

Military Family Readiness Council Meeting Minutes
The Pentagon Conference Center, Room B6
June 16, 2016
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Members Attending:

Office of the Secretary of Defense:

Mr. Peter Levine, Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)
Ms. Barbara Thompson, 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 Duty Spouse

Navy:

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Ann Burkhardt, USN, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office (N17)

Air Force:

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Cody
Ms. Michelle Padgett, U.S. Air Force Active Duty Spouse

National Guard Bureau:

Brigadier General Ivan Denton, Director, Manpower and Personnel (J1), National Guard Bureau

Military Family Organizations:

Ms. Karen Ruedisueli, National Military Family Association
Dr. Mary Keller, Ph. D., Military Child Education Coalition
Dr. David Ruben, M.D., Children's Hospital Alliance

Representatives of Members Attending:

Army:

Ms. Carla Coulson, representing Installation Management Command, and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management
Sergeant Major Donald Rose, representing Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey

USMC:

Ms. Marie Balocki, representing Major General Burke Whitman, Director, Marine and Family Programs

Air Force:

Mr. H. L. Larry, representing Brigadier General Lenny Richoux, Director, Air Force Services

Also Present:

Ms. Stephanie Barna, Performing the Duties of Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)

Dr. Karen Guice, M.D., Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

Mr. Charles Milam, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

Mr. Ronald Keohane, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy)

Ms. Diana Banks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Education and Training)

Ms. Patricia Mulcahy, Office of the DASD for Military Personnel Policy

Lt Col Esther Sablan, National Guard Bureau

Ms. Stacy Barnes, Office of the DASD for Reserve Integration, (OASD/M&RA)

Public Submissions:

Public submissions received in advance of the June 16, 2016 meeting are contained in Enclosure 1.

Proceedings of the Meeting:

On Thursday, June 16, 2016, the Military Family Readiness Council (Council) meeting was held at the Pentagon Conference Center. The purpose of this meeting was to review public submissions, policy updates, and receive informational briefings.

A full transcript of the meeting and attendance of members and advisers present are available.

Ms. Betsy Graham, alternate Designated Federal Officer, opened the meeting by welcoming Council members, advisers, and public guests. She then provided 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. Next, she informed them the Council could be reached via email at osd.pentagon.ousd-p-r.mbx.family-readiness-council@mail.mil, via the web at www.militaryonesource.mil/those-who-support-mfrc, or via mail at Office of Family Readiness Policy, Attention: Military Family Readiness Council, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Suite 3G15, Alexandria, VA 22350-2300. Following a review of the meeting agenda, Ms. Graham concluded administrative remarks and introduced the Chairman, Mr. Peter Levine, Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Mr. Levine welcomed everyone to the 15th session of the Council and thanked them for their service and their critically important work. He expressed his belief that the Department of Defense must recognize the vital support that military families provide to the men and women in uniform, and the Department must also provide support to military families in every way it can. To that end, the day's session would investigate financial and healthcare readiness and what the Department was doing to strengthen military family readiness in these two critical areas. After his opening comments, Mr. Levine turned the floor over to Ms. Graham to review previous Council business.

Council business review and discussion:

Two business topics, public submissions and policy changes since the last session were reviewed by the Council. Ms. Graham outlined two submissions resulting from the meeting announcement on the Federal Register. The first public submission, from Ms. Mary Herrera, recommended that instead of raising fees, TRICARE should implement specific process improvements which would save money. The second public submission, from 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 benefit. Ms. Graham then allowed a few minutes for Council members to read an overview of the following policy changes within the Services since the October 2015 meeting:

- MCO 1700.31, "Transition Readiness Program," published Dec. 30, 2015
- MCO 1754.10A, "Marine Corps Information and Referral Program with Relocation Services," published March 6, 2016
- MCO 1700.39, "Marine Corps Recreation Programs," published March 21, 2016
- MCBul 1700, "Military and Family Life Counselor Program," published April 4, 2016
- MCO 1754.14, "Marine Corps Community Counseling Program," published April 4, 2016
- NAVADMIN 222/15, "Skillbridge Employment Skills Training Program," published September 17, 2015
- NAVADMIN 004/16, "Domestic Violence Incident Court-Consequent Command Actions," published January 5, 2016
- OPNAVINST 1750.3A, "Transitional Compensation for Abused Dependents" published May 11, 2016
- AFI36-3009, "Airman and Family Readiness Centers" published February 18, 2016
- AFGM2016_36-01, "School Facilities Supporting Compulsory Child Education on Air Force Installations" published April 11, 2016
- AFI34-144, "Child and Youth Programs," published March 2, 2016

