

**Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report
to the Secretary of Defense
and the Congressional Defense Committees
on the Department of Defense
Military Family Readiness Council**



Fiscal Year 2016

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ARNG	Army National Guard
ANG	Air National Guard
CAEL	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
CDP	Child Development Program
DHA	Defense Health Agency
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
DSLO	Defense State Liaison Office
ECHO	Extended Care Health Option
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
FERS	Federal Employees Retirement System
FMEAP	Family Member Employment Assistance Program
FACAT	Family Advocacy Command Assistance Team
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accounting Office
IQR	Interquartile Range
MCO	Marine Corps Order
MFLN	Military Families Learning Network
MFRC	Military Family Readiness Council
MGIB	Montgomery G.I. Bill
MyCAA	My Career Advancement Account Program
NAL	Nurse Advice Line
NAVADMIN	Naval Administrative Message
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NGB	National Guard Bureau
OASD(HA)	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)
OCJCS	Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
ODASD (MC&FP)	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy
ODASD(MPP)	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy
OPNAV	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
OSD	Office of Secretary of Defense
OSN	Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs
P&R	Personnel and Readiness
SECNAV	Secretary of the Navy
SECO	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities
STOMP	Specialized Training for Military Parents
TA	Tuition Assistance
TAP	Transition Assistance Program

TFK	TRICARE for Kids
TSP	Thrift Savings Plan
TVPO	Transition to Veterans Program Office
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USD (P&R)	Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
USNR	United States Navy Reserve
VOSB	Veterans Online Shopping Benefit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is provided in accordance with requirements set forth in section 1781a of title 10, U.S. Code (U.S.C.) which requires the Department of Defense (DoD) Military Family Readiness Council (MFRC) (hereafter called “the Council”) to submit an annual report to the Secretary of Defense and to the Congressional Defense Committees with assessments and recommendations regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of military family readiness programs and activities.

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the Council held two meetings of the full Council and two meetings to prepare new Council members to participate in Council activities and deliberations.

On June 16, 2016, the Council hosted an administrative preparatory meeting to provide new Council members with background and baseline information, basic orientation information and information regarding MFRC Council rules, regulations and procedures.

Following this preparatory meeting, a meeting of the full Council was held which focused on topics selected for assessment during FY2016: Financial Readiness and Healthcare Readiness. Keynote speakers provided three briefings including (1) the financial readiness of military members and spouses; (2) financial readiness force education; and (3) military pediatric health care which included studies being conducted to gain a greater understanding of the medically-complex conditions of military children with special needs, gaps in the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefit and improvements made in TRICARE direct services.

Full text of related public submissions and meeting minutes for the June 16, 2016 meeting are posted online on the DoD Military Family Readiness Council webpage: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc>.

On September 14, 2016, the Council held its second preparatory meeting and meeting of the full Council for the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations regarding all focus areas considered by Council members during FY2016:

- Financial Readiness
- Healthcare Readiness: Care for Children Using the Military Health System
- Prevention and Response to Domestic Abuse and Child Abuse and Neglect
- Military Community Outreach provided by Military OneSource
- State Liaison to Inform State Policies and Legislation Supporting Military Personnel and Families
- Implications of Force of the Future Initiatives on Military Families
- Impact of Constrained Budgets on Support Programs for the Reserve Component
- Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships to Support Military Families

As a result of Council deliberations, the Council made six FY2016 Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and proposed four FY2017 Focus Areas.

FY2016 Recommendations

1. Continue the standardization of the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) across all Military Services and strengthen related service delivery components of health care for family members with special needs.
2. Explore use of community collaboratives to gain greater access to a broad range of military family readiness resources, services and expertise needed by Service and family members.
3. Consider opening the aperture of Tuition Assistance (TA) for use by both Service members and spouses who want to pursue professional licensing and technical certifications.
4. Promote state policy to support the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect by civilian authorities to the military while continuing to pursue greater child abuse and neglect prevention efforts.
5. Support the Veterans Online Shopping Benefit (VOSB).
6. Continue efforts to make Military OneSource (including its integrated social media channels) our central information dissemination point through which we focus and funnel information to those in need and to our youngest members of the Force and their families.

FY2017 Focus Areas

1. EFMP, Health Care and Special Education Components of services which support special needs families
2. Educational Benefits for Service and Family Members
3. Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) Update Briefing on DoD's Top Ten Mobile Military Lifestyle Issues and Veterans Employment Protections
4. Veterans Online Shopping Benefit (VOSB) Update Briefing, including other viable resourcing options that can provide needed support for military family support programs and services.

