

# **Annual Report to the Congressional Defense Committees on the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council**



## **Fiscal Year 2014**

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$5,300 in Fiscal Years 2014 - 2015. This includes \$0 in expenses and \$5,300 in DoD labor.  
Generated on 2014Dec19 RefID: A-04EAE39

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CALE	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
FY	Fiscal Year
MCO	Marine Corps Order
MFLN	Military Families Learning Network
NAVADMIN	Naval Administrative Message
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NGB	National Guard Bureau
ODASD (MC&FP)	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family 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
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This report is pursuant to section 1781a of title 10, U.S. Code (U.S.C.), which requires the Department of Defense (DoD) Military Family Readiness Council (hereafter called “the Council”) to submit an annual report that provides its recommendations and assessments of the adequacy and effectiveness of military family readiness programs and activities.

Fiscal year (FY) 2014 was another productive year for the Council. Continuing from FY13, the Council convened three times during FY2014. Beginning this fiscal year the Council began holding an administrative meeting before each meeting. The administrative meeting helps the Council members better prepare for the meeting and focus on the discussion subjects during the public forum by allowing the Council to deal with administrative issues ahead of time. The Council’s activities of its past, present, and future are posted and archived on its webpage on the Military OneSource website<sup>1</sup>.

In the first meeting of FY2014, the Council identified the following focus areas: transition assistance, including consideration of spouses and children, the Reserve family program network, and the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff’s strategy that he set for the current fiscal year. These areas of focus guided the FY2014’s Council program and policy reviews in the subsequent meetings. As a result of the reviews conducted during FY 2014, the Council recommends the following five action items to the Secretary of Defense:

1. Continue to improve communication and awareness of existing services to Service members and families and continue to improve how those in the Reserve components, those who are geographically dispersed, and Active Duty members and their families who live on and off installations learn about services available to them.
2. Develop a toolkit to educate and inform military family and civilian leaders on total military family DoD engagement strategies.
3. Continue the transformation of Military OneSource to enhance DoD’s ability to reach all elements of the military community.
4. Explore and leverage, where applicable and appropriate, public-private partnerships to support military families.
5. Focus on transitioning military families and highlight availability of existing programs.

DoD has already been working on the subject areas identified above. The Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (ODASD (MC&FP)) has been conducting a series of improvements on the Military OneSource website and its contents. The Council will continue monitoring and reviewing the Department’s efforts and progress in military family readiness programs in the FY 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> The Council webpage is available at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/those-who-support-mfrc>.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The DoD Military Family Readiness Council (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 DoD. The duties of the Council include the following:

- (1) To review and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding the policy and plans supporting military family readiness.
- (2) To monitor requirements for the support of military family readiness by DoD.
- (3) To evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the military family readiness programs and activities of DoD.

The original Council membership was modified and expanded by Section 574 of NDAA FY 2012. This legislative change added spouses of the Military Services’ Senior Enlisted Advisors and spouses or parents of Service members. The new membership composition helped improve the Council business planning and reenergized Council activities overall. Currently there are 18 members serving on the Council (see Appendix A).

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

- (1) An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the military family readiness programs and activities of DoD during the preceding fiscal year in meeting the needs and requirements of military families.
- (2) Recommendations on actions to be taken to improve the capability of the military family readiness programs and activities of DoD 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 2013**

### **2-1. Council Activities**

**Meetings:** The Council is required to meet twice a year. Since FY 2013, the Council has been convening more than twice a year in order to receive more information on specific issues and policy changes. During FY 2014, the Council convened three times: Nov 22nd, 2013, Jun 25th, 2014, and Aug 18th, 2014. All three meetings were held at the Pentagon Conference Center in Washington, D.C. The objectives of the meeting are three fold: to review new information and updates on DoD efforts pertaining to military family readiness from the Services and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) offices; to discuss issues affecting military family readiness; and to consider possible recommendations from the Council to the Secretary of Defense. The meetings are required to be open to the public. The Senate Armed Services Committee encouraged the Council to establish a website in order to “keep military families informed about upcoming Council meetings, to post the outcomes of prior meetings, and to

increase transparency of Council activities and reports.”<sup>2</sup> In response to this Senate recommendation, the Council established an official webpage housed on the Military OneSource website at the following address: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/those-who-support-mfrc>. This official web page is used to help the Council better inform the public on its future events as well as provide an online archive of past activities.