Presentations to the Council:

Financial Conditions of Military Members/Spouses: Results from the 2013-2014 Status of the Force Surveys and the 2014-2015 Surveys of Military Spouses

Ms. Kimberly Williams and Ms. Malikah Dorvil from the Defense Manpower Data Center's Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center briefed the Council on the results from the 2013-2014 Status of the Force Surveys and the 2014-2015 Surveys of Military Spouses. The key points of their briefing were as follows: Financial conditions generally improved for active-duty Service members and spouses while holding steady for Reserve Component members and spouses compared to previous results. A lower percentage of active-duty Service members and their spouses reported experiencing financial problems than in the previous decade. Specific findings include:

- Seventy-one percent of active-duty Service members 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 Service members and active-duty spouses reported experiencing specific financial problems. Thirty percent of Reserve Component Service members reported experiencing specific financial problems.
- Eighty-six percent of active-duty Service members 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 Service members reported having specific financial goals compared to the same group between 2006 and 2012.
- 52 percent of active-duty Service members indicated they contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan.
- The next survey of Reserve Component Service members will occur in the summer of 2016, while the next survey of Reserve Component spouses will occur in the fall of 2016. The next survey of active-duty Service members will occur in the fall of 2016, while the next survey of active-duty spouses will occur in early 2017. The Service member surveys will include a new section designed to assess financial literacy.

Discussion of Ms. Williams' and Ms. Dorvil's briefing:

Much of the 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, nothing more specific. 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, will be compared to the actual percentage of contributors to see how the results align. Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Cody recommended council members consider how recent environmental factors, such as multiple deployments and the increased pay they provide, may have impacted the survey results as much or more than any program undertaken by a member organization.

Financial Readiness and Force Education:

Ms. Diana Banks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training, provided an update. The key points of her briefing were as follows:

- Title 10 U.S. Code Section 992 directs financial education and counseling for Service members and their families. The Department of Defense implements this through Department of Defense Instruction 1342.22, "Military Family Readiness." The Services deliver resources and support to Service members 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 all Department of Defense financial readiness activity. The financial readiness pillars are: Manage, Save and Invest, Protect, and Future Planning.
- The National Defense Authorization Act 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 Service members to take their Thrift Savings Plan contributions with them regardless of when

they leave. Interactive online training outlining the new system is now available through a link on Military OneSource for anyone to take, including spouses. A specific course tailored to Service members who must decide whether or not to opt-in to the new system will be available in spring¹ 2017.

Discussion of Ms. Banks' briefing:

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

Military Health Care Pediatrics Update from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs:

Ms. Theresa Hart, Perinatal, Pediatrics and Special Medical Programs Program Manager, briefed the Council. The key points of her briefing were as follows:

- As part of the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Omnibus, 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.
- Two 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 FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, is a three-year pilot, which provides two urgent care visits per year without preauthorization 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 or 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 and 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.

¹ During her presentation, Ms. Banks advised the course tailored to Service members who must decide whether or not to opt-in to the new system will be available in January 2017. Rather, the course will be available in spring 2017. To ensure Service members and their families received the correct information, the Executive Summary was adjusted to reflect this at the request of Ms. Banks.

- There is now mental health and substance abuse disorder parity with medical and surgical benefits in TRICARE.
- Beneficiaries have greater access to services than ever before. 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. 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 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 the 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 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.

Discussion of Ms. Hart's briefing:

Council members discussed several topics. First, TRICARE Prime users are now authorized two referral-free urgent care visits per year as part of the Urgent Care Pilot. Chairman Levine and Ms. 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. The second topic, raised by Dr. 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 benefits. The third topic raised by the Council was the need for Health Affairs to look into the use of certain medications, such as ADD/ADHD medications, among military children, and how and if that use impacted their ability to later join the military. All Council members agreed it was important to provide the best possible care to Service members and their families.

Next meeting:

The next Military Family Readiness Council meeting will take place September 14, 2016, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., at the Pentagon Conference Center.

Closing remarks:

Mr. Levine adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m. by thanking the presenters for their briefings, as well as the Council members for their helpful discussion.

AUG 26 2016

Submitted by:



Elizabeth A. Graham
Alternate Designated Federal Officer
Military Family Readiness Council

Certified by:



Peter Levine
Acting Under Secretary of Defense
for 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.