1. INTRODUCTION

The DoD Military Family Readiness Council (MFRC) (hereafter referred to as the "Council") was established in November 2008 under the provisions of section 1781a of title 10, U.S.C. and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972. The Council is a congressionally

mandated, non-discretionary Federal Advisory Committee sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD). The Council is required to:

- (1) Review and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding the policy and plans supporting military family readiness;
- (2) Monitor requirements for the support of military family readiness by DoD; and
- (3) Evaluate and assess the effectiveness of DoD military family readiness programs and activities.

To carry out this mission, the Council includes 18 members (Appendix A) as required by specific requirements for a balanced, diverse membership which includes active and reserve component officer and enlisted Servicemembers; spouses and parents from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and the National Guard; representatives from community-based military support organizations; and military family readiness subject matter experts from DoD and the Military Services. Positions rotate every 2-3 years and are renewed annually.

Per section 1781a of title 10, U.S.C., the Council is required to submit an annual report to the Secretary of Defense and to the Congressional Defense Committees, to include:

- (1) An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of DoD military family readiness programs and activities during the preceding fiscal year in meeting the needs and requirements of military families; and
- (2) Recommendations on actions to be taken to improve the capability of DoD military family readiness programs and activities to meet the needs and requirements of military families, including actions relating to the allocation of funding and other resources to and among such programs and activities.

2. COUNCIL ACTIVITIES IN FY 2016

2-1. Council Activities

Meetings: The Council is required to meet at least twice a year. During FY2016, the Council met on June 16, 2016 and September 14, 2016. Both meetings were held at the Pentagon Library & Conference Center in Washington, D.C. Three objectives were set to guide FY2016 Council proceedings:

- Review new information and updates from the Military Services and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) regarding military family readiness efforts;
- Discuss issues affecting military family readiness; and
- Draft recommendations from the Council for the Secretary of Defense which are related to military family readiness.

As required by policy and law, MFRC Council meetings are open meetings. In order to facilitate maximum transparency, the Council (1) publishes a Federal Registry Notice to invite members of the public to attend and observe its meetings (subject to space availability); and (2) maintains an MFRC webpage within the Military OneSource enclave (<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc>) where Council membership, activities, meeting information, annual recommendations and reports are archived and accessible.

A full range of information and resources are published on the Council's webpage to keep Council members and the public educated, informed and updated on military family readiness plans, policies, programs and initiatives under review and consideration by the Council.

2-2. Review of Recent Policy Changes

Each year, the Council monitors and reviews DoD and Service-level policies and regulations through annual policy updates and follow-on discussions at Council meetings.

During its June 16, 2016 Council meeting, the Military Services reported a total of 11 new or updated policies pertaining to military family readiness. Brief summaries of policy changes are provided in Appendix B¹. The Council reviewed these summaries and did not request additional information or briefings on these policies.

2-3. Review of Major Projects and Initiatives

The Council is required to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of military family readiness programs and DoD activities which meet the needs and requirements of military families. During the June 16, 2016 meeting, the Council received detailed briefings on two focus areas and 14 projects and initiatives related to Financial Readiness and Health Readiness.

Briefing #1:

Financial Conditions of Military Family Members and Spouses: Ms. Kimberly Williams and Ms. Malukah Dorvil from the Defense Manpower Data Center's (DMDC) Research, Surveys and Statistics Center briefed the Council on results from the 2013-2014 Status of the Force Surveys and the 2014-2015 Surveys of Military Spouses. Key information provided during their briefings included the following:

Financial conditions generally improved for active-duty Servicemembers and spouses while holding steady for Reserve Component members and spouses compared to previous year results.

A lower percentage of active-duty Servicemembers and their spouses reported experiencing financial problems than in the previous decade.

¹ Appendix B only includes the policy changes that were finalized and published during FY2016.

- Seventy-one percent of active duty Servicemembers and 72 percent of active duty spouses reported a “comfortable” financial condition compared to only 63 percent and 62 percent, respectively, in 2006.
- Seventeen percent of both active duty Servicemembers and active duty spouses reported experiencing specific financial problems. Thirty percent of Reserve Component Servicemembers reported experiencing specific financial problems.
- Eighty-six percent of active duty Servicemembers and 83 percent of active duty spouses indicated they have a savings habit with almost 50 percent of both groups reporting they save regularly each month.
- Higher percentages of active duty Servicemembers reported having specific financial goals compared to the same group between 2006 and 2012.
- Fifty-two percent of active duty Servicemembers indicated they contribute to their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

The next survey of Reserve Component Servicemembers will be administered during the summer of 2016, while the next survey of Reserve Component spouses will occur during the fall of 2016. The next survey of active duty Servicemembers will occur in the fall of 2016, while the next survey of active duty spouses will occur in early 2017. Servicemember surveys will include a new section designed to assess financial literacy.

