

## **STRONG BONDS BUILDS A SOLID FAMILY FOUNDATION AND MORE MISSION-FOCUSED SOLDIER**

- Strong Bonds enables Soldiers to stay focused on the mission, improving readiness and retention.
- Strong Bonds demonstrates the Army's commitment to its families.
- Strong Bonds strengthens family bonds by building trust and integrity, just as the Warrior Ethos unites the team.
- Strong Bonds is cost-effective: retaining one first-term Soldier saves \$60,000 in recruitment and training costs.
- Strong Bonds is easy to implement: chaplains work with commanders to recruit participants and lead training.
- Strong Bonds training creates a support group for Soldiers and families that share deployment cycles.
- Strong Bonds renews Soldiers and families with an off-site weekend retreat.
- Strong Bonds assesses the health and well-being of Soldiers' relationships.
- Strong Bonds empowers Soldiers and families to access Army and community resources to prevent crisis and to preserve relationships.
- Strong Bonds ensures Army children grow up in healthy Army families, setting the stage for a healthy future force of Soldiers.



**Help for the families  
who serve our country.**



**A SOLDIER'S WORK IS FAR FROM ORDINARY. THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO RISE TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE ARE CLEARLY EXTRAORDINARY. SO ARE THEIR FAMILIES.**

We depend on our Soldiers' commitments to duty and service. And they rely on the Army's commitment to their families. The Army recognizes that Soldiers with strong marital and family relationships make better Soldiers. Strong Bonds was initiated to build Soldier readiness by providing skills that the Soldier can use to strengthen his or her marriage. Initially, Strong Bonds was intended for married couples. Today Strong Bonds includes programs for single Soldiers, families with children, and those deploying or re-deploying. It's been approved Army-wide so all Soldiers and their families will have access to Strong Bonds.

**"It gave my wife and me additional tools to work with and it gives younger couples the basic skills they need."**



**Over half of the Army's Soldiers are married and most single Soldiers will marry while enlisted.**



**RIISING TO MEET THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF ARMY FAMILIES**

Demands placed on Army families, especially in wartime, place unique strain on relationships. Marriages are tried; some have ended in divorce. Current studies show that one-third of all first-term Soldiers won't finish their first enlistment. It is believed that this rate could be significantly reduced if the Soldier had strong support from family and loved ones.

Recognizing the importance of Army families and that Soldiers with strong relationships make better Soldiers, Army chaplains initiated relationship skills building training and support in 1997. Since then, Strong Bonds has grown and developed into a sharply focused, prevention-oriented program available to active duty, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers and their families. Currently, Strong Bonds has four readiness programs to meet the needs of Soldiers and their families.

**Strong Bonds Single Soldier**

Focuses on the skills of finding the right partner and building a great relationship.

**Strong Bonds Couples**

Strengthens the marital bond, giving couples the tools and information they need for better communication and relationship building. Originally referred to as *Building Strong and Ready Families*.

**Strong Bonds Family**

Teaches family members to work together to ensure Army families stay close during trying times.

**Strong Bonds Pre- and Re-deployment**

Provides the tools to enable Soldiers and families to stay close during deployment and to reintegrate after a long separation.

Chaplains lead the programs and work with commanders to schedule training in accordance with the deployment cycle. This gives Soldiers and their families time to use new skills before deployment. Participants usually share the same deployment cycle and have time to form a support network before deployment.

**THE ARMY VALUES ITS SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES**

Through Strong Bonds, Soldiers and their families assess the current well-being of their relationships and are empowered to access resources within the Army and in the community to strengthen their relationships and head-off family crises. As a result, Soldiers with strong family and relationship support are more committed and mission-focused. And, since Army children often become Soldiers, a healthy Army family sets the stage for the future force and generations of Soldiers.

**To find out more, go to [www.strongbonds.org](http://www.strongbonds.org).** Or, contact the Unit Chaplain.

Army Reserve and National Guard Commanders and Chaplains, contact the US Army Reserve Command Chaplains office at (404) 464-8475 or the National Guard Bureau Chaplains office at (866) 839-7438.

Active Component Commanders and Chaplains, contact the Family Ministries Officer in the Army Chief of Chaplains Office at (703) 601-4448.



**"My first priority, and without a question the most important one, is providing for the well-being of Soldiers and their families."**

Dr. Francis J. Harvey,  
Secretary of the Army