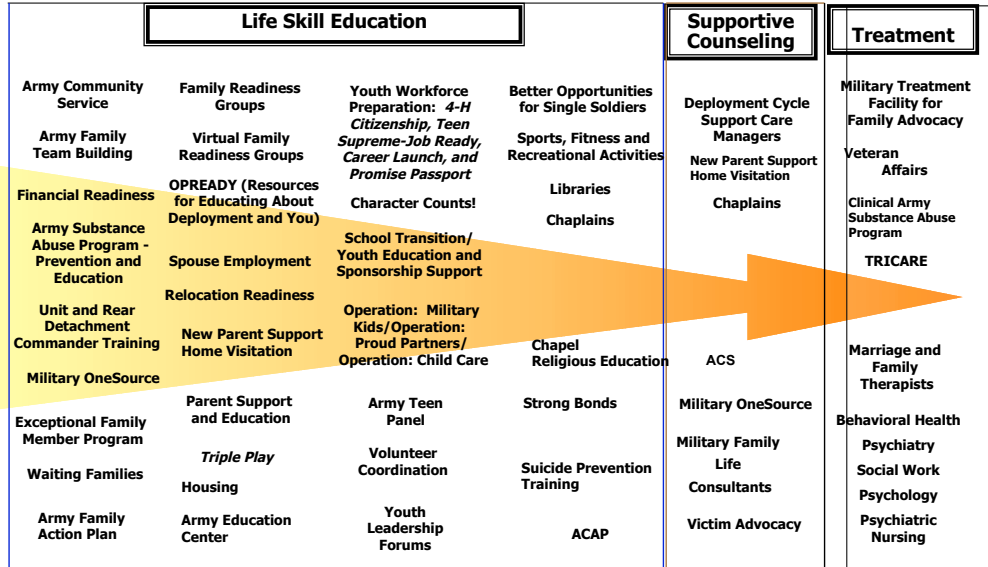
Community outreach, individual or Family counseling, support groups, or new parent support home visit. Service providers are generally Masters degree level Family service providers and Chaplains. Education and supportive counseling services—aimed at short term situational life events:

Army OneSource (AOS); Army Community Service (ACS)/National Guard & Army Reserve Family Programs | Military OneSource (MOS) | New Parent Support Program—Home Visitors | Victim Advocates | Chaplains | Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) | Soldier and Family Assistance Center (SFAC) | Clinical Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)

Treatment/Therapy Programs—Clinical or medical intervention that is typically long term aimed at remediation of symptoms, to support health and well-being treatment goals.

Clinical and therapeutic sessions, or in-patient care—Service providers are licensed social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, marriage and Family therapists, or medical personnel. Treatment services aimed at treatment and longer term challenges: Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) | MTF for Family Advocacy | Clinical Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) | Marriage and Family Therapists | Behavioral Health Services such as Psychiatry, Social Work Service (SWS), Psychology, Psychiatric Nursing | Department of Veteran Affairs.

Army Spectrum of Counseling



Mar 08

Operation READY—Mobilization and Deployment

The Operation READY (OPREADY) training materials are primarily for Mobilization/ Deployment Family program staff of Active duty, National Guard and Reserve. Other Army Family program professionals, unit leaders, Family Readiness Group leaders, Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSAs), Family Life Chaplains, and volunteers can benefit from a review of specific OPREADY handbooks and guides. These materials provide guidance on supporting Soldiers/Civilians and Family members through the ARFORGEN cycle.

The Training Resources for Mobilization/Deployment Program: The training materials are organized in the following areas: Family Readiness Group (FRG), Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA), Rear Detachment Commander, Pre-deployment, RESET, Trauma in the Unit and Care Teams, and Deployment Readiness: Children and Youth. The training materials include:

- A *Facilitator's Guide* and accompanying PowerPoint™ modules and handouts provide training resources for Family program staff in each of the areas above.
- A range of guides and handbooks provide information to different audiences such as unit leaders, volunteers, or Soldiers/Civilians and Family Members. The Guides are primarily for Family program professionals.
- The Smart Book (PDF) collates all the facilitator handouts for each training area, supplemental information, regulations, policy guidance, and other key information.