Much of the Council’s discussion on this briefing centered on what the data actually indicated about the financial status of the Force, both in terms of the generalizability of the results, and whether or not financial readiness is actually being improved.

The Council agreed the data could only indicate that there is a positive trend in relation to perceptions of financial readiness. In order to strengthen the validity of the study, some of the findings, such as the percentage of those reporting they contributed to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), will be compared to the actual percentage of contributors to see how survey results align.

Then Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Cody recommended Council members consider how recent environmental factors, such as multiple deployments and the increased pay they provide, may have impacted survey results as much or more than programs undertaken by member organizations.

An information paper from DMDC entitled “Effects of Deployments on Reserve Component Members” (posted on the MFRC webpage <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc> (See June 16, 2016 Meeting Minutes)) partially addresses these issues.

Subsequent to the June 16, 2016 Council meeting, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Personnel Policy) (ODASD(MPP)) provided actual TSP data that showed a +4.7% growth in unique Active Component TSP participants (+29,833 individuals) between Sep 2013 and Mar 2016. For comparison purposes, the TSP participant rate for federal

civilian employees in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) is almost 90 percent. Federal civilians receive matching TSP contributions. Military members are not currently eligible to receive matching TSP contributions. However, those who will be covered under the new Blended Retirement System will become eligible to receive matching government contributions.

Community outreach to military spouses and force education for Servicemembers regarding the Blended Retirement System benefit and matching contributions will become a primary focus for DoD and important issue in 2017.

Briefing #2:

Financial Readiness and Force Education: Ms. Diana Banks, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training (DASD(FE&T)), provided an update on financial education programs. Key points of her briefing were as follows:

- Title 10 U.S. Code Section 992 directs financial education and counseling for Servicemembers and their families. The Department of Defense implements this through DoD Instruction 1342.22, “Military Family Readiness.” The Services deliver resources and support to Servicemembers and their families to enhance financial literacy and sustain financial readiness. Collaboration at all levels with community stakeholders is vital to mission success.
- Developed in conjunction with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the new pillars of financial readiness will underpin Department of Defense financial readiness activity. Financial readiness pillars include: Manage, Save and Invest, Protect, and Future Planning.
- The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2016 established a new Blended Retirement System and requires training at unique touchpoints across the military lifecycle. In addition to providing an annuity for those who retire after 20 years, as well as a retention bonus, the Blended Retirement System mirrors a civilian-style 401(k), allowing Servicemembers to take their Thrift Savings Plan contributions with them regardless of when they leave military service.
- Interactive online training and basic information on the Blended Retirement System is now available on Military OneSource for Service and family members (http://www.militaryonesource.mil/footer?content_id=290760). A specific course tailored to Servicemembers who must decide whether or not to opt-in to the new system will be available in Spring 2017.

Council members discussed the need to ensure spouses are appropriately notified of available training on the Blended Retirement System and encouraged to access information through Military OneSource.

Briefing #3:

Military Health Care Pediatrics Update: Ms. Theresa Hart, Perinatal, Pediatrics and Special Medical Programs Program Manager, briefed the Council on behalf of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (OASD(HA)). Key points of her briefing included:

- As part of the FY2017 Omnibus Bill, Health Affairs submitted preventative services legislation that would align preventative care with Affordable Care Act standards for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries. Additionally, significant regulatory revision proposals are being finalized, which remove administrative barriers and expand access to mental health and substance abuse disorder benefits.
- Several new programs are being piloted that impact TRICARE beneficiaries.
 - The TeleMental Health Pilot, launched with Johns Hopkins United States Family Health Plans, allows adult and pediatric beneficiaries to receive virtual behavioral health care at a patient's location.
 - The Urgent Care Pilot, directed by the FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act, is a three-year pilot, which provides two urgent care visits per year without pre-authorization for all TRICARE Prime and Prime Remote beneficiaries.
 - A third program, the Laboratory Developed Test Demonstration, is a three-year program started in 2014 that allows the Defense Health Agency to review and approve for coverage non-United States Food and Drug Administration-approved laboratory testing to include such things as Prenatal Cystic Fibrosis Carrier and BRCA (breast cancer gene) screenings.
- Several Behavioral Health Improvements have been made:
 - The Autism Care Demonstration, which consolidated three autism programs into one, was created to ensure a consistent benefit for all beneficiaries to include all autism care under the catastrophic cap, reducing the financial burden on families.
 - A referral and authorization are no longer required for the first eight outpatient self-referred visits per fiscal year.
 - Outpatient psychotherapy is covered for up to two sessions per week in any combination of individual or family sessions.
 - Non-surgical treatment for gender dysphoria is now covered.

