

# REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND THE CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES

---

Military Family Readiness Council  
Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report

February 2018

Submitted by:  
Under Secretary of Defense  
for Personnel and Readiness

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 Military Family Readiness 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. The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$10,000 for the 2017 Fiscal Year. This includes \$6,000 in expenses and \$4,100 in DoD Labor. Generated on 2017Dec20. RefID: 0-2E25FDB.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Council Meetings</b>	1
(1) Overview of Military Family Readiness Council Meetings	1
(2) Written Public Submissions	2
(3) Military Family Readiness Policies	3
<b>Fiscal Year 2017 Focus Areas</b>	3
(1) Review of Support for Special Needs Families	3
(2) Review of Military Health System Pediatric-Focused Activities	3
(3) Review of Defense State Liaison Office Top Ten Initiatives	4
(4) Review of Community Collaboratives and Partnerships	4
<b>Council Recommendations</b>	6
<b>Conclusion</b>	7
<b>Appendix A: Members of the Military Family Readiness Council</b>	8
<b>Appendix B: MFRC Fact Sheet</b>	9

# **Military Family Readiness Council Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report**

## **Introduction**

This report is provided in accordance with requirements set forth in section 1781a of title 10, United States Code, 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 four congressional defense committees with assessments and recommendations regarding military family readiness policies and programs.

This Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 report is based on transcripts of MFRC meetings, deliberations, and voting by the 18 congressionally-mandated members (see Appendix A) representing all military Services (active duty, guard and reserve), senior enlisted advisors, military spouses and parents, military support organizations, and the DoD Office of Military Family Readiness Policy.

To assess military family readiness policies and programs, Council members hear briefings and testimony from DoD and Military Service policy analysts and program managers, review educational materials and background information provided by subject matter experts, consider written public submissions, and participate in open session Council member deliberations. Additionally, Council members make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding family readiness issues that should be further addressed, or taken for action by the Department.

## **Council Meetings**

During FY 2017, the Council held three two-hour meetings, described below. Each meeting was preceded by a preparatory meeting. Preparatory meetings were used to pre-brief Council members on: (1) background information needed for Council deliberations, and (2) Council deliberation and voting processes. In accordance with DoD Instruction 5105.04, “Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committee Management Program,” preparatory meetings and discussions are not open to the public.

## **Overview of Military Family Readiness Council Meetings**

- **February 15, 2017 Meeting:** The Council received briefings on three topics of continued interest to the Council and military families: (1) Office of Special Needs Exceptional Family Member (EFM) Program and EFM Standardization; (2) Defense State Liaison Top 10 Initiatives (Special Emphasis: Medicaid Waivers); and (3) Military Health System: Pediatric-Focused Activities.

- **April 27, 2017 Meeting:** A series of briefings was presented to the Council on effective Community Collaboratives and Partnerships that are helping DoD meet military community needs: (1) Military OneSource, Non-Medical Counseling and Information and Referral Networks; (2) Community Collaboratives with Military Support Organizations (Focus: Military Spouse Employment Partnership and Military Spouse Ambassador Network); (3) New Hampshire’s National Guard Care Coordination Program; and (4) a Military Service Community Partnerships Panel which presented information on the following military-civilian collaboratives:
  - Army Community Covenant Initiative
  - Navy “zero8hundred” Initiative
  - Marine Corps Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program
  - Air Force Air National Guard Teen Leadership Summits
  
- **August 29, 2017 Meeting:** MFRC members presented and discussed draft FY 2017 recommendations and proposed focus area topics to be reviewed during FY 2018. After careful consideration and discussion, seven final recommendations were endorsed, six additional recommendations were taken for immediate action, and four topics were selected for review during FY 2018.

NOTE: Detailed meeting minutes, including executive summaries of written public submission topics (shown below), are posted on the DoD Military Family Readiness Council webpage: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc>. This year, an MFRC Fact Sheet (see Appendix B) and MFRC Orientation Briefing materials were also posted online.

### **Written Public Submissions**

During FY 2017, the Council received the following written public submissions for their review and consideration:

- Applied Behavioral Analysis Therapy Services and Policies
- Impact of Relocation
- Continuity of Care
- Local Information and Referrals
- Gaps in Services
- Training for EFM Program Coordinators and Parents
- Respite Care
- Comprehensive Reviews and EFM Oversight
- Hospice and Guardianship Issues
- Special Education Issues
- Nursing Care Options through TRICARE
- Model Program: Horses Healing Maryland’s Military
- Model Program: Home Base Summer Camp and Youth Development
- Pilot Program: Building Healthy Military Communities

- Recommendations for Additional MFRC Briefings:
  - Military medical partnerships that expand support for family well-being (including support for autistic children)
  - School behavioral health and special education partnerships
  - Community best practices from Joint Base Lewis-McCord
- Beyond Yellow Ribbon Programs
- General Schedule Positions in Support of the Guard and Reserve
- Transitional Assistance Programs and Policies

## **Military Family Readiness Policies**

There were 27 military family readiness-related policy issuances published by DoD and the Services during FY17. A descriptive list was incorporated into the August 29, 2017 MFRC meeting minutes and posted online at: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc>.