OPREADY HANDBOOKS AND GUIDES

- *U.S. Army Care Team Handbook*—This material is for Care Team volunteers to understand the Care Team’s role and to learn how to support Families effectively.
- *U.S. Army Deployment Cycle Readiness: Soldier’s, and Family Member’s Handbook*—This handbook helps Families prepare for the various stages in the deployment cycle process providing tips, ideas, and resources.
- *U.S. Army Deployment Support Handbook: Children and Youth*—This is designed for primarily professionals to learn about the deployment readiness process and the effects on children and youth.
- *U.S. Army FRG Leader’s Handbook*—This is designed for FRG leaders to assist in establishing and managing a Family Readiness Group (FRG), based on lessons learned.
- *U.S. Army Family Readiness Support Assistant: FRSA Resource Guide*—This handbook is designed primarily to inform Family Readiness Support Assistants about their roles and responsibilities in the deployment cycle support process.
- *U.S. Army Leader’s Handbook: Trauma in the Unit*—This handbook for leaders provides information on how to support Family members, as well as the Unit response team when combat deployments and casualties occur.
- *U.S. Army Rear Detachment Commander’s Handbook*—This handbook for leaders describes how leadership and FRGs individually and in partnership support Soldiers and Family members through the deployment cycle.
- *U.S. Army RESET Guide for Professionals*—This guide provides direction to professionals who work with Soldiers, Civilians, and their Family members as they welcome Soldiers/ Civilians home from their deployments and redeployments.
- *U.S. Army RESET Handbook for Leaders*—This handbook is intended to provide leaders with recommendations about how to support Soldiers and Civilians, and their Family members as they work through various challenges and emotions following a deployment.
- *U.S. Army RESET Handbook for Soldiers, DA Civilians, and Family Members*—This handbook offers this audience information and resources specific to the Soldiers/Family’s readiness for the deployed member’s and their reintegration into the Family.

[Information about training needs and these materials can be coordinated with ACS/ National Guard/Reserve Family program staff. Some Handbooks can be accessed at www.myarmyonesource.com (Select tab “Family Programs,” “Deployment Readiness,” and find OPREADY), and those with access to the training materials are available at the ACS staff web site: www.acsstaff.org].

PTSD/MTBI CHAIN TEACHING PROGRAM FOR FAMILY READINESS GROUP LEADER’S

Army Behavioral Health (<http://www.behavioralhealth.army.mil>) offers an online video file of the PTSD/MTBI Chain Teaching Program which is available to Family Readiness Group (FRG) Leaders. This version is tailored for unit leaders to present at FRG meetings to help familiarize Family Members with signs and symptoms of PTSD/MTBI, and for further use by Family Readiness Groups to inform spouses and other Family members. This was developed by Battlemind Training System Office, and Army Medical Department and School.

Web Sites

Military OneSource—www.militaryonesource.com

This DoD portal offers a toll free telephone number 1-800-342-9647) and web site with 24/7 capability for confidential counseling, to either speak to or email a master level consultant, at no cost. Assistance to Soldiers and Family members includes reintegration support, child care, personal finances, emotional support—before, during and after deployments, relocation information, resources needed for special circumstances, or private counseling in the local community.

Army OneSource—www.myarmyonesource.com

Official Army “one-stop knowledge portal” that offers all Army members a central point for getting information about Family programs and accessing services. A three pronged approach provides support at Army Centers, on the web, and through 24/7 telephone support (Military OneSource).

Army Community Service (ACS)—www.myarmyonesource.com

ACS offers quality of life programs that provide support services, education, and information. Some key ACS services are the Soldier and Family Assistance Center (SFAC), Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), Army Family Team Building (AFTB), Army Family Action Plan (AFAP), Relocation Readiness, Financial Readiness, Employment Readiness, Survivor Outreach Services (SOS), Outreach for Waiting Families (e.g., Hearts Apart) and Emergency Assistance. The Family Advocacy Programs addresses prevention of child abuse and domestic Abuse, parent education, the New Parent Support Program (offering home visitation), stress/anger management classes, relationship support, and intervention services (e.g., victim advocacy, transitional compensation). The Mobilization and Deployment, Operation READY training materials provide a range of information regarding deployment. Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) offer anonymous, short-term confidential support and situational counseling via licensed clinicians (e.g., Master’s and Ph.D. level).