- There is now mental health and substance abuse disorder parity with medical and surgical benefits in TRICARE.
- The Tri-Service Patient-Centered Medical Home Advisory Board improved wait time for acute pediatric appointments in direct care. Primary care wait times for acute medical needs improved 34 percent, and the variance in medical treatment facility performance experienced a 45 percent improvement since August 2014.
- Beneficiaries have greater access to services than ever before. Twenty-four percent more appointments for acute needs were available every duty day between January and March 2016 than were available before appointment optimization was implemented. The Services are extending operating hours in some treatment facilities, while also utilizing enhanced access tools, such as Secure Messaging to Care Providers and Nurse Advice Lines. Additionally, a new referral policy to be implemented in calendar year 2016 will provide enrollees with a specialty appointment date and time before they leave the medical treatment facility or within 24 hours.
- TRICARE is focusing efforts on ensuring a higher standard of care for military children. Five studies are being conducted to gain greater understanding of military children and their unique needs. The results of these studies will assist Health Affairs in meeting the needs of military children, especially those with medically-complex conditions. Additionally, Health Affairs is working with TRICARE Managed Care support contractors to streamline the process for moving beneficiaries from one region to another to ensure continuity of care.
- The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission conducted a survey to identify gaps in TRICARE's Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefits. This survey clearly showed that Health Affairs must identify services provided under state waivers, analyze Medicaid Level of Care determinations and assessment tools to determine institutional level of care eligibility, and investigate requirements to increase respite care. Many internal and external partners will assist in meeting these goals.

Council members discussed several topics in depth. First, TRICARE Prime users are now authorized two referral-free urgent care visits per year as part of the Urgent Care Pilot. Then MFRC Chairman Peter Levine and Ms. Theresa Hart conversed over the differences between the TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Standard insurance policies and why the Urgent Care Pilot was being tested with TRICARE Prime users.

A second topic of concern, raised by Council member Dr. David Rubin, is the data collected in the various Health Affairs surveys and what can actually be inferred from the data. He requested specific data from Ms. Hart regarding beneficiary wait times, the number of unique users of the Nurse Advice Line, users who were considered outliers in access studies, and those

who were eligible for but had not used TRICARE's Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefits.

The third topic raised by Council members was the need for Health Affairs to look into the use of certain medications, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) medications, among military children, and how and if that use impacted their ability to later join the military.

Council members agreed that it is important to provide the best possible care for Servicemembers and their families. Following this briefing, Health Affairs provided additional information in response to Council member questions and requests. This information is available as part of the June 2016 Meeting Minutes which are posted on the MFRC Council webpage: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc>.

2-4. Review of Public Comments

As part of its Federal Register Notices to the public regarding upcoming MFRC meetings, DoD invites the public and interested groups to submit written statements to the Council for its review and consideration at any time or in response to stated agendas which are published as part of Federal Register Notices. In FY 2016, the Council received six submissions which are summarized below:

- Submission by Ms. Megan O'Day and Ms. Mary Herrera: Recommends that instead of raising fees, TRICARE should implement specific process improvements which would save money.
- Submission by Mr. Jeremy Hilton: Urged the Council to recommend implementation of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission recommendations regarding the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefit.
- Submission by Mr. Jeremy Hilton: Recommends that OSD and Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OCJCS) leaders provide oversight until policies are in place and are being executed appropriately with regard to the support needed by Exceptional Family Members. Keeping EFMP as a focus area for the Military Family Readiness Council is also recommended.
- Submission by Karen Driscoll: Recommends that the MFRC Council recommend to the Secretary of Defense that TRICARE roll back Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) rate cuts to restore lost access to ABA services that are occurring at many of our nation's most important military facilities and to assure that children who have been diagnosed with autism will receive the care and treatment they deserve.
- Submission by Wendy Kruse on behalf of the Military Special Needs Network: Requests corrections by the Defense Health Agency (DHA) for the record as related to briefer misstatements to MFRC at the June 16 2016 meeting and long term engagement and leadership by the MFRC Council regarding EFM families. She also recommends that the Secretary of Defense implement the Military Compensation and Retirement

Modernization Commission (MCRMC) ECHO recommendation to update benefits to meet the actual needs of families by aligning the program with state Medicaid Waiver Programs.

