

Military Family Readiness Council Meeting Minutes
The Pentagon Conference Center, Room B6
September 17, 2015
1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Members Attending:

Office of the Secretary of Defense:

Mr. Brad Carson, Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)
Ms. Barbara Thompson, Director, Office of Family Readiness Policy, Director, Office of
Community Support for Military Families With Special Needs

Army:

Ms. Laura Conley, U.S. Army National Guard Spouse

Marine Corps:

Ms. Andrea Smith Green, Spouse of Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Ronald Green
Ms. Christina Myers, U.S. Marine Corps Active Spouse

Navy:

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Ann Burkhardt, USN, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office
(N17)
Ms. Chaun Theng Young, U.S. Navy Reserve Spouse

Air Force:

Brigadier General Lenny Richoux, Director of Air Force Services
Ms. Michelle Padgett, U.S. Air Force Spouse

Military Family Organizations:

Ms. Karen Ruedisueli, National Military Family Association
Ms. Noeleen Tillman, Blue Star Families

Representatives of Members Attending:

Army:

Ms. Diane Randon, representing Lieutenant General David Halverson, Commander, U.S. Army
Installation Management Command, and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management
Ms. Carla Coulson, representing Lieutenant General David Halverson, Commander, U.S. Army
Installation Management Command, and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management

Navy:

Force Master Chief Andrew Thompson, representing Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
Mike Stevens

Air Force:

Mr. H. L. Larry, representing Brigadier General Lenny Richoux, Director of Air Force Services
Chief Master Sergeant Sandra Pfeffer, USAF, representing Chief Master Sergeant of the Air
Force James Cody

Air National Guard:

Major General Brian Neal, representing Lieutenant General Stanley Clarke, Director, Air
National Guard

Military Family Organizations:

Dr. Mary Keller, President and Chief Executive Officer, Military Child Education Coalition

Also Present:

Lieutenant General Robert Ruark, Military Deputy to the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel
and Readiness)

Sergeant Major Bryan Battaglia, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of
Staff

Ms. Rosemary Williams, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and
Family Policy)

Dr. Jack Smith, M.D., Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

Colonel Gina Humble, U.S. Air Force, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,
Deputy Director J1

Mr. Tony Wickham, National Guard Bureau

Ms. Stacy Barnes, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs)

Commander Peter Hoegel, USN, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military
Community and Family Policy)

Public Submissions

Public submissions received in advance of the September 17, 2015, meeting are contained in
Enclosure 1.

Proceedings of the Meeting

On Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015, the Military Family Readiness Council met at the Pentagon
Conference Center, Room B6. The meeting's purpose was to review previous business, receive
informational briefings and to discuss the annual Council recommendations to be sent forward
for consideration by the Secretary of Defense.

A full transcript of the meeting and attendance list of members and advisors present is available.
CDR Peter Hoegel, United States Navy, Designated Federal Officer, opened the meeting by
welcoming Council members, advisors and public guests. He noted that the Council had a
quorum and was thus officially in session. Three members attended via speakerphone. CDR
Hoegel briefly reviewed the rules and regulations under which the Council must conduct
business pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act and Department of Defense
Instruction 5105.04. Further, he advised that all documents produced in the meeting were open to

the public and that submissions presented to the Council for review would also be available upon request. Concluding his opening remarks, he turned the floor over to Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Honorable Mr. Brad Carson.

Mr. Carson expressed excitement about the Council's work, saying he looks forward to getting to know the individual Council members. He described his primary goal as seeking initiatives to improve the lives of military families, couples and single mothers. He thanked Council members for their commitment to this task, adding that information and suggestions from the meeting will be presented to the Secretary of Defense. He introduced Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Robert Ruark, the new military deputy at the Personnel and Readiness office. Mr. Carson then turned the floor back to CDR Hoegel.

CDR Hoegel reminded the Council that three members were participating via speakerphone and asked all of those present to use their microphones and speak clearly. He then conducted a brief review of previous Council business.

Council business review and discussion

The Council discussed three topics: public submissions, policy updates and a review of 2014 Council recommendations.

CDR Hoegel succinctly described the public submissions for the meeting, starting with one from Ms. Megan Oday about the need for families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program to connect with family services at each installation to which they move. A submission by Ms. Mary Ward pointed out that many Exceptional Family Member Program family members that receive counseling feel "stigmatized" and believe it negatively affects assignment policies. CDR Hoegel noted that this was not necessarily a statement of fact but the belief of one individual. He then related Ms. Erin Ward's view on the need for consistent installation access policies in order to foster more public/private partnerships between military installations and community organizations.