## **2-2. Review of Recent Policy Changes**

The Services and OSD Offices reported a total of five new or updated policies pertaining to military family readiness in FY 2014 (see Appendix B)<sup>3</sup>. The Council will continue monitoring and reviewing DoD and Service-level policies and regulations on military family readiness through periodic policy updates. When an in-depth review of a policy change is warranted, the Council will request briefings on specific policy issues pertaining to military family readiness in order to better assess the impact on family readiness and make effective and opportune recommendations.

## **2-3. Review of Major Initiatives and Program Evaluation Projects**

The Council is mandated to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of military family readiness programs and DoD activities in meeting the needs and requirements of military families. In the November 2013 meeting, the Council identified the following six focus areas:

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

These areas of focus guided the FY2014’s Council program and policy reviews in the subsequent meetings. The Council received briefings on the following DoD initiatives and program evaluation efforts during the FY2014 meetings:

**The Status Update on Standardization of the Exceptional Family Member (EFMP) program:** Dr. Edward Tyner of the DoD Office of Community Support for Families with Special Needs (OSN) provided status updates on the current standardization efforts for EFMP services. The key updates were as follows:

- A multi-phased functional analysis was systematically and methodically conducted DoD-wide to provide an in-depth examination of the current EFMP policies, business processes, forms and databases used by each Service.
- The analysis resulted in the identification of ten recommendations which were then consolidated into five focus areas requiring DoD action: identification and

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<sup>2</sup> The Senate Report 111-201, accompanying NDAA FY 2011, page 134-135.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix B only includes the policy changes that have been finalized and published during the subject fiscal year.

enrollment, assignment coordination, family support, technology, and communication.

- Each of the Services collaborated and participated fully in the analysis process, and the project staff is now ready to staff with the Service leadership and get their questions and feedback.

**Family programs and initiatives supporting the National Guard members and their families:** Mr. Anthony Wickham, Director of Family Programs, the National Guard Bureau (NGB) provided a briefing on this subject. The key points of his presentation include:

- Sharing best practices for family support programs between states, such as the Illinois Joining Forces and Minnesota Beyond the Yellow Ribbon programs, is a strength of the NGB system.
- The NGB will collaborate with the American Legion Auxiliary to obtain Volunteers in Service to America personnel.
- The NGB is implementing a new community-based volunteer position at the state level.
- The NGB will continue to identify, actively pursue, and form MOUs with national-level resources that can fill the gaps for services losing funding.
- The NGB will maintain links with Joining Forces.
- States will continue to deepen relationships with local resource providers.

**The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Second-Term Strategy:** Col. Gina Humble from the Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff, J1, discussed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's second term strategy. Her key points included:

- The Chairman recently published his second term strategy which outlines four focus areas: achievement of national objectives in the current conflict, develop Joint Force 2020, renew commitments to the Profession of Arms, and keep faith with military families.
- In order to define actions required to keep faith with military families, a time continuum was envisioned, which included a period of service followed by a period of transition and then a period of reintegration back into civilian life.
- During the period of military service, major actions include combating high-risk behaviors, creating an enduring mechanism for priority ranking of benefits and services most required by military families, developing policies and best practices for services to wounded warriors, and conducting general and flag officer outreach.
- The focus of the period of transition is the development and implementation of transition policy coupled with a joint force communication policy and improved transition outcomes. A large number of Service members will transition out of the military in the next five years, so this is of immediate concern.