- Submission by Kara Tollett Oakley on behalf of the TRICARE for Kids (TFK) Coalition: Recommends the MFRC Council continue its leadership and engagement on Exceptional Family Member matters. Specifically, she requests that the Secretary of Defense make a statement that acknowledges the importance of pediatric care for military children and the necessity of updating the Council and stakeholders on actions taken to date and planned to specifically address the 31 findings of the TFK/Section 735 Report and related questions.

Council members acknowledge the value of written submissions from the public and remain committed to reviewing and assessing input and recommendations from constituents which are associated with topics under review by the Council each fiscal year.

3. COUNCIL FY2016 RECOMMENDATIONS & 2017 FOCUS AREAS

After considerable discussion of issues brought before the Council during FY2016, review of written submissions, and evaluation of family readiness programs, policies and initiatives, the Council developed the following six FY2016 recommendations for the Secretary of Defense:

- **Continue the standardization of the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) across all Military Services and strengthen related service delivery components of health care for family members with special needs.**

The Council recommended that MFRC continue to oversee and review programs and services that support military families with special needs as a high priority issue. Special emphasis needs to be placed on health and educational services needed by both children and adults with special needs.

Specifically, the Council requests that the Department of Defense:

- a. Take necessary actions to break down barriers which limit availability and access to needed services and support, especially specialty health care, so continuity of service can be provided as families move to new duty locations. Council members highlighted exceptional family member needs for:
 - 1) Clarification regarding the interplay between Medicaid, TRICARE and ECHO services.
 - 2) More choices in terms of health care options and providers.

- 3) Qualified specialty care providers (including Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapists and others) who are readily available at or near their duty locations.
 - b. Allow use of prior authorizations for support services once the family member reaches the determination for EFMP/ECHO. Such authorizations can become a time critical health care and cost savings issue during military reassignments and relocations across state lines.
 - c. Address the recommendations in the TRICARE for Kids Coalition Report in a timely fashion.
- **Explore use of community collaboratives to gain greater access to a broad range of military family readiness resources, services and expertise needed by Service and family members.**

The Council discussed the fact that for many years, the Department of Defense has successfully used public-private partnerships to fill gaps in family support and service delivery needed by military families. Examples include: better health care access, tuition assistance, and professional credentialing. Members of MFRC feel strongly that such community capacity building should continue and expand across the spectrum of military family support, especially with regard to issues impacted by military relocations.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Address mobility and portability areas of concern that support relocating military Servicemembers and families, especially specialty health care and educational needs for EFMP families; education portability for children and adults; and employment opportunities, professional licensing and credentials needed to work across state lines.
 - b. Take advantage of the good work that states and other direct service organizations are doing.
- **Consider opening the aperture of Tuition Assistance (TA) for use by both Servicemembers and spouses who want to pursue professional licensing and technical certifications.**

Recognizing that the Military Services recruit the member and retain the family, Council members feel it is important for the Department of Defense to further examine educational benefits and gain a deeper understanding of how such benefits affect the Servicemember, spouse, family as a whole, as well as the readiness of the Force.

Army representatives on the Council reported that over the past six years, the Army found that by providing educational benefits that can be used to pursue technical certification opportunities, they can reduce unemployment compensation by millions of dollars when Servicemembers separate from Military Service – a significant cost savings for the Army and an attractive incentive for new recruits.

By reducing barriers to eligibility for TA and allowing it to be used for technical certifications by both Servicemembers and spouses, the Department of Defense could show the priority it places on recruiting and retaining high quality personnel and strong families.

