

11

Policies and Programs that Support Military Families

In Chapter 11, you will

- Meet Jonathan Douglas, Major, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired; a prior Branch Head at Personal and Family Readiness Division, Headquarters, Marine Corps.
- Learn about the different ways that the Department of Defense (DoD) ensures that Active and Reserve Component families from all branches of the military are supported as they respond to the challenges associated with being military families.
- Consider the laws and policies that respond to unique situations faced by military members and their families.
- Learn how the DoD is attempting to change the military view of psychological health and to encourage military members and their families to seek psychological health care when they need.
- Review the programs that the DoD has developed in response to the increased challenges and stress that military families experience as a result of the sustained U.S. military involvement in numerous military operations around the world.

Meet

Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Douglas, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired) and prior Branch Head at HQ, Marine Corps, Personal and Family Readiness Division

I joined the Marines in 1983. Back then, your family was not considered part of the military. The attitude was, "that's your baggage." There were limited programs available and no focus on children of different ages.

I was a helicopter pilot. That's all I wanted to do. Eighteen years later, I found myself running all of these programs for families. In part I chose this assignment because of location. It was this or a 2-hour commute. I ended up loving the work. Everything we did day-by-day supported Marines and/or their families including spouses, children, parents, extended family, and others that our Marines and Sailors designated.

I had a staff of 14. All but two were civilian. Their professions included counselor, recreation directors, health educator, physical education teacher, and nurse. I oversaw many

programs, including suicide prevention, recreation departments, and aquatics programs in 54 swimming pools across the world.

We ran a Single Marines Program. We aligned with sororities and fraternities so we could get ideas and learn how to serve 18–26 year olds. Think about college kids going off to school, not knowing how to do their laundry. Some of the new recruits were in the same position but unlike their peers in college, they had to be neatly dressed and at work at 6:30 AM. I never thought about anyone in the Marines trying to arrange for a concert tour to play close to an installation, but that's the kind of thing we did.

Our work could have immediate impact on someone's life. Say we had money on hand to start a new program. Within 30 days it would be up and running. Thirty days later we'd know if it was working and if there were changes to make, we could make them.

We worked with the civilian community when we could. For example, say we were underfunded for youth football at an installation. We'd build a connection with a team and tell families, "This team outside the gate will give you a good rate and be glad to see your child."

The military is a great way of life if done right. We're not perfect at it but now we see how important family programs are. People just don't join the military. They come with a family or often get one soon after they join. Families are part of the infrastructure. If doing something is possible, you are happy to try to figure how. Something as simple as turning two racketball courts into child care so moms can exercise and get a little time for themselves, can make someone's life better.

INTRODUCTION

When families are cared for and doing well in the military community, service members are more likely to stay in the military and to concentrate on their jobs when deployed or away from their families. Civilians who know that their families will be taken care of are more likely to join the military. Therefore, as a matter of recruitment and retention, DoD has developed an extensive infrastructure with the sole purpose of assisting families with military specific issues like moving to a new installation or having a loved one go off to war to managing a wide variety of problems that can occur in any family. Some of the programs are voluntary programs for military families; others are mandated by the service member's chain of command. Some programs provide information or are intended to make life more convenient for military families while others are there to provide basic necessities for the family.

The DoD offers many services and programs for military families, but historically these services have often been more plentiful and accessible for active duty families. While service members who are on active duty usually live near or on military installations, members of the National Guard, Reservists, and veterans and their families live across the United States in communities that may have limited access to DoD programs and services. As the role of reservists has become more prominent and the needs of their families have become more salient, some programs have been expanded and others developed specifically for the Reserve Component.

In recognition of the demands placed on Army soldiers and families due to deployments to war zones and in other military operations, such as humanitarian missions, the Army has declared its gratitude and commitment through "The Army Family Covenant" (U.S. Army Installation Management Command, 2010), a unique contract and promise to provide Army families with accessible and high-quality support programs and services:

BEST PRACTICES

THE ARMY FAMILY COVENANT: KEEPING THE PROMISE

- We recognize the commitment and increasing sacrifices that our Families are making every day.
- We recognize the strength of our Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families.
- We are committed to providing Soldiers and Families a Quality of Life that is commensurate with their service.
- We are committed to providing our Families a strong, supportive environment where they can thrive.
- We are committed to building a partnership with Army Families that enhances their strength and resilience.
- We are committed to improving Family readiness by:
 - Standardizing and funding existing Family programs and services.
 - Increasing accessibility and quality of healthcare.
 - Improving Soldier and Family housing.
 - Ensuring excellence in schools, youth services, and child care.
 - Expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members.

