

Executive Summary

Military Family Readiness Council Meeting

The Pentagon Conference Center, Room B6

Aug. 18, 2014

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Members Attending:

Office of the Secretary of Defense:

Jessica Wright, Chair, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Barbara Thompson, Director, Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth, Director, Office of Special Needs

Army:

LTG David Halverson, Commander, U.S. Army Installation Management Command and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management

Christina Vine, Army Active Duty Spouse Representative

Marine Corps:

BGen Russell Sanborn, USMC, Director, Marine and Family Programs

Emily Fertitta, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Spouse

Navy:

RDML Rick Snyder, USN, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office (N17)

Kristy Ortega, U.S. Navy Spouse

Air Force:

Brig Gen Patrick Doherty, USAF, Director of Air Force Services

Jeanne Benden, Air National Guard Spouse Representative

Air National Guard:

Lt Gen Stanley Clarke, Director, Air National Guard

Military Family Organizations:

Sherri Brown, American Red Cross

Kathy Moakler, National Military Family Association

Noeleen Tillman, Blue Star Families

Representatives of Members Attending:

Army:

MSG Shawn Gulley, Representing Jeanne Chandler, wife of SMA Raymond Chandler, USA

Marine Corps:

SGTMAJ William Harvey, Representing SgtMajMC Michael Barrett

Navy:

FORCM Nancy Hollingsworth, USN, representing MCPON Mike Stevens

Air Force:

CMSgt Melanie Noel, USAF, Representing Mrs. Athena Cody

Also Present:

Dr. Laura Junor, PDUSD (P&R)

Ms. Stephanie Barna, Acting ASD (R&FM)

Ms. Rosemary Williams, DASD (MC&FP)

Mr. Mr. James Rodriguez, DASD (WCP)

Dr. Susan Kelly, Director, TVPO

Dr. Jack Smith, M.D., OASD (HA)

Col Gina Humble, USAF OJCS, Vice Director, J1

Lt Col Susanne Hiscock, NGB

Dr. Ed Tyner, ODASD (MC&FP)

Ms. Betsy Graham, ODASD (MC&FP)

Ms. Debbie Maraia, ODASD (MC&FP)

Ms. Sandra Mason, ODASD (WCP)

Ms. Lee McMahan, ODASD (MC&FP)

Ms. Stacy Barnes, OASD (RA)

CDR Peter Hoegel, USN, ODASD (MC&FP)

Public Submissions

The public submission received in advance of the June 25, 2014, meeting is contained in Enclosure 1.

Proceedings of the Meeting

On Monday, Aug. 18, 2014, the Military Family Readiness Council meeting was held at the Pentagon Conference Center. The purpose of this meeting 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 of members and advisers present is available.

Navy Cmdr. Peter Hoegel, Designated Federal Officer, opened the meeting by welcoming Council members, advisers and public guests. He noted that the Council had a quorum and thus was officially in session. He then proceeded with a review of the rules and regulations the Council must follow while conducting 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 comments, he turned the floor over to the chairperson, Mrs. Jessica Wright, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Mrs. Wright welcomed all present, thanking them for their attendance. She then introduced important guests and said farewell to departing member Ms. Sherri Brown from the American Red Cross. Next, she requested that, in preparation for the annual report to Congress, Council members carefully consider recommendations for future Council topics for inclusion in the report. Concluding her opening comments, Mrs. Wright turned the floor over to Cmdr. Hoegel to review previous Council business.

Council business review and discussion

Four business topics were reviewed and discussed by the Council: public submissions, service policy changes, Council focus areas for 2014 and the June 25, 2014 meeting.

To open the discussion, Cmdr. Hoegel reviewed the public submission from the June 25, 2014 meeting wherein the American Military Partner Association requested the Council's review of the top six needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered military spouses and their families. He went on to state that Mrs. Wright had provided a response to that submission which addressed the specific concerns raised and reaffirmed the department's commitment to all military families. Cmdr. Hoegel then reviewed a new submission to the Council from the TRICARE for Kids Stakeholders Coalition who, in response to the DoD "Study on Health Care and Related Support for Children of Members of the Armed Forces," provided a section-by-section analysis and initial response to the findings in that report.

