

Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council

TERMS OF REFERENCE

These terms of reference establish the objectives of the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council (MFRC) as an impactful assessment tool on readiness programs within the Department of Defense (DoD or “the Department”).

Mission Statement: The MFRC, as a Federal advisory committee subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (5 U.S.C., Appendix), and consistent with 10 U.S.C. §§ 1781a(d) and (e), provides independent advice on matters to improve the quality of life for Service members. In performing its advisory role, the MFRC will assess DoD-wide policies and programs, and identify systemic issues requiring resolution that affect the well-being of Service members and their families, survivors, and other eligible members of the military community.

Problem/Issue Statement: The Coronavirus Pandemic 2019 (COVID-19) and steps taken by State, Local and Federal governments to mitigate the impact of the pandemic had a profound impact on all DoD military family readiness programs. Across the Department, programs and services were modified in response to COVID-19. To address these impacts and prepare for the future, the Department needs to better understand the inhibitors to readiness and lingering effects of the pandemic on the Department’s military family readiness programs and services.

Objectives and Scope: Consistent with its responsibilities described in 10 U.S.C. §§ 1781a(d) and (e) and the procedural requirements of FACA, the MFRC will assess the effectiveness of the Department’s military family readiness programs and services during the COVID-19 Pandemic and provide actionable recommendations to address shortcomings of the Department’s programs and services, impacts on military families, and ways to better position the Department for similar events in the future.

Methodology:

1. The MFRC will operate in conformity with, and pursuant to, its charter, FACA, the Government in the Sunshine Act (“the Sunshine Act”) (5 U.S.C. § 552b), other applicable Federal statutes and regulations, and DoD policies and procedures. Individual MFRC members do not have the authority to make decisions or provide recommendations on behalf of the MFRC nor report directly to any Federal representative. Members of the MFRC are subject to certain Federal ethics laws, including 18 U.S.C § 208, governing conflicts of interest, and the Standards of Ethical Conduct regulations in 5 C.F.R., Part 2635.
2. In support of this ToR and the work conducted in response to it, the MFRC has my full support to meet with DoD experts. The MFRC staff, on behalf of the MFRC, may request the Office of the Secretary of Defense and DoD Component Heads to timely furnish any requested information, assistance, or access to personnel to the MFRC. All requests shall be consistent with applicable laws; applicable security classifications; DoDI 5105.04, “Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committee Management Program”; and this ToR. As special government employee members of a DoD Federal advisory committee, the MFRC members will not be given any access to DoD networks, to include DoD email systems.

Once material is provided to the MFRC, it becomes a permanent part of the MFRC's records. All data/information provided is subject to public inspection unless the originating Component office properly marks the data/information with the appropriate classification and Freedom of Information Act exemption categories before the data/information is released to the MFRC. The MFRC has physical storage capability and electronic storage and communications capability on both unclassified and classified networks to support receipt of material up to the Secret level.

3. As appropriate, the MFRC may seek input from government and non-government experts (e.g., military family organizations) with pertinent knowledge or experience with military family issues and programs.

Deliverable: The MFRC will discuss and deliberate on its recommendations at a properly noticed and open meeting, subject to the Sunshine Act exemptions. The MFRC's final recommendations will be presented to the Secretary of Defense as part of its Fiscal Year 2023 Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council Annual Report, which must be submitted no later than July 1, 2024

Support: The Office of the USD(P&R) will support the MFRC while its members accomplish the tasks under this ToR.