(U.S. Army Installation Management Command, 2010)

You are reading this book because you are interested in helping military and veteran families. One of the ways that you can assist military families is acquiring a basic understanding of programs and policies in place to help them. A large percentage of military families do not know or have accurate knowledge of available benefits and services, due in part to "the plethora of resources that are offered by a complicated patchwork comprising DoD, the services, civilian support agencies, and state government" (MacDermid et al., 2008, p. 19). Understanding the kinds of programs that are available to military and veteran families will help you assist them to access the appropriate programs to meet their needs. This chapter will introduce you to some of the long-standing and new programs, policies, and attitudes adopted by the DoD in its attempt to honor its commitment to military families.

MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE

Among the active duty, National Guard, and Reserves there are approximately 3 million military family members who are part of the United States Armed Forces community (DASD, 2014). The DoD is responsible for programs and policies that support these family members. The Active and Reserve Components each have a senior civil service assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense who is responsible for creating and managing these programs and policies. For active duty families, it is the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. For Reserve Component families, it is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. The DoD family support infrastructure includes a mixture of service members, civil service employees, and contractors who work together but often have different roles in developing and managing the programs and policies that support military families.

Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy

The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy is responsible for establishing and maintaining all military community programs and policies for active duty service members and their families (Department of Defense, 2012b). It is responsible for policy, advocacy, and oversight of all quality of life issues; family and casualty assistance; morale, welfare, and recreation programs; the Military OneSource website; the DoD Education Activity; and the DoD's commissary (similar to a grocery store) and exchange (similar to a department store) services.

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense on all matters involving members of the Reserve Components of the United States Armed Forces, including the Army and Air National Guards and all reserve components of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, 2010b). To ensure that all Reserve Component members and families receive the support they need through appropriate policies and programs, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and the DoD Office of Family Policy formed a strategic partnership (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, 2010a). This partnership and commitment to provide exceptional quality of life programs for the Reserve Component is part of the DoD's commitment to make sure reservists and their families are not left behind in the effort to provide quality family support programs across the entire military force.

POLICIES THAT SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES

This section reviews policies and organizations available to protect and serve military personnel and their families.

Strengthening Our Military Families

In January 2011, President Barack Obama announced a presidential initiative, Strengthening Our Military Families, to support military families through a coordinated Federal approach that directs Cabinet secretaries and heads of agencies to focus on four priorities central to the lives of military families ("Strengthening Our Military Families," 2011). The goals of this unified approach are to:

- "Enhance the well-being and psychological health of the military family.
- Ensure excellence in military children's education and their development.
- Develop career and educational opportunities for military spouses,... [and].
- Increase child care availability and quality for the Armed Forces" ("Strengthening Our Military Families," 2011, pp. 2–3).

The goals of this presidential initiative reflect the research on and feedback from military families and service members about the challenges that most affect them. Efforts noted in the initiative, some of which are already in progress, include improving and expanding mental health preventive services and treatment at the community level, training school staff on the educational needs of military children, increasing employment opportunities in careers in Federal government and public workforce for military spouses, and increasing access to child care.

National Defense Authorization Act

The **National Defense Authorization Act** is a federal law that is passed by Congress every year to grant the Department of Defense, including Active and Reserve Components, funds to operate and specific guidance on how to spend those funds. The law is a way for Congress and the U.S. President to ensure that the DoD is accomplishing goals that are set by Congress and to closely control how American tax dollars are spent on national defense. The law specifies the number of military personnel and equipment types and numbers that each branch of the service should have as well as other activities that the services should be engaged in (e.g., the types of aircraft that the Air Force should have, the requirement to purchase new body armor for service members to wear when deployed, how much and what types of research and testing will occur).

The National Defense Authorization Act also ensures the well-being of military members and their families. For example, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 included a pilot program that allows the DoD to reimburse federal agencies for the costs of hiring a military spouse as an intern; a revised plan for implementing the services' sexual assault prevention and response policies; a requirement that the services report to Congress on the effects of domestic violence on military families; and a mandate to assess the impact of deployment on children of military members.