- There is a focus on implementing reintegration centers to expand state and community-based partnerships, as well as developing a narrative of continued service. Service members leaving Active Duty continue serving their communities once they become civilians.

**Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program:** Ms. Lee McMahon, Senior Program Analyst, ODASD (MC&FP) Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth/Special Needs provided 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).
- In fall 2014, 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.

**Transition Assistance Program:** Dr. Susan Kelly of the DoD Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO) briefed on the revised Transition Assistance Program (TAP). She presented important elements of the TAP redesign including:

- 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, employment, and entrepreneurship)
- Preparation begins at accession and extends across the life cycle of the Service member's career.
- Family considerations are integrated as part of the program.

Below are the main differences from the previous version of TAP:

- 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 launched a month long TAP Awareness Campaign in September 2014 targeting Service members, spouses and military commanders.

**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.

### **3-3. Review of Public Comments**

As a Federal Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Defense, the Council must hold meetings open to the public. In addition, the public and interested groups are allowed to submit their written statements to the Council for its consideration at any time or in response to the stated agenda. In FY 2014, the Council received the following two new comments. Please note that the public comments submitted for the November 2013 meeting were highly relevant to the FY2013 Council recommendations so that they were included in the FY2013 annual report.<sup>4</sup>

- Mr. Stephen Peters, President of the American Military Partner Association, submitted its top six needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender military spouses and their

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<sup>4</sup> The Council's annual report to Congress is available on the Council website at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/those-who-support-mfrc>.

families, including (1) transitioning from Active Duty and accessing veterans benefits; (2) DoD Non-discrimination policy including sexual orientation; (3) Status of Forces Agreements and Outside Continental United States Command sponsorship; (4) protection for military families stationed in non-marriage equality states; (5) Military chaplain and counseling support; and (6) respecting transgender Service members and their families.

- The Tricare for Kids Stakeholders Coalition’s initial response: “Study on Health Care and Related Support for Children of Members of the Armed Forces” was submitted to the Council. This document provides a section-by-section analysis and response to the DoD Report to Congressional Defense Committees, “Study on Health Care and Related Support for Children of Members of the Armed Forces,” required under section 735 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, Public Law 112-239, which required the Secretary of Defense to conduct a study on the health care provided to dependent children of members of the armed forces.

The Council gave the attending public the opportunity to provide oral comments at the November 2013 and June 25<sup>th</sup> meetings. The Council values active contribution of the public in the forum and reviews all communication to the Council. Public comments will inform the Council’s future reviews and discussion for further action.

#### **4. COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the Council’s FY2014 reviews on DoD’s recent policy changes, program evaluation activities, and public submissions, the Council presented, deliberated, and voted on FY2014 recommendations during the meeting held on October 07, 2014. The Council members also discussed how military families access information about available family support resources and programs and methods of determining military family preferences in how they receive this information. The Council set forth the following five recommendations for the Secretary of Defense to consider:

1. Continue to improve communication and awareness of existing services to Service members and families and continue to improve how those in the Reserve components, those who are geographically dispersed, and Active Duty members and their families who live on and off installations learn about services available to them.
2. Develop a toolkit to educate and inform military family and civilian leaders on total military family DoD engagement strategies.
3. Continue the transformation of Military OneSource to enhance DoD’s ability to reach all elements of the military community.
4. Explore and leverage, where applicable and appropriate, public-private partnerships to support military families.
5. Focus on transitioning military families and highlight availability of existing programs.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**MEMBERS OF THE DoD MILITARY FAMILY READINESS COUNCIL**  
(Membership as of the end of FY2014)

**Chair: The Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)**

Honorable Jessica L. Wright, Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)  
Alternate Chair: Ms. Stephanie A. Barna, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
Readiness and Force Management

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

Lieutenant General David Halverson, Commander, U.S. Army Installation  
Management Command and Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management,  
U.S. Army  
Brigadier General Russell Sanborn, Director, Marine and Family Programs, U.S.  
Marine Corps  
Rear Admiral Richard Snyder, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office (N17),  
United States Navy  
Brigadier General Patrick Doherty, Director of Air Force Services, U.S. Air Force