Army National Guard—www.arng.army.mil or www.guardfamily.org

This web site provides information, services and support to National Guard Soldiers and their Families worldwide. Phone numbers (including state FAC and FAC Specialists), links to support agencies and interactive support are available 24/7—Yellow Ribbon reintegration training initiative.

Army Reserve Family Programs—www.arfp.org

The ARFP web site is a one-stop portal to get connected with Army Reserve Family support information, resources, education, training, awareness, outreach, information, referral, and follow-up. Phone numbers, links to support agencies and interactive support are available 24/7 to include reintegration information and support.

Soldier and Family Assistance Center (SFAC)—www.myarmyonesource.com

Provides tailored integrated support services while serving as an information broker/clearing house in a location proximate to Warriors in Transition (WT) and their Families. These services are to equip and aid Warriors in making life changing decisions as they transition either back to duty or to civilian life. The virtual SFAC (vSFAC) is a web-based system that offers information and support, and especially helpful for Family members who are not located near an installation/facility. There are multiple links to other resources such the Army Wounded Warrior Program and Military Home Front as well as direct links to local SFACs.

Other Selective Resources

Army Behavioral Health—www.behavioralhealth.army.mil

This web site has information for Soldiers, their Families and the public on how to help Soldiers deal with the stress of war, and Q&A that help assess behavioral-health needs before, during and after deployments; Pre and post deployment health self assessments (the PDHRA), post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide prevention; Soldier's Battlemind training I and II, Battlemind for Family members and links to fifteen video resources covering a variety of topics that are helpful for Soldiers, Family members, children and professionals (<http://www.battlemind.army.mil>). The PTSD/MTBI Chain Teaching Program is being made available to FRG leaders.

Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine (CHPPM)—chppm-www.apgea.army.mil

The CHPPM mission supports health promotion and wellness for all aspects of the changing Army community anticipating and responding to operational needs to a changing world environment. They have professional resources to include Suicide Prevention resources and training materials; deployment health guides and related topics.

Army Center for Substance Abuse Programs (ACSAP)—<https://acsap.army.mil>

The ACSAP program develops, administers, and evaluates Army-wide alcohol and other drug prevention, education, and training programs. Provides training materials on substance prevention and related information. Under tab "Drug/Alcohol Prevention Education, there are a range of trainings on everything from alcohol to steroid use and other drug trends, as well as command tools. This web site includes monthly and special campaign information and accompanying tools (articles, news releases, etc.) to support each theme (e.g., "protecting lives, saving futures," "buzzed driving is drunk driving"). Links to Employee Assistance, and the clinical/treatment program, which is through the local Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP).

[Army] Comprehensive Soldier Fitness—www.army.mil/csf

The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) goal is to increase "total fitness" by ensuring that Soldiers and DA Civilians and their Family members have the opportunity to maximize available training time, by equipping them with the skills to become more "self-aware, fit, balanced, confident, and competent." It is designed to promote resilience to enhance skill and performance levels. An initial online assessment needs to be completed which provides links to related online trainings. Additional assessments are taken throughout the Soldier's/ Civilian's career to monitor overall fitness—physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and Family.

American Red Cross—www.redcross.org

Rapid communication, personal and financial assistance for emergency leave and disaster assistance available 24/7. Services via phone contact (1-877-272-7337), internet connectivity, and a Welcome Home guide for Families (1996) that addresses how to make a smooth transition when military members return home. A post deployment workshop is available (as of October 2008 in 16 states and WDC and is planned to all states by Summer of 2009) entitled "Coping With Deployments: Psychological First Aid for Military Families."

Chaplain and Unit ministry team—

The Chaplains and the Unit ministry team offer counseling support, conduct training/workshops on a wide ranges of issues, and serve as referral contact especially for Soldiers and Family members in distress (e.g., serve on crisis response teams). They also sponsor marriage retreats (Strong Bonds (www.strongbonds.org) or Guard and Reserve Marriage Enrichment Seminars) to help couples adjust with the challenges of deployment.