The Family and Medical Leave Act

The **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** of 1993 offers eligible employees of covered employers job-protected, unpaid leave of up to 12 workweeks for the care of seriously ill family members, to attend to their own serious health condition, or upon the birth or adoption of a child. FMLA applies to all public agencies (i.e., state, local, and federal employers), schools, and private-sector employers with 50 or more employees. Employees are eligible for FMLA when they have worked for the employer for 12 months, worked at least 1,250 hours the previous year, and work in a location where at least 50 employees are employed in a 75-mile radius. Family members are defined as parent, spouse, daughter, or son. Employers are required to maintain pre-existing group health-care coverage for employees on FMLA leave and to "reinstatement [them] to the same or an equivalent job with equivalent employment benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment" (Family Medical Leave Act Regulations, 2007, p. 35550).

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 amended the FMLA to include military family leave entitlements, and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 expanded these entitlements. The first entitlement allows eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave for any "qualifying exigency" due to the active duty or call to active duty of a spouse, parent, daughter, or son. Qualifying exigencies include situations related to notification of deployment on short notice (7 days or fewer); military service-related activities such as family support programs and informational sessions; child-related responsibilities such as arranging child care or schooling; financial and legal arrangements related to the military member's absence; counseling sessions; up to 5 days of leave to be with a military member on short-term leave during deployment; post-deployment activities (e.g., arrival ceremonies, reintegration briefings) and other official military programs for a period of 90 days after completion of active duty status; issues related to the death of the service member; and any other employer-employee agreed upon event (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

The second military family leave entitlement is the military caregiver leave. This entitlement allows an eligible employee up to 26 workweeks of unpaid leave within a single 12-month period to care for a service member with a serious illness or injury. The employee must be the spouse, parent, daughter, son, or next of kin of the service member. A covered service member

is a veteran within 5 years of seeking medical help or a current member of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, who is in outpatient status undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy or is on the temporary retired list because of a serious illness or injury incurred or aggravated while on active duty (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

FMLA leave can be taken as a block or intermittently. Employees should try to schedule medical treatments to cause the least disruption to the employer's operation (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor investigates complaints (see <http://www.dol.gov/whd>).

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

The **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)**, administered by the Veterans Employment and Training Services in the U.S. Department of Labor, prohibits employers from discriminating on the basis of an employee's consideration of joining the military or an employee's current or past military service. It applies to all private and public sector employers in the U.S. regardless of size, including foreign companies with locations in the U.S., its territories, or its possessions. USERRA also protects re-employment rights for returning service members. They must be re-employed in the original or equivalent position (i.e., similar seniority, status, and pay) and are entitled to increases in benefits or seniority that would have occurred if they had not done military service. Once back from military service, an employer cannot fire a service member without cause within 180 days of re-employment if the military service was between 31 and 180 days, or within 1 year of re-employment if the military service was over 180 days (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009).

Service members returning to work after 30 days or fewer of military service must report back for the next regularly scheduled work period, allowing for travel. If the service period was 31 to 180 days, service members submit an application of re-employment with the employer no later than 14 days after completing their military duties. If the service period was 181 days or more, service members submit an application of re-employment within 90 days. Service members hospitalized for or convalescing from injury or illness incurred or aggravated during service have 2 years to report to the pre-service employer. In general, the cumulative time in service cannot exceed 5 years while employed by the employer although there are exceptions (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Service members who believe their USERRA rights are being violated may obtain assistance by contacting the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR; www.esgr.org).

COMPREHENSIVE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RESOURCES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

The following resources are the results of DoD's attempts to provide easy access to information and referral sources for programs and policies available to military members and their families. They are excellent starting points for finding information to help military families with whom you may be working. The first, military family assistance centers, are one-stop service and support centers for military members and families. The second, Military OneSource, provides online information, services, and resources for service members and family members.

Military Family Assistance Centers

The active components of each branch of the military service have family assistance centers that house many of the family programs you will learn about in this chapter. Each branch has its own name for its family support centers: Army Community Service Centers; Marine Corps Marine and Family Service Centers; Navy Fleet and Family

Support Centers; Air Force Airmen and Family Readiness Centers; and Coast Guard Work-Life Centers (*Air Force Times*, 2010). For all services, these are one-stop centers for military members and their families to go to find information, obtain assistance, enroll in programs, and become volunteers in their communities. Family centers usually provide outreach services for families in remote or isolated areas. The centers also serve mobilized National Guard and reserve members, DoD civilians, and military retirees.