CDR Hoegel called attention to Ms. Angela Drake's material on cyber-bullying within the military. A submission from Ms. Tara Szymanek asked for greater support for the Military Support 360 Project. Mr. Jeremy Hilton submitted a request that the Council propose policies to ease burdens on families with special needs. CDR Hoegel stated that all of the submissions would be entered into the record and provided to Council members.

He then reviewed a series of policy changes of interest to the Council:

- Department of Defense Instruction 1342.12 regarding early intervention and special education services to eligible Department of Defense dependents
- Department of Defense Instruction 1402.5 regarding background checks for child-care workers
- Department of Defense Instruction 6400.1, which updated and established policies on responsibilities for the Family Advocacy Program
- Department of Defense Manual 6400.1, Volume 1, which created uniform policy standards for the Family Advocacy Program

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- Defense Manual 6400.01, Volume 4, which provided clinical intervention guidelines for domestic abusers
- Department of Defense Instruction 6400.06, which updated existing policy regarding domestic abuse involving Department of Defense military and certain affiliated personnel
- NAVADMIN 243/14, which updated the Transition Goals, Plans and Success program
- NAVADMIN 263/14, which provided guidance to installation commanders on the voluntary storage of privately owned firearms
- NAVADMIN 281/14, which made changes to the documenting process for family care plans
- NAVADMIN 030/15, which further updated the Transition Goals, Plans and Success program
- NAVADMIN 037/15, which provided guidance and implementation for commands to report domestic violence counts and consequent command actions
- NAVADMIN 119/15, which established the Mrs. Sybil Stockdale Ombudsman of the Year Award
- NAVADMIN 182/15, which updated the Navy's convalescent and maternity leave policies
- NAVADMIN 125/15, which made the Ombudsman Registry CAC-enabled
- NAVADMIN 178/15, which altered the Physical Readiness Program to create a balance between health, fitness and mission readiness
- Marine Corps Order 1710.30, which standardizes child care and youth programs across the Marine Corps
- Marine Corps Order 1751.3, which establishes policy for the Basic Allowance for Housing, as well as travel and transportation allowance
- Marine Corps Bulletin 1754, which outlines policy for respite care use and reimbursement for families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program
- Marine Corps Bulletin 1742, which changes the process and timelines for the voting assistance reporting process
- Marine Corps Order 1700.37, which offers financial counseling, training and education to Marines and their families in order to increase financial readiness

CDR Hoegel then led a review of the Council's 2014 Annual Report to Congress recommendations:

- Recommendation #1 – Continue improving both the communication about services and the service delivery system to armed forces members and their families.
- Recommendation #2 – Develop a toolkit to educate and inform military family and civilian leaders on total military family Department of Defense engagement strategies.
- Recommendation #3 – Continue transformation of Military OneSource.
- Recommendation #4 – Explore and make use of public-private partnerships to benefit military families.
- Recommendation #5 – Focus on transitioning military families and inform them of available existing programs.

Presentations to the Council

Ms. Rosemary Williams, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy

CDR Hoegel turned the podium over to Ms. Williams, who highlighted progress on three of the Council's five recommendations from 2014. She described making military families aware of, and getting them to engage Department of Defense support services as "not just a moral obligation...it is a national security issue." She noted that about 70 percent of the 2.5 million active-duty and reserve Service members live off base.

Of that force, 85 percent are under the age of 35 and are known as "militaryennials." This group relies heavily on social media and the input of family and friends to make life decisions. Ms. Williams stated that militaryennials demand accurate, reliable, credible, and timely digital content. The Department of Defense, through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, is launching its first paid digital outreach and engagement strategy. The first two campaigns will focus on prevention of child abuse and neglect and increasing military families' financial readiness. Ms. Williams thanked Mr. Carson for lowering barriers to allow quick change in these areas.

Ms. Williams then turned to the ongoing transformation of Military OneSource. She noted that Military OneSource annually handles about 700,000 calls, while its website receives about 1.75 million unique visits. The redesigned website, unveiled August 1, 2015, features streamlined navigation, more-focused content and a keyword-optimized search function. The new site is interactive and features a single sign-on function.

Ms. Williams then focused on a broad Military OneSource "refresh" that will eventually focus on outreach via mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets, which will allow users to accomplish tasks such as managing their military careers and even engaging in e-commerce through Department of Defense websites.

Ms. Williams touched briefly on using social and behavioral science to devise the best methods for engaging Service members, families, and survivors. She pointed out that the Department of Defense recently used such methodology to increase participation in the Thrift Savings Plan by Service members.