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE)—<http://www.dcoe.health.mil>

This DoD web site brings together nine directorates and six component centers (e.g., Center for Traumatic Stress, Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, Deployment Health Clinic Center) through a collaborative global network to maximize opportunities for warriors and Families to promote resilience, recovery for TBI and psychological health and reintegration. They “oversee and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury.” This site provides a portal to a range of health issues (under Resource tab). Search for newsletter, DCoE in Action” which highlights special topics.

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>

The MyPay web site gives each Soldier and their Family access to information about the Service Member’s money 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world. After signing up for a personal PIN number there will be a list of options from which to choose such as the ability to view and make changes to your account, printing and saving LES’s, viewing and printing tax statements, making changes to federal and state tax withholdings, updating bank accounts, electronic fund transfer information, and certificates of eligibility, plus “Hot Topics” with helpful, up-to-date information.

Department of Defense’s Military HOMEFRONT—www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil

This official Department of Defense portal provides information for all Service Members and their Family members, service providers and leaders relevant to quality of life information, programs and services.

Department of Veteran’s Affairs—www.va.gov

The web site operates a system of 232 community based counseling centers providing readjustment counseling and outreach services to all veterans, and their Family members for military related issues. Information and booklets on VA benefits and programs for disabled veterans are available on their web site. The Department of Veterans Affairs’ publication entitled Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents can be accessed on the web at www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm. For detailed information on survivor benefits, visit the Veterans Affairs’ Survivors Benefits web site at www.vba.va.gov.

Deployment Health Clinical Center—www.pdhealth.mil/main.asp

A DoD web site, PDHealth.mil, was designed to assist clinicians in the delivery of post deployment healthcare by fostering a trusting partnership between military men and women, veterans, their Families, and their healthcare providers to ensure the highest quality care.

DeploymentKids.com web site—www.deploymentkids.com

DeploymentKids web site offers ideas for kids such as journaling, reviewing a time zone chart, and using a distance calculator, among other things.

Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)—www.militarychild.org

MCEC identifies the challenges that face the highly mobile military child, increases awareness of these challenges in military and educational communities and initiates and implements programs to meet the challenges. MCEC offers workshops for parents at various installations.

Military Spouse Career Center—www.military.com/spouse/fs

A DoD web site that has a variety of articles on everything from deployment to personal finance and childcare. A connection to other resources and links on additional topics of concern to military Spouses and Families as well as an e-newsletter are available.

My Hooah 4 Health—www.hooah4health.com

U.S. Army health promotion and wellness web site, Hooah 4 Health, is a health promotion partnership that allows individuals to assume the responsibility to explore options and take charge of their health and well being. Topics cover the personal—physical, material, mental, and spiritual—state of Soldiers, Civilians, and their Families as well as focuses on areas concerning the deployment cycle such as Soldiers returning from a combat zone and reintegration.

National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD)—<http://ncptsd.va.gov>

Information and resources to advance the clinical care and social welfare of U.S. Veterans through research, education and training on PTSD and stress-related disorders are accessible for Veterans and their Families, and service providers. Key resources currently available: "Returning from the War Zone: A Guide for Families," "Returning from the War Zone: A Guide for Military Personnel," "Iraq War Clinicians Guide," and "The New Warrior — Combat Stress and Wellness" video (i.e., video discusses actions that can be taken to prevent chronic mental health problems for Service members who have been exposed to combat and war zone-related stress). A range of related information can be found under the tabs "Mental Health Care Providers" and "Veterans and their Families."

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)—www.nctsnet.org

The NCTSN is a unique collaboration of academic and community-based service centers whose mission is to raise the standard of care and increase access to services for traumatized children and their families across the United States. Resources are available for Educators, Family Members, Mental Health and Medical Professionals with a specific section pertaining to and for Military Children and Families. Some of the topics include deployment-related stressors such as parental separation, family reunification, and reintegration as well as welcoming home a parent who returns with a combat injury or illness, or of facing a parent's death.

National Military Family Association (NMFA)—www.nmfa.org

Dedicated to providing information to and representing the interests of family members of the uniformed services by providing extensive information for military families and those who service them. Fact sheets are offered on a variety of topics, including Benefits for Survivors of Active Duty Deaths and Resources for Wounded or Injured Service Members and their Families. Both the web site and fact sheets provide detailed information and links to additional resources such as Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Family Support Professionals and Coming Home—Families and War.