Typical family center programs include the following:

- Counseling and crisis assistance.
- Deployment and mobilization support services.
- Family advocacy programs.
- Financial management.
- Employment assistance.
- Information and referrals.
- Outreach programs.
- Parenting, stress management, and life skills education.
- Relocation assistance.
- New parent-support programs.
- Special-needs family member assistance programs.

The National Guard Family Program has staff members in each state and in four territories serving Air and Army National Guard and their families. Each state has a program director and one or more additional staff: Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager, Family Readiness Support Assistant, Family Assistance Specialists, or Child and Youth Program Coordinator (see www.jointservicessupport.org). While each state is different with regard to its family programs, many states also have standing Family Assistance Centers, which provide services to National Guard families (for examples, see www.ndguard.ngh.army.mil/family/support/familyassistancecenter/Pages/default.aspx; www.il.ngh.army.mil/family/fac/facmain.aspx; and www.al.ngh.army.mil/Resources/sfss/fac/default.aspx). The state National Guard headquarters can also activate a Family Assistance Center when a unit is mobilized.

In addition, as part of a Joint Family Support Assistance program, military and family life counselors provide non-medical counseling and referrals to Reserve Component families; they address relationships, parenting, loss, and adjustment issues. Likewise, child and youth behavioral counselors locate resources for children and youth and can provide counseling and education in the area of children's development, behaviors, separation, and anxiety. Since 2008, these counselors deliver "mobile family support and services" to those families located far from military installations (see www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment/joint-family-support-assistance-program).

Army Reserve family support programs include six family support centers, called Army Strong Community Centers, located in areas far from military installations. These centers are located in Connecticut, New York, North Carolina, Michigan, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. They support members of all branches of the military, veterans, retirees, and their families. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force Reserve families can also access services and support online through their respective family programs and through Military OneSource (see <https://www.arfp.org/programs.html#programtwo>).

Voices From the Frontline

SERVICES FOR SAME-SEX PARTNERS

The military is moving in the right direction

As an advocate for families, I'm very excited about the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. Now we can offer services to same-sex partners. It's becoming the norm. It used to be that if a couple was seeking counseling or if there was a domestic violence incident we

had to refer same-sex partners to services in town because they didn't have a military ID card. Now they have access to those services. The mindset is changing and the military is moving in the right direction.

Ginny Wescott, Certified Family Life Educator (C.F.L.E.)
*Family Advocacy Program Prevention & Education Specialist for
 Marine Corps and Army as well as long-time military spouse*

Military OneSource

Military OneSource provides information and resources on an array of topics that impact on military life (see <http://militaryonesource.mil/>). Trained MOS consultants are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone, online, or via email to provide information and referrals and to offer personalized support to active duty, Guard, and Reserve members and their families at no charge. Military OneSource programs include:

- Individual, marital, and family counseling.
- Strategies and resources on dealing with stress.
- Financial counseling.
- Child-care planning and referrals.
- Parenting issues.
- Deployment and reintegration support.
- Spouse employment assistance.
- Education and relocation assistance.
- Information on local resources and recreational opportunities.
- Assistance in using the online, virtual DoD morale, welfare, and recreation library to download books, write a resumé, or take practice college entrance exams.
- Wounded warrior information and referrals on veterans' affairs (VA) benefits, health-care services, and military facilities.

Short-term, problem-focused counseling sessions on life issues are also available. These sessions can be provided in person, via telephone, or online. This service is designed to address a variety of issues, such as improving relationships at home and at work, marital issues, normal grief and loss issues, and adjusting to life changes and challenges. Military members who are more comfortable going outside the military community for counseling services can choose this option for issues that do not require more extensive mental health care from the military medical care system. They can receive up to 12 free counseling sessions through Military OneSource.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES IN DISTRESS

The following two resources, military chaplains and military aid and charity organizations, are important sources of support and assistance for individuals and families in distress or in need of immediate counseling or aid.