The Council feels the educational benefits issue should remain a high priority for MFRC in FY2017. Additionally, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Ensure all DoD Components work together to better adjust and improve educational benefits for the entire military family, with consistency across DoD.
 - b. Assess the cost and benefit of expanding educational opportunities by applying the principle of transferability between eligible Servicemembers and their family members.
 - c. Monitor Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) progress on licensure portability issues.
- **Promote state policy to support the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect by civilian authorities to the military while continuing to pursue greater child abuse and neglect prevention efforts.**

For many years, the Department of Defense has worked hard to reduce the rate of child abuse and neglect. In recent years, child abuse rates have remained stable but the rate of child neglect has increased. Prevention initiatives are key to reducing incident rates and keeping them low. Those that focus on preserving families and developing parenting skills, coping skills, and resiliency are showing the most positive impacts.

In order to continue making progress, the Department of Defense knows that it must continue to work on the issue of reporting. DoD acknowledges that there are still significant barriers that prevent civilian authorities from reporting military child abuse and neglect cases to military authorities. While much progress has been made, military officials know that many more cases go unreported. Thus, more work needs to be done to strengthen working relationships and communications between military and civilian sectors.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Track progress on the FY2017 NDAA proposal with regard to requirements for child welfare agencies in the states to also report abuse and neglect cases involving Servicemembers and their families to military authorities.
- b. Track progress on the development of a universal DoD parenting plan to prevent child abuse and neglect.

c. Focus on preservation of the Force and family, prevention vs. response, the life skills needed to cope, and resiliency.

- **Support the Veterans Online Shopping Benefit (VOSB).**

Over the past decade, the Military Services have used resale profits from their Military Exchanges to fund installation services such as community pools, child and youth centers, and other family support services not covered by appropriated funds. As the Military Services have reduced in size, patronage at the Exchanges has also scaled down. This has resulted in budgeting shortfalls to pay for a wide range of non-appropriated fund base services.

One strategy for providing needed funds to continue base services for military personnel and families is a current proposal to establish a Veterans Online Shopping Benefit (VOSB), which would be open to all veterans with honorable discharges, thus increasing the population that is eligible to make purchases from Military Exchanges.

The Council was cautioned that this is a complex issue that both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs are addressing. It is unclear if a legislative change would be required to allow the VOSB concept to be enacted and if all resale profits from VOSB sales would funnel back to base level personnel and family support programs. Council members do not want to see services for families cut on base.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Support the Veterans Online Shopping Benefit.
- b. Ensure that Morale, Welfare and Recreation and family support services maintain their funding levels.

- **Continue efforts to make Military OneSource (including its integrated social media channels) our central information dissemination point through which we focus and funnel information to those in need and to our youngest members of the Force and their families.**

Military OneSource was designed to be the primary source for channeling accurate, trustworthy, timely information to Service members and their families on resources that are available to support their current and evolving needs. It is especially important that Millennials and other targeted audiences have awareness and access to this information from an accurate and reliable source so they can apply it and further share it with their personal and professional networks.

The Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Take necessary steps to expand the use of Military OneSource to ensure that it is the first link that appears in search engines, with the goal being to:

- 1) Maximize community outreach, Servicemember and family engagement, and sharing of information and referrals to DoD and Military Services programs, services and community partnerships designed to strengthen and support military families.
- 2) Increase engagement with family support professionals from all Military Services to help post and promote their programs, services and community partnerships within the Military OneSource enclave, maximizing the accuracy and reliability of information provided and enhancing on-going connections to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and their families.

FY2017 Focus Areas

Members of the MFRC Council recommended the following Focus Areas for FY2017.

1. EFMP, health care and special education components of services which support special needs families.

- a. With regard to Medicaid Waiver Services provided by TRICARE and ECHO:
 - 1) Brief the Council on the synergies between these programs, including registration processes and transitions between military- and state-provided programs and services.
 - 2) Promote the availability of accurate and reliable information through Military OneSource, so that all users can be better educated and kept informed.
- b. Identify and share promising practices (e.g. special education, specialty health care, respite care, Specialized Training for Military Parents (STOMP)).
- c. Update the Council on progress made with regard to short-term EFMP and related health care and special education program objectives, initiatives, and pilots, which feed into the more comprehensive system-wide improvement process, including target start- and end-dates.

2. Educational Benefits for Service and Family Members

- a. Determine how educational benefits impact the entire military family and force readiness.
- b. Explore eligibility requirements for the Tuition Assistance (TA), Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB), and My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) programs and resources. Consider integrating a transferability clause in all such programs to ensure the ability to share educational benefits between Servicemembers and their family members to maximize their recruitment, readiness and retention.

3. Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) Update Briefing on DoD's Top Ten Military Lifestyle Issues and Veterans Employment Protections

- a. Request a DSLO briefing on the DoD Top Ten Mobile Lifestyle Issues and progress made on each.
- b. Focus on issues that affect families.
- c. Request a briefing on employment protections for veterans and National Guardsmen who are on state-only activations.