Next, Cmdr. Hoegel briefly outlined three recent policy changes, two within DoD and one in the Navy, which impact the interests of military family members. In August 2014, DoD published DoD Instruction 6060.02 "Child Development Programs" which updated policy, assigned

responsibilities and prescribed procedures for providing care to minor children. Additionally, DoDI 6400.03 “Family Advocacy Command Assistance Team” was updated to authorize special assistance teams to support installations needing additional resources in the face of specific family advocacy issues. Finally, in July 2014, the Navy published NAVADMIN 154/14 – “Transition Goals, Plans and Success,” the fourth in a series of updates on the subject of transitioning out of the military.

Cmdr. Hoegel continued by reiterating the Council’s four focus areas. The Council focus areas and the meeting in which they were discussed are as follows:

- Review of the state of the Exceptional Family Member Program – briefed at the June 25, 2014 meeting
- Review of the network of family programs supporting the Guard and reserve – briefed at the June 25, 2014 meeting
- Review of transition programs – to be briefed later in the Aug. 18, 2014 session
- Review of programs supporting military spouses – to be briefed later in the Aug. 18, 2014 session

Finally, Cmdr. Hoegel closed the old business review discussion with an overview of the June 25, 2014 meeting activities. He then reminded the Council members that a crucial activity of the current session would be to review, discuss and decide upon which topics to include on meeting agendas for the coming year.

Briefs to the Council

Ms. Lee McMahon – Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program

Cmdr. Hoegel turned the podium over to Ms. Lee McMahon for an update brief on programs supporting military spouses, specifically the SECO program. The key points of her comments were as follows:

- The two overarching goals of the SECO program are to decrease the 25 percent unemployment rate experienced by military spouses and close the 25 percent wage gap experienced by military wives.
- The SECO services support the four stages of the career life cycle: career exploration; education, training and licensing; employment readiness and career connections.
- The three main program components are the Military OneSource SECO Career Center, the My Career Advancement Account Scholarship (MyCAA) and the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP).
- This fall SECO will launch a pilot program through the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CALE) to enable military spouses to build portfolios of prior

learning, which can be assessed for college credit. The CALE will provide a resource to military spouses who are not eligible for MyCAA, though MyCAA eligible spouses will be able to use CALE as well.

Discussion of Ms. McMahon's brief:

Discussion of Ms. McMahon's brief highlighted the fact that both Guard and reserve spouses are eligible for services through SECO and that SECO staff are committed to expanding services to more military spouses through programs like MSEP and CALE. Spouses who are interested in CALE services can contact SECO to connect with a career counselor, who will then work with the spouse to determine if the university to which they are interested in applying accepts transfer credit. With regard to MSEP, feedback from employers who have hired military spouses has been exceptionally positive. The SECO program is now investigating the possibility of creating an MSEP widget to disseminate job opportunities to spouses.

Dr. Susan Kelly – service member transition update

Cmdr. Hoegel then turned the floor over to Dr. Susan Kelly of the DoD Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO) for a brief on the revised Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The key points of her comments:

- Important elements of the TAP redesign include:
 - Service members must meet career readiness standards and develop an individual transition plan
 - Standardized curriculum and learning outcomes across all services
 - Focused on service member's goals (education, technical training, entrepreneurship)
 - Preparation begins at accession and extends across the life cycle of the service member's career
 - Family considerations are integrated
- Main differences from the previous version of TAP include:
 - Participation is mandatory by law, to include guardsmen and reservists
 - Inclusion of career readiness standards
 - An expanded timeline to better enable preparation for transition
 - Bridges between service members, benefits and support provided in the community
 - Command involvement verifies service member readiness
- Curriculum is reviewed and modified annually based on participant feedback
- Virtual curriculum is available on Joint Knowledge Online and accessible by all service members, spouses and veterans
- The TVPO will launch a month long TAP Awareness Campaign in September 2014 targeting service members, spouses and military commanders

Discussion of Dr. Kelly's brief:

Clarification was requested and received as to the differences which exist, primarily in eligibility and mission statements, between the Veterans Employment Center (VEC) and MSEP.