Military Chaplains

Military chaplains have accompanied the U.S. military worldwide for over 200 years. Chaplains are qualified clergy who are ordained by their individual religious denomination or faith group prior to joining the military. As personal staff officers, chaplains

advise commanders on upholding the free exercise rights of religion, unit morale, and ethics (U.S. Army Chaplain Corps). Chaplains provide religious services and ceremonies and assist military members and their families with faith issues; personal issues, such as stress; redeployment and reunion issues; and moral and ethical concerns. Many times chaplains are the first source of support for military personnel outside of their chains of command, because they are easy to access. In this case, chaplains can counsel personnel or make appropriate referrals to social service agencies or other appropriate organizations that can help military members with their issue. Many have further training and certification in counseling fields, such as marriage and family therapy, and can provide those services as well. Chaplains in the Active and Reserve Components offer workshops and retreats for couples (e.g., the Army's Strong Bonds, the Navy's PREP, and the Air Force's Marriage Care) and individuals (e.g., the Navy's Personal Resiliency Retreat).

Chaplains provide care to service personnel and their family members regardless of faith beliefs. As a matter of professional obligation chaplains hold all information shared with them in confidence, unless the service or family members give permission for a chaplain to disclose their identity and/or the content of the communication. This confidential communication covers both oral and written disclosures and extends beyond the end of a counseling relationship and death of the person who disclosed. Commanders must honor and support this confidential communication. Not adhering to this policy of confidentiality can lead to loss of chaplain credentials and/or action noted in the Uniform Code of Military Justice or the Military Personnel Manual (e.g., Department of the Navy, 2008).

Because of the policy of confidentiality granted and adhered to by chaplains, service members often seek them out when they need to talk. Chaplains will guide persons to the resources needed and will not leave individuals alone when they or others are at risk.

Military Aid and Charity Organizations

Several types of emergency and charitable associations and organizations serve military members and their families. While they are not DoD-sponsored programs, they are heavily supported by military members and are considered extremely important "safety nets" for military members and families. Military members are strongly encouraged to contribute to these organizations and willingly do so, as they provide a mechanism for military members to "care for their own." Each branch of the service relies on a charitable organization to assist its members. They are the Army Emergency Relief (AER), the Air Force Aid Society (AFAS), and the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS). These organizations are private, non-profit organizations; however, they have close ties to the DoD, are largely funded through service-specific fund drives, and rely on command or installation personnel to distribute funds to military members in need. They provide emergency assistance, emergency grants and loans, advocacy services, counseling services, and other emergency and support services for active duty and Reserve Component members and their families. The service branches' emergency relief organizations have a cross-servicing agreement, so that personnel who are not located near an installation of their own branch can request help through the emergency relief offices of the other organizations.

Each military branch's emergency and charitable organization was created differently and in response to varied needs, emphasizes diverse needs, provides slightly different types of assistance, and is accessed differently. Service members should be encouraged to consult their Military Family Assistance Center (discussed previously in this chapter) for information on what services their branch provides and how to access those services.

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- Individual, marital, and family counseling.
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- Financial counseling.
- Child-care planning and referrals.
- Parenting issues.
- Deployment and reintegration support.
- Spouse employment assistance.
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SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR IDENTIFIED OR POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Two of the following programs are mandated programs designed to identify and assist families requiring special services. The third program, the New Parent Support Program, is intended to strengthen families, so that they are less likely to be at risk for child abuse or neglect.

Exceptional Family Member Program

The DoD's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), called Special Needs Identification and Assignment Coordination in the Air Force, requires service members to identify family members with special medical or educational needs and helps those families obtain required services (Department of Defense, 2010g). The family members are enrolled in the program and the services they require are documented. The documentation includes requirements for special educational needs and specialty medical services. In decisions about the military member's future assignments, special family needs are heavily considered and attempts are made to match the family needs with military assignments and communities that can support those needs. This process ensures those families have access to necessary services, wherever they are assigned. The EFMP helps families connect with medical and educational programs with the goals of increasing family self-sufficiency and improving family self-advocacy skills.

Responses to the online Blue Star Families' 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey, conducted in February and March 2014 with more than 6,000 respondents, indicated that 21% of the respondents had a family member enrolled in the EFMP. The top four conditions reported in the survey were autism, developmental delay, speech or language impairment, and mental health disorder. Between 58% and 73% of respondents with a family member enrolled in the EFMP indicated that they experienced the following challenges to continuity of care when moving: finding vocational services, doctors, early intervention services for infant/toddlers, and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services; receiving SSI/SSDI (69%); accessing respite services; getting educational accommodations; and accessing community and state-based support programs, such as Medicaid.