4. Veterans Online Shopping Benefit (VOSB) Update Briefing, including other viable resourcing options that can provide needed support for military family support programs and services.

- a. Keep the Council informed about the status of VOSB.
- b. Since the Defense Resale System is much larger than VOSB, explore additional modernization efforts that potentially can provide funding to military family support programs.

5. CONCLUSION

The Military Family Readiness Council remains committed to reviewing, evaluating and monitoring military family readiness programs, policies, plans and initiatives -- particularly those that have the greatest potential for producing positive impacts on the daily lives of Service and family members. Council members recognize that through continued community dialogue and on-going assessment of community needs and available resources, needed improvements can be made which will help keep military families strong and provide the support services that are needed throughout the mobile military lifecycle.

APPENDIX A:

Members of the Military Family Readiness Council

Membership as of the end of FY2016

MFRC Chair: Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)

Honorable Peter Levine, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Alternate Chair: Ms. Stephanie Barna, Performing the Duties of the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Service member Representatives from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps

Lieutenant General Gwen Bingham, Commander, U.S. Army Installation Management Command and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management, U.S. Army
Read Admiral (Lower Half) Ann Burkhardt, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office (N17), U.S. Navy

Brigadier General Kathleen Cook, Director of Air Force Services, U.S. Air Force
Brigadier General Burke W. Whitman, Director, Marine and Family Programs, U.S. Marine Corps

Representative of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard

Brigadier General Ivan Denton, Director, Air National Guard

Director of the Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs

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

Senior Enlisted Advisors of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps

Two of these members may be selected from among the spouses of the Senior Enlisted Advisors

Daniel Dailey, Sergeant Major of the Army, U.S. Army
Michael Stevens, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, U.S. Navy
James A. Cody, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, U.S. Air Force
Ms. Andrea Smith-Green, Spouse of the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps

Spouses or Parents of Members of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corp

Two from the Active Component and two from the Reserve Component

Ms. Laura Conley, U.S. Army National Guard Spouse
Ms. Chaun (Candy) Young, U.S. Navy Reserve Spouse
Ms. Michelle Padgett, U.S. Air Force Active Duty Spouse
Ms. Christina Myers, U.S. Marine Corps Active Duty Spouse

Representatives of Military Family Support Organizations

Ms. Karen Ruedisueli, National Military Family Association

Dr. David Rubin, Children's Hospital Association

Dr. Mary Keller, Military Child Education Coalition

**APPENDIX B:
MAJOR POLICY CHANGES PERTAINING TO MILITARY FAMILY
READINESS IN FY2016 (October 2015- September 2016)**

Policy Change	Summary
A. Military Services	Policy Change Summary
1. Army	Army Policy Change Summary
No policy updates.	No Summary
2. Marine Corps	Marine Corps Policy Change Summary
Transition Readiness Program (MCO 1700.31; 30 Dec 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Marine Corps Order was developed due to cancellation of MCO P1700.24B. The program name was changed from the Transition Assistance Management Program to the Transition Readiness Program. This order provides policy designed to prepare Marines for their transition from military to civilian life. It also provides Marines and their families with the tools and resources needed to meet Department of Defense directed Career Readiness Standards. Finally, it defines program elements of Marine for Life Cycle Transition Services, Career Services and Advising, and Transition Readiness Seminars.
Marine Corps Information and Referral Program with Relocation Services (MCO 1754.10A; 06 Mar 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Marine Corps Order canceled MCO 1754.12 and MCO 1754.10. The program name was changed to include relocation services. This order revision provides policy on Information & Referral Services. I&R Services are the central connector between military and community resources, and the primary point of contact for all mandatory relocation assistance services on an installation. Title 10 relocation services include the provision of Settling In Services, Permanent Change of Station and Outside the Continental United States workshops, quarterly updates to the Military Installations website, and Sponsorship Training.
Marine Corps Recreation Programs (MCO 1700.39; 21 Mar 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a Joint Order between Marine and Family Programs Division, Semper Fit and Recreation Branch, and the non-appropriated fund Business and Support Services Division. It provides updated policy and standards for the safe and effective management, operation, and administration of Marine Corps Recreation Programs and Commercial Recreation at the Installation level.
Military and Family Life Counselor Programs (MCBul 1700; 04 Apr 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This document formalizes the relationship between Marine Corps Community Services non-medical counselors and Department of Defense Military and Family Life Counselors.