**Representative of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard**

Lieutenant General Stanley E. Clarke III, Director, Air National Guard

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

Ms. Barbara A. Thompson, Director, Office of Family Policy/Children and  
Youth/Special Needs, Office of Deputy Under 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)

Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Michael P. Barrett, U.S. Marine Corps  
Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Michael Stevens, U.S. Navy  
Mrs. Athena Cody, Spouse of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James A. Cody,  
United States Air Force  
Mrs. Jeanne Chandler, Spouse of Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond F Chandler,  
United States Army

**Spouses or parents of members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force** (Two from Active component and two from the Reserve Component)

Mrs. Christina Vine, Army Spouse  
Mrs. Emily Fertitta, USMC Reserve Spouse  
Mrs. Kristy Ortega, Navy Spouse  
Mrs. Jeanne Benden, Air National Guard Spouse

**Representatives of military family organizations**

Ms. Kathleen B. Moakler, National Military Family Association

Ms. Sherri L. Brown, American Red Cross

Ms. Noeleen Tillman, Blue Star Families

**APPENDIX B:**  
**MAJOR POLICY CHANGES PERTAINING TO MILITARY FAMILY**  
**READINESS IN FY2014 (October 2013- September 20134)**

Policy Change	Summary
<b>A. Military Services</b>	
<b>1. Army</b>	
No policy updates.	
<b>2. Marine Corps</b>	
Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) (MCO 1700.38; 20 Feb 2014)	<p>This Marine Corps Order expands on the key concepts of the program and details the duties to clearly identify roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Key changes from previous order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept of operations has been segmented into three major elements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employment Resources which provide information to family members regarding multiple career paths, including education, employment, entrepreneurial pursuits, or volunteerism.</li> <li>2. Career education and training for family members on available resources and/or programs for family members.</li> <li>3. Career coaching which can be implemented in a group setting and/or one-on-one environment.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Establishes directive to collaborate with other Marine and Family Division programs to fully assist family members with employment, such as Marine Corps Family Team Building and Information and Referral.</li> <li>• Establishes standards for reporting requirements and evaluation tools in order to measure the utilization and effectiveness of the program.</li> <li>• Incorporates provisions of the Order into an Inspector General Functional Area Checklist (981), so that inspections can be conducted to ensure adherence to guidance.</li> </ul>
<b>3. U.S. Navy</b>	
Enrollment In The Exceptional Family Member Program (NAVADMIN 304/13, November 27,2013)	This NAVADMIN directs commands to review their Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) enrolled sponsors within their units and ensure service members have a current EFMP enrollment status.
Transition Goals, Plans, and Success (NAVADMIN 154/14, July 03, 2014)	This NAVADMIN is the fourth in a series of updates for Transition Goals, Plans, and Success (GPS). It provides information pertaining to new exemptions from the Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), policy for using transition GPS virtual curriculum, the availability of additional training tracks to assist in meeting Career Readiness Standards

Policy Change	Summary
	(CRS), and requirements for submission of transition checklist via Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) website.
<b>4. Air Force</b>	
No policy updates	
<b>5. National Guard Bureau</b>	
No policy updates	
<b>B. Office of Secretary of Defense</b>	
<b>1. Military Community and Family Policy</b>	
Department of Defense Instruction 6400.03, “Family Advocacy Command Assistance Team (FACAT)” (April 25, 2014)	This instruction provides for a coordinated and comprehensive DoD response through the deployment of a FACAT at the request of a Military Department to address allegations of extra familial child sexual abuse in DoD-sanctioned activities.
Department of Defense Instruction 6060.02, “Child Development Programs (CDPs)” (August 5, 2014)	This instruction updates policy, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes procedures for providing care to minor children (birth through age 12 years) of individuals who are eligible for care in DoD center-based and community-based care, family child care (FCC), school-age care (SAC), and supplemental child care.