Family Advocacy Program

Changing to an all-volunteer force has resulted in higher numbers of service members who are married and have children. Since the number of military families has grown, so has the awareness of potential spouse and child abuse and neglect in the military services. The stressors of military life, including deployments, separations, frequent moves, and distance from extended family and friends has also been associated with an increased risk and incidence of abuse. A University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study (Rentz, Marshall, Loomis, Casteel, Martin, & Gibbs, 2007) showed that prior to October 2002, the rate of abuse and neglect was slightly higher among non-military families when compared to military families. However, between October 2002 and June 2003, after the U.S. started sending larger numbers of troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, the rates of abuse and neglect in military families increased substantially while the rates for non-military families remained stable. The average number of incidents of child abuse in military families doubled. In fact, the rate of child abuse in military families increased by about 30% for each percent increase in the number of military members leaving for or returning from deployments.

The DoD Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is a coordinated effort to prevent, identify, report, and treat all aspects of domestic abuse and violence. It is a command support program for identifying and helping military families who are at risk for or impacted by issues

of domestic abuse or violence, such as child abuse or neglect and spouse or partner abuse. The FAP provides policy and program guidance to assist each military branch of the FAP, which has staff at each installation where families are assigned. These Army, Air Force, and Navy FAPs (the Marine Corps families receive services from the Navy FAP) provide local outreach, prevention, and intervention. They provide a wide range of services and programs in order to address the specific needs of families.

The FAP tries to prevent or stop domestic abuse by educating service members and families about domestic abuse; identifying and assisting families experiencing domestic abuse; providing support and counseling services to victims of abuse; and providing treatment and discipline for abusers.

The FAP staff members work with military commanders and leaders, law enforcement personnel, the medical community, family support personnel, victim advocates, and military chaplains to assist families involved in domestic abuse. They also coordinate staff with civilian organizations and agencies in communities where service members and their families live to provide a community response to family and intimate partner abuse and to ensure that military families get the help they need to recover from and prevent further domestic abuse. Intervention includes safety planning, counseling, educational programs, advocacy, and other services. For more information go to http://www.militaryonesource.mil/abuse?content_id=266706.

New Parent Support Program

The New Parent Support Program (NPSP) offers primary prevention for young families as well as intensive services for those at risk for abuse or neglect. Focused on expectant and new parents, services include information on child development and positive parenting skills, parent/infant groups and sibling groups, and a lending program (DoD, 2014c).

In an evaluation study, surveys from 821 program users, both active duty and family members, from 22 NPSP locations across the Navy were analyzed (Kelley, Schwerin, Farrar, & Lane, 2007). A majority of users reported that the program was better or much better than expected. Over 75% of program users reported that the program helped them quite a bit or a great deal with coping with parenting stress appropriately, with improving their parenting skills, and with feeling a greater sense of community. Over 90% of users who attended the parenting classes or received home visits agreed or strongly agreed that the program demonstrated concern for and contributed to the health and safety of sailors and families, and that it contributed to their quality of life; 62% of those who attended parenting classes and 72% who received home visits indicated that the program helped them to concentrate at work; and over 70% of users agreed or strongly agreed that it contributed to readiness. However, a majority neither agreed nor disagreed that it contributed to their decision to remain in the Navy.

PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO HELP FAMILIES DEAL WITH DEPLOYMENTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

The following programs are available to family members during times when their service member is preparing to deploy, while he or she is gone, and when he or she returns from a deployment.

Deployment Cycle Programs

Pre-deployment programs are common across the services. Deployment programming was common in some services prior to September 11, 2001, especially in the Navy, where sailors have always been away from families for long periods of time. Now in all of the

services, families are invited to presentations on financial, legal, emotional, and relationship preparation for separation. The family support centers typically offer a presentation for couples and another for parents and children. These presentations may occur in the evening or over a weekend, and at the family support center or through a command (i.e., the families are invited to a deployment readiness briefing at the unit's location, for example, aboard the ship). Some of the Navy's Fleet and Family Support Centers may also conduct command-requested Return and Reunion programs for service members onboard ships as they transit back to the homeport (Blaisure & Arnold-Mann, 1992).