Additionally, clarification was also sought as to the difference between Hero 2 Hired and the VEC. Hero 2 Hired was set up to address specific needs of the Guard and reserve, but it will be stepped down if it duplicates services of the VEC once the VEC is fully established. Finally, Ms. Vine confirmed that surviving spouses are eligible for TAP and the other programs discussed.

Following that, a detailed discussion ensued as to the effectiveness of having senior and junior military members go through TAP together given that they often have divergent financial interests and concerns when transitioning. Dr. Kelly advised that they receive feedback supporting both integrated sessions and separate sessions for these groups. For the most part, most sessions are currently integrated and all sessions use the same curriculum. The curriculum and delivery method will be reviewed every year for improvement based on participant feedback and staff assistance visits. Therefore, if the current methodology turns out to be ineffective, there will be ample opportunity to make changes. Additionally, a Web service has been established to gather data from service members about their post-service employment placement and advancement, which can then be used to help evaluate long term TAP success.

Finally, Gen. Halverson applauded the excellent TAP and highlighted the importance of individual expectation management and of being willing to help oneself when transitioning from the military to civilian life. He further advised that TAP provides an excellent opportunity to interact with others, access online resources, translate military experience to civilian skill sets and to develop the skills needed to get and to sustain employment.

Ms. Sandra Mason, Ms. Debbie Maraia and Ms. Betsy Graham – caregiver support panel

The final brief to the Council was a panel session with representatives from the Military Caregiver PEER Forum Initiative and the Military Families Learning Network (MFLN). Key points of the session include:

- The purpose of the Military Caregiver PEER Forum is to provide caregiver-centric training and delivery, caregiver-focused communication and information strategies, and give caregivers the opportunity to interact directly with their peers, thus reducing feelings of isolation.
- The key staff of the Military Caregiver PEER Forum are the caregivers themselves, the recovery care coordinator, and the military and family life counselor.
- For caregivers who are not able to connect in person or who are not located near an installation, Warrior Care Policy and Military OneSource provide online options for connecting with other caregivers through virtual forums.
- The MFLN is a project that strengthens the military Family Readiness System, which is a network of the agencies, programs, services, individuals and the collaboration among

those groups that promotes the readiness and quality of life of service members and their families.

- The primary concentration areas of the MFLN are personal finance, family development, military caregiving, network literacy and community capacity building.
- MFLN webinars are open to the public, and continuing education units from the National Association of Social Workers are available for many of them.

Discussion of the panel session:

The group, led by Ms. Tillman and Mrs. Wright, discussed the fact that caregivers come in all kinds of shapes and sizes and that the Council must think of each; some care for wounded service members who need constant assistance, others care for wounded service members who require much less assistance, some care for the retired wounded and still others care for other family members such as disabled children or parents with dementia or Alzheimer's.

A second discussion thread, which came up during the preparatory meeting and was put before the Council for discussion by Cmdr. Hoegel, centered on the extent to which caregiving support resources collaborate with VSOs, MSOs and other organizations. Ms. Maraia advised that her organization was doing this and that they sought to work closely with other organizations to identify and address gaps in service systematically. Mrs. Wright advised that Secretary Hagel also does something like this, meeting every three months with the president or chief executive officer of certain organizations involved in supporting caregivers. She recommended that during one of those sessions Secretary Hagel share information about what DoD is doing in this regard.

Council discussions and deliberations

Before reviewing the list of prospective future Council topics, Cmdr. Hoegel provided a review of the 2014 Council topics which included:

- Support to military families with special needs
- Family programs and initiatives supporting the National Guard
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff second term strategic direction to the joint force
- Programs supporting military spouses
- Transition support programs
- Support programs for military caregivers

He went on to state that the recommendations for future topics would be formalized at the next meeting, Tuesday Oct. 7, 2014. Current prospective future topics include:

1. An update from the Family Advocacy Program on the DoD Prevention and Coordinated Community Response to Child Abuse and Neglect and Domestic Abuse Working Group
2. An update from the DoD State Liaison Education Opportunities office on state and local legislative efforts supporting military families
3. Military health system review

4. Tobacco use reduction efforts
5. Military Family Program assessment of needs, including a review of the Family Readiness System and Land-Grant University partnership initiatives
6. Military family support programs outreach efforts, including online initiatives and millennial generation unique efforts
7. An update on the DoD Financial Readiness Program
8. Operation Live Well and Healthy Base Initiative
9. National Guard and reserve unique perspectives on Family Advocacy, Transition and other family support programs