Discussion of Ms. Williams' brief

The conversation touched on a number of issues including the integration of suicide prevention hotlines into Military OneSource. Attendees asked questions about services provided by personal financial counselors and managers, as well as Military OneSource resources available to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

Dr. Tom Langdon, Director, State Liaison Education Opportunities Office, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy

Dr. Langdon opened by stating his office's mission – Alleviate barriers in state policy that Service members and their families face as a result of military service. He noted that his office does not lobby state legislators but rather educates, builds relationships, and assists lawmakers by identifying issues that affect Service members and their families. Prior to each state's legislative cycle, the State Liaison Education Opportunities Office (SLEO) gets input from the Services, Joint Staff, Military and Veteran Support Organizations, and the National Guard leadership. Dr. Langdon pointed to a 61 percent passage rate for bills that remove barriers for Service members at the state level.

One of the big issues for the 2016 legislative cycle is state policy to support identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. State laws do not require child protective services to identify military families in cases of child abuse and neglect, or to report cases to the appropriate military authorities. Changes in state law can support both local government and the military Services concurrently by reporting child abuse or neglect cases involving military families to the appropriate military authorities. Another initiative being pursued is one that will allow Service members to retain their earned priority for receiving Medicaid home and community care waivers. States frequently have long waiting lists and Service members face periods of no Medicaid service every time they transfer across state lines.

The SLEO team is also working to expand the number of states that allow flexibility in distance-education standards. For example, while taking an online class at a community college in Georgia, a Service member might be reassigned to the State of Washington. The Georgia community college might not be licensed to deliver educational programs in Washington State. The goal is to get the states to recognize each other's educational credentials in such situations.

Dr. Langdon touched on other priorities, including expansion of veterans hiring preferences in the private sector, professional licensure portability for military spouses, and getting the final eight states to set up Veterans Treatment Courts for veterans who run afoul of the law due to mental health and addiction issues. Finally, he turned to the need for states to recognize and accept the homeschooling standards of the home states of military Service members.

Discussion of Dr. Langdon's brief

The question arose about whether acceptance of interstate public schooling and homeschooling standards are the same. Dr. Langdon replied they are not, and each state has its own methods of regulating homeschooling. It was pointed out that students transitioning from homeschooling to public schools after moving to a new state might have difficulty obtaining the classes they need due to the patchwork of curriculum standards and regulations. The conversation then turned to Medicaid eligibility and waiting lists in different states.

Ms. Barbara Thompson, Director, Office of Family Readiness Policy, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy

CDR Hoegel then welcomed Ms. Barbara Thompson to the podium for a presentation on helping military families achieve financial readiness. The key points of the brief were as follows:

- The Department of Defense provides Service members with a wide array of financial literacy programs — including My Training Hub, an online learning management program — all of which are available in-person, online and telephonically.
- The Pillars of personal financial readiness were developed 8 years ago, and changes to the economic climate warrant a refresh.
 - The Pillars are being revamped.
 - The Office of Family Readiness is consulting with universities to develop relevant content.
 - The Office of Family Readiness cannot carry this out alone and is partnering with federal and non-profit organizations to develop programs and curricula.
- There is a big push to encourage military families to save more for both emergencies and retirement.
 - Military families are urged to participate in the Thrift Savings Program.
 - On-base banks and credit unions are providing needed financial education to Service members.
 - The key challenge is getting Service members and their families to act on the information they receive.

Discussion of Ms. Thompson's brief

The conversation began with questions about Service members receiving credit cards when they enter the military and whether or not they have the sufficient money-management skills to responsibly use the cards. It was noted that Service members are required to undergo basic financial training at their first duty stations. Mr. Carson stated that he would get more information on this issue in time for the next Council meeting.

Ms. Katherine Robertson, Family Advocacy Program Manager, Office of Family Readiness Policy, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy

CDR Hoegel then turned the floor over to Ms. Kathy Robertson for a briefing on the Family Advocacy Program, which serves as a key element of the Department of Defense's Coordinated Community Response system to prevent and respond to reports of domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect. Ms. Robertson said the Family Advocacy Program is working to decrease incidents of domestic and child abuse by encouraging young Service members to get involved in family education programs.

She noted the Family Advocacy Program has a large, well-trained domestic violence staff that works with local communities on the issues of child and domestic partner abuse. This collaboration increases the number of resources — such as shelters — available to abuse victims of military families.

Ms. Robertson cited a 2012 *Army Times* article that described child abuse as “epidemic” among military families. Spurred by that report, the Family Advocacy Program studied child abuse prevention programs within the Department of Defense and then held two rapid improvement events — one for child abuse and neglect prevention, and the other for preventing domestic abuse. The sessions produced 84 new ideas for combatting abuse and neglect, many of which they are implementing.