The Navy offers a weekend Returning Warrior Workshop (RWW) for individual augmentees (i.e., service members who are temporarily assigned to another command, deploy with the new command, and return to their parent command upon completion of the deployment) and their guest. The RWW is offered through the Navy's five Reserve Component Commands and is open to active duty and reserve members. The guest may include a spouse, a significant other (e.g., boyfriend or girlfriend), or a family member (e.g., sister, brother). The RWW is offered so sailors and their loved one can reconnect and learn how best to support one another during the reintegration phase (see https://navyreserve.navy.mil/Pages/Returning_Warrior_Workshop.aspx).

Voices From the Frontline

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Some of our best family support programs . . . naturally emerged among families.

It's common for people today to think, or say, "Just give me a pill and I can get better." It's true for civilians and for people in the military. But it doesn't work that way. People need other people to support them but today everyone is so busy it is hard to find the time to get together. Having a one-on-one support network is hard. Life moves fast. Sometimes the technology that is supposed to be enhancing communication between us gets in the way. Many people don't know how to connect. But that doesn't change the need. Some of our best family support programs today come from what naturally emerged among families. For example, Key Wives and ombudsmen volunteer spouses who support other spouses.

Evonne Carawan, Director, Personnel Readiness and Community Support,
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Military Personnel Policy)

Family Readiness Groups and Navy Family Ombudsman Program

The Family Readiness Group (FRG), also called the Key Volunteer Network in the Marine Corps, is one of the most important programs for supporting family members while individual service members or units deploy. Providing support for family members allows deployed service members to focus on their mission without unnecessary worry about their families. The FRG is a command-sponsored organization made up of service members, civilian employees, and family member volunteers (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, 2007). Its purpose is to provide a structure and forum for service members and their families to provide social and emotional support and outreach services, and to distribute information to each other. The FRG is a vital organization for helping maintain family member morale and for helping families resolve problems.

Family readiness group activities might include voluntary telephone rosters, or "trees" with family member contact information, in case of emergencies or to relate important information; deployment-related (before, during, or after a unit goes to a combat zone) or mobilization-related (Reserve Component units called to active duty for deployment or

training) information briefings/meetings; newsletters with information on unit missions, self-help programs and services, benefits and entitlements, and events; free or low cost social activities for spouses and/or families (Department of the Army, 2000).

In addition to the FRG program, the Navy also has a Family Ombudsman program as part of its family support system. The Navy Family Ombudsman program provides support to Navy families during times of deployment and when units are home. Like FRG volunteers, Navy ombudsmen are volunteers and spouses who wear no uniform and hold no rank, but are key members of the command support team DoD. All Navy commands, including Navy Reserve commands, have a command-appointed ombudsman. Navy Reserve Ombudsmen are fully trained to assist both activated and non-activated Navy Reserve families. They serve as information links between command leadership and Navy families. They are official command representatives and points of contact for all family members associated with the command, including spouses, parents, and extended family members (Command, Navy Installations Command, n.d.).

Voices From the Frontline

BUILDING A SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

Family Readiness Support helps people know that they . . . are not alone.

Family Readiness Support helps people know that they are connected to the resources and support. They are not alone. Our goal is to build a social and emotional support network that happens more naturally on military installations. We provide deployment and reunion briefings, help family members understand the Unit's mission, and provide information and referrals. My work takes me all over the state working with 11 Family Readiness Groups, one for each armory that has soldiers serving in the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. We also reach out to the other states that are part of the Brigade (seven plus small groups from other states who have sought to join the mission).

The chain of concern is supposed to work like this:

- We have developed telephone trees headed by volunteer trained callers who check in with families once a month. If families have questions or the furnace breaks, this person is their first point of contact. Families know they are not alone.
- Callers then report back to the Telephone Tree Coordinator, who is supervised by the Family Readiness Group Leader. To maintain confidentiality, info passed up the chain may describe a situation but not name a person unless permission is given or if it is an emergency.
- The Telephone Tree callers let the Coordinator know of any issues that need to be addressed. Sometimes those come to me but more often go directly to the Family Assistance Center, the "one stop shop" for issues: TRICARE, finances, legal, whatever it may be. We also remind families of the other services available to them: a Military Family Life Consultant who works with families and children and visits school and educates the educators about the unique challenges of military children; the youth coordinator who oversees programs and camps for military children; a psychologist; Military OneSource; and outreach specialists who work with veterans and their families.
- Every family receives a From the Home Front newsletter that continues to list the resources available as well as upcoming support groups and other events.

Being military family members helps my co-worker and me reach other military families. We understand what they are experiencing and can respond to some