Cmdr. Hoegel invited Council members to make revisions to the current list of prospective topics and turned the floor over to Mrs. Wright to lead the discussion. Recommendations for future topics could either be provided during the current Council session or sent via email to Cmdr. Hoegel. Additionally, Mrs. Wright clarified that, should the Council be interested in nominating the topics for inclusion in a future session, the military health system review will not be done until Aug. 29, and the tobacco use reduction efforts review will not be done until late October or early November. Each would have to be integrated into the schedule while accommodating those constraints. Mrs. Wright then opened the floor to member discussion and recommendations.

Mrs. Wright reminded the group that they must provide recommendations for Fiscal Year 2014 no later than Oct. 7, 2014. Once the recommendations for Fiscal Year 2014 are finalized on Oct. 7, DoD will provide a report to Congress which will include the final recommendations of the Council for this year.

Future Topic Recommendation #1

Ms. Sherri Brown requested revisiting a past topic and receiving additional briefings on the connectivity between organizations at the local level around the country, as well as on how the warm hand-off happens between the military and the community as service members transition.

Future Topic Recommendation #2

Ms. Moakler brought up the fact that several news agencies recently reported on the issue of military families taking part in the government's supplemental nutrition assistance program (food stamps) and other food assistance programs such as food banks. After much discussion as to the actual size of the military population utilizing food assistance programs, it was suggested that the Council get in front of this issue and look deeper into it to determine the scope of the problem, what the DoD is currently doing to serve these families and what the DoD's role should be in supporting these families.

Future Topic Recommendation #3

Gen. Clarke recommended that prospective future topic number seven, an update on the DoD Financial Readiness Program, be highly prioritized for inclusion in 2015 meeting topics due to its direct tie to the issue of suicide.

Future Topic Recommendation #4

Ms. Vine, requested the Council give a high prioritization to prospective future topic number six, military family support programs outreach efforts — including online initiatives and millennial generation unique efforts. She would like to focus on how to reach the target audience most effectively to inform them of all of the wonderful programs available to them.

Future Topic Recommendation #5

Ms. Thompson suggested that the Defense State Liaison Office, prospective future topic number two, come and brief the Council in 2015.

Future Topic Recommendation #6

Ms. Ortega recommended that prospective future topic number eight, Operation Live Well and Healthy Base Initiative, be prioritized highly for inclusion in the 2015 briefing cycle.

In closing, two new topic recommendations were put forth (transition and food assistance) for inclusion on the prospective future topics list. Additionally, four recommendations for the high prioritization of specific existing prospective topics were put forth (future topic recommendations seven, six, two and eight).

The Council did not finalize any Fiscal Year 2014 recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the Congressional Defense Committees.

Next meeting

The next Military Family Readiness Council meeting is scheduled for Oct. 7, 2014 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. EDT in the Pentagon Conference Center, Room B6.

Following that, a session has been tentatively scheduled for either Feb. 6 or Feb. 11, 2015 at the Pentagon Conference Center. Council members were asked to block both dates on their calendars now in order to ensure their availability.

Finally, the rotation of Council membership will occur over the next several months. The rotation will be conducted deliberately, with care, and Cmdr. Hoegel will disseminate information about the process and timeline as it becomes available.

Public Oral Comment Opportunity

Before closing the meeting, Mrs. Wright opened the floor for public comment. Ms. Theresa Rankin of BrainLine.org and BrainLineMilitary.org took the opportunity to advise MFRC members that all of the opportunities and services briefed at Council sessions could be posted on the BrainLine websites and included in their webcasts. Additionally, she committed to providing a list of recommendations for session topics to Cmdr. Hoegel for the consideration of the Council members.

Closing Remarks

Mrs. Wright thanked everyone for their time and attendance, whereupon she adjourned the meeting at 3:16 p.m.

Submitted by:

Certified by:

Peter Hoegel Jr.

Jessica L. Wright

Commander, United States Navy

Under Secretary of Defense

DFO, Military Family Readiness Council

for Personnel and Readiness

Chair, Military Family Readiness Council

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.