Other key points in Ms. Robertson’s report included:

- The Family Advocacy Program is looking at starting a guardian ad litem program.
- There is a need to allow the military legal system to investigate misdemeanor-level abuse cases. Currently the system can only investigate felony-level cases.
- A study is under way of all of the Services’ New Parent Support programs, which employ home visits by licensed nurses and social workers to help parents with children from birth to age 3 in order to avoid child abuse and neglect. The goal is to standardize components of the program across the Department of Defense.
- The Family Advocacy Program is working with the Marine Corps Assessments Branch to study victim advocacy programs in order to standardize procedures and staffing ratios.
- The Family Advocacy Program proposed a Department of Defense-wide study on child neglect to develop strategies to combat this problem. This course of action includes hiring an outside expert to investigate the increasing number of child neglect cases.
- The Family Advocacy Program is partnering with Pennsylvania State University on Thrive, a combination of four evidence-based parenting programs that will be tested at 10 installations in 2016.
- The program plans to roll out the Intimate Partner Physical Injury Risk Assessment Tool to gauge the risk of subsequent physical violence by alleged domestic abuse offenders.
- South Carolina and the State of Washington have passed laws requiring Child Protective Services to report to Family Advocacy and military law enforcement any incidents of child abuse involving a military family living in a civilian community.

Discussion of Ms. Robertson’s brief

Discussion of the Family Advocacy Program revolved around assessing the risk of repeated abuse in military families in which incidents had been reported. Questions also arose about whether incidents of abuse occur most frequently among active-duty, National Guard or reserve families, and whether such abuse occurs most frequently during and after deployments. The conversation closed with questions about the feasibility and safety of placing — in some cases — abused children with close friends rather than extended family.

Council discussions and deliberations

Before turning to deliberations of future Council recommendations, CDR Hoegel opened the floor for general questions and discussion.

Ms. Noeleen Tillman asked about progress on public/private partnerships between the Department of Defense and the communities in which its facilities are located. Ms. Williams replied that some progress has been made, but that the Office of Military Community and Family Policy hopes to increase agreements between military bases and localities on a variety of issues. Ms. Thompson pointed out that a study is under way with the University of Georgia and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to identify community assets and develop strategies for connecting military families to those resources. Ms. Williams then recounted a recent Morale, Welfare and Recreation Innovations Round Table meeting that included discussion of an Air Force program that promotes partnerships between bases and communities on services such as refuse pick-up, utilities and use of recreation facilities, among other things.

The discussion returned to the issue of health care for Service members and their families, particularly the challenge of obtaining Medicaid coverage. Questions were raised about the coverage levels under the TRICARE ECHO program, particularly in the area of pediatric care. Mr. Carson said his office is committed to working on those issues.

The conversation then turned briefly back to the Family Advocacy Program, with the question asked about whether seeking help under the program is “career ending.” Ms. Robertson stated that the program does track recidivism rates among alleged abusers, and that the emphasis is shifting toward treatment for the accused and finding ways to keep military families together.

Mr. Carson thanked Council members for the discussion, then turned the floor back to CDR Hoegel for a focus on prospective topics for study at future meetings. The topics for discussion at the next meeting likely include:

- TRICARE for Kids – Section 745
- Update of Military OneSource
- Implications for children and military families of the “Force of the Future” program
- The impact of budget cuts on support programs for families of the National Guard and reserves

Discussion then turned to how often the Military Family Readiness Council should meet. Mr. Carson suggested perhaps three times per year, with no meeting during the summer months.

Public oral comment

CDR Hoegel then invited anyone who wished to address the Council to step up to the open microphone.

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- Theresa Rankin, an advisor to the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, suggested a pooling of data on brain injuries suffered by Service members and veterans. She noted that many states are seeking Medicaid set-asides to help Service members and veterans with such injuries. She closed her remarks by praising the use of public-private partnerships to solve this challenge.
- Christine Taylor from the Policy Lab at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia discussed her work on a study of the potential relationship between deployment cycles and domestic abuse and mental health issues. She stated her team looks forward to sharing its findings with the Council.

Council member Michelle Padgett then noted that many of the submissions focus on needs of families with special needs. She requested more discussion at the next meeting about how to serve those families. CDR Hoegel stated that he would be happy to address that topic, adding that his office will set a date for the next meeting as soon as possible. He then turned the floor back to Mr. Carson.

Mr. Carson thanked all who participated in the meeting, whereupon he adjourned the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

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Submitted by:

Certified by:

Peter Hoegel Jr.
Commander, United States Navy
DFO, Military Family Readiness Council

Brad Carson
Acting Under Secretary of Defense
(Personnel and Readiness)

These minutes will be formally considered by the Council at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.