Operation Military Child Care—www.childcareaware.org

A Department of Defense initiative to help Families/child care guardians of geographically dispersed active duty personnel and mobilized National Guard and Reserve find affordable child care options in their local communities. Under this initiative, reduced child care fees are offered at licensed child care providers.

Operation Military Kids—www.operationmilitarykids.org

Army Child and Youth Service, National 4-H Headquarters/USDA, and land-grant Universities throughout the U.S. collaborate. This partnership with local organizations serving youth establishes networks that connect and support the youth of mobilized National Guard and Reserve Service Members. Through these community support networks, military youth receive a wide range of recreational, social, and educational programs in communities where they live. These include opportunities to participate in a range of programs, gain leadership, organizational, and technical skills by participating in the Speak Out for Military Kids program or Mobile Technology Lab programs, receive assistance with school issues by connecting with Army Child Youth and School Services School Liaisons—More on School Transition Support, attend single day or weekend camps and meet other youth who are also experiencing deployment.

**Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists (SOFAR)—
www.sofarusa.org/about_sofar.html**

SOFAR is a nonprofit program that connects military Families with clinicians who provide free mental health services. Founded in 2003 in the Boston area, the program has expanded with one chapter in Michigan and two more chapters to be launched in 2008 in New York and Florida. The program tailors mental health services to the Soldiers and the primary focus is on the extended Families of Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers. SOFAR seeks to help military Families develop realistic expectations about the process of rehabilitation and reintegration that Soldiers undergo when they return from war.

**[Suicidology Organization] American Association of Suicidology—
www.suicidology.org**

An education and resource organization dedicated to the understanding and prevention of suicide. Hosts conferences, provides various links to other websites as a source of further information regarding suicidology and mental health, and offers books such as the SOS—Handbook for Survivors of Suicide which, is a pocket-sized quick-reference booklet to help suicide survivors cope with grief.

Surviving Deployment—www.survivingdeployment.com

This web site hosts a variety of information and resources for military Families that consists of an assortment of articles on deployments, listing of books, multiple links and resources for Families to include Military Family and Deployment Web sites, U.S. Armed Forces Websites, news sites, and a section of deployment information and ideas just for kids.

[Veterans Affairs and DoD] afterdeployment—www.afterdeployment.org

It was designed by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs as an alternative to face-to-face counseling to decrease stigma and provide access to care to those who do not live near a Military Treatment Facility. This web site was launched as a behavioral health portal to focus on “self checks” and online workshops which help assist with understanding concerns related to post deployment, for all Service members, Veterans, and their Families. The self checks topics include area such as sleep, seeking spiritual fitness, dealing with depression, handling stress, overcoming anger, etc.

Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG)—www.armyfrg.org

Provides the functionality of a traditional FRG in an ad hoc and on-line setting to meet the needs of geographically dispersed units and families across all components of the Army. The vFRG links deployed Soldiers, Families, FRG leaders, unit commanders, rear detachments, and other Family readiness personnel.

**Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS)—
<http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/> Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress –
www.centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress.org**

The Center conducts research in partnership with USUHS and provides information on preparing and responding to and recovering from trauma. The Courage to Care project is an electronic, health promotion and deployment campaign that offers fact sheets for professionals and Families related information. There are other materials related to response and recovery from trauma related events. The Joining Forces: Joining Families Newsletter through (USUHS) brings timely topics on Family violence to the field.

U.S. Army Combined Army Center, Center for Army Lessons Learned—call.army.mil

This site offers “lessons learned” and has specific FRG resources to include: Call Handbook, Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Toolkit, and other helpful information.

U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)—www.aw2.army.mil

Assistance to Families who have a Wounded Warrior toll-free 800-237-1336. This is the official U.S. Army program that assists and advocates for severely wounded, injured, and ill Soldiers and their Families, wherever they are located. This site provides a wealth of information pertaining to the Wounded Warrior Program and opportunities that exist for the Wounded Warrior. It also offers multiple listings of links and resources available to the Wounded Warrior and Family for assistance to include, but not limited to Career and Education, Benefits, Information for Family/Spouse/Child/Caregiver, and Government and Military resources.

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Getting prepared — Staying prepared

**OPERATION
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Resources for Educating About Deployment and You