Policy Change	Summary
Marine Corps Community Counseling Program (MCO 1754.14; 04 Apr 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the initial Marine Corps Order which provides policy for the Community Counseling Program. It provides policy on prevention based education, proper assessment, treatment, and, when indicated, referrals to appropriate agencies.
3. U.S. Navy	U.S. Navy Policy Change Summary
Skillbridge Employment Skills Training Program (NAVADMIN 222/15; 17 Sep 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This NAVADMIN serves as interim policy guidance and provides specific information and eligibility requirements for participation in the Department of Defense (DoD) Skillbridge Voluntary Employment Skills Training Program.
Domestic Violence Incident Court-Consequent Command Actions (NAVADMIN 004/16; 05 Jan 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This NAVADMIN provides amplifying information for NAVADMIN 037/15, Navy Domestic Violence Incident Count and Consequent Command Action (DVIC-CCA) collection and reporting plan.
Command Family Readiness Program (OPNAVINST 1754.8; 23 Nov 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This instruction establishes policy for standardized implementation of Navy's Command Family Readiness Program.
Transitional Compensation for Abused Dependents (OPNAVINST 1750.3A; 11 May 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This instruction amplifies procedures for payment of monthly transitional compensation to dependents of members of the Navy separated for dependent abuse and implements requirements of the DoD 7000.14R, Volume 7b, Chapter 60: Department of Defense Financial Management Regulations, February 2015; DoD Instruction 1342.24: Transitional Compensation for Abused Dependents, 23 May 1995; ASN (M&RA) Memo, Delegation of Authority for Transitional Compensation for Abused Dependents, 2 April 2015; and ASN (M&RA) Memo, Delegation of Authority for Transitional Compensation for Abused Dependents, 21 April 2014.
4. Air Force	Air Force Policy Change Summary
Airman and Family Readiness Centers (AFI36-3009; 18 Feb 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By Order of the Secretary of the Air Force, this AF Guidance Memorandum (AFGM) immediately changes AFI 36-3009, Airman and Family Readiness Centers. It implements a change to current processes by mandating improvements to the Transition Assistance Program per Directive-type Memorandum (DTM) 12-007 – "Implementation of Mandatory Transition Assistance Program Participation for Eligible Service Members". This DTM is based on guidance and requirements set forth in the Veteran Opportunity to Work Act (VOW Act) and the Veteran's Employment Initiative (VEI). Compliance with this publication is mandatory. To the extent its directions

Policy Change	Summary
	<p>are inconsistent with other Air Force publications, the information herein prevails, in accordance with AFI 33-360, <i>Publications and Forms Management</i>. In collaboration with the Chief of the Air Force Reserve (AF/RE) and the Director of the Air National Guard (NGB/CF), the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1) develops policy for Airman and Family Readiness Centers.</p>
<p>Child and Youth Programs (AFI 34-144; 02 March 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This instruction updates policy, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes procedures for establishing and implementing Air Force Child and Youth Programs. This update combined the separate instructions for Child Development Centers (CDC), Family Child Care (FCC) Programs, Youth Programs (YP) and Air Force Manuals (AFMANs) for School-Age Care (SAC) and Youth Sports.
<p>School Facilities Supporting Compulsory Child Education on Air Force Installations (AFGM2016_36-01; 11 Apr 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By Order of the Secretary of the Air Force, this Guidance Memorandum (GM) immediately implements policy and procedures when receiving a request from a state or local municipality, local education agency (LEA), or other state authorized activity, to locate a new non-Department of Defense (DOD) public school or maintain an existing non-DOD public school on an AF installation. It details the coordination requirements of installations prior to entering into any real property actions on AF installations. This GM applies to all installations under the purview of AF policies on real property matters. In collaboration with the Chief of the Air Force Reserve (AF/RE) and the Director of the Air National Guard (NGB/CF), the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1) develops policy for Airman and Family Readiness Centers. To the extent its directions are inconsistent with other Air Force publications, the information herein prevails, in accordance with AFI 33-360, <i>Publications and Forms Management</i>.
<p>5. National Guard Bureau</p>	<p>National Guard Bureau Policy Change Summary</p>
<p>No policy updates</p>	<p>No Summary</p>
<p>B. Office of Secretary of Defense</p>	<p>Policy Change Summary</p>
<p>No policy updates</p>	<p>No Summary</p>