## **FY 2017 Focus Areas**

### *Review of Support for Special Needs Families*

#### **Department of Defense Office of Special Needs (OSN) EFM Program and EFM**

**Standardization:** OSN clarified its responsibility to: (1) identify families with special needs and enroll them in the EFM Program; (2) coordinate assignments between personnel and medical professionals; (3) provide family support; and (4) oversee early intervention and special education services. They noted that DoD Health Affairs provides oversight for the fifth element of support for special needs families: the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO). OSN's long-term, on-going efforts focus on: continuing to work with Health Affairs, family support providers, and school liaisons across the DoD enterprise to address needs to improve communications; integrate, streamline, and standardize EFM policies, programs, and processes; and improve service coordination and delivery. The Council will continue monitoring progress. The EFM Family Panel is helping by recommending ways to identify and fill gaps in medical, educational, and case management support services.

### *Review of Military Health System Pediatric-Focused Activities*

**Military Health System: Pediatric-Focused Activities:** The Defense Health Agency and TRICARE provided the Council with an overview brief on pediatric-focused activities and initiatives as they relate to military family readiness. They pointed out that a significant portion of TRICARE Prime enrollees are families with special needs and that much has been done to expand and improve benefits and services for special needs children and youth. During FY 2017, the Military Health System took several important actions that relate to military family readiness: (1) a Pediatric Quality Measures Dashboard was established to monitor key performance metrics which assess and evaluate the delivery of healthcare services for military children; (2) a new HealthySteps pilot program was launched at three pediatric clinics that are integrating healthcare with delivery of family support services; (3) TRICARE mental and behavioral healthcare benefits were expanded and documented in clinical practice guidelines and policy manuals; (4) school-based behavioral health pilot programs, clinics, and wellness-services were successfully

implemented in dozens of Army communities and Department of Defense Education Activity Schools; and (5) community outreach initiatives were launched to reduce the stigma regarding receipt of behavioral health services.

### *Review of Defense State Liaison Office Top Ten Initiatives*

**Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) Top 10 Initiatives:** DSLO explained the two-year process used to identify, select, and track progress on DLSO's Top 10 initiatives being worked with state legislators. Over the last seven years, states have enacted an average of 76 bills in support of DoD initiatives (an aggregate of about 600 bills since DSLO was established). At the February 15, 2017 MFRC meeting, DSLO provided detailed information on the issue of Medicaid waivers for special needs family members who need home- and community-based support services. DSLO highlighted two important actions taken this year: (1) DSLO asked states to allow active duty Service members to use their state of legal residence to sign up now for a Medicaid waiver which would be accessible when they retire, separate, or otherwise return to their state of legal residence; and (2) DSLO is encouraging states to consider additional licensure options (e.g., a "privilege of practice" provision) in support of military spouse employment. Council members also asked DSLO to explore the option for a Professional Scholars License and other licensing options accepted by Interstate Compact states. Currently, all 50 states engage in at least one of these processes: (a) professional license endorsement; (b) temporary licensure; or (c) expediting in-state licensure efforts.

### *Review of Community Collaboratives and Partnerships*

The Council received information about seven different types of community collaboratives and partnerships that are helping military community members connect to needed resources available from military and local communities.

- **Military OneSource, Non-Medical Counseling and Information and Referral Services:** The Office of Military Community Outreach briefed the Council on the Military OneSource website ([www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil)) and call center (1-800-342-9647) which delivers 24-7-365 information, educational materials, and non-medical counseling services to Service members and families. A re-design of the website and improvements to content and direct services were based on over 200 interviews at 10 installations during the summer of 2016. The re-launched site can now reach expanded target audiences through a full range of traditional and social media platforms and screen sizes. The call center is receiving between 30,000-40,000 calls per month. Callers are now able to interface with counselors and coaches in three ways: face-to-face, video and online.
- **Community Collaboratives with Military Support Organizations:** The Office of Military Family Readiness Policy (OMFRP) staff told the Council that Spouse Education and Career Opportunities initiatives have facilitated the hiring of over 110,000 military spouses by more than 350 partner employers who are participating in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership. OMFRP reported that the My Career Advancement Account Scholarship program is only reaching 25% of the

eligible spouse population. The Spouse Ambassador Network, critical to promoting these and other spouse support resources, has grown from 11 to 22 participating organizations. This network meets quarterly to share resource information and facilitate military spouse connections across the membership's professional and personal networks.

- **New Hampshire's Care Coordination Program:** The New Hampshire Army National Guard reported that since 2014, their Care Coordination initiative has been serving all military Services in the state of New Hampshire, not just the Army. Community needs frequently stem from financial difficulties and relate to other problems such as marital issues and under-employment. Their program is key to bringing community resources together at the state and local levels. Their 24-7 phone line is promoted to military commands throughout the state. Family Assistance Center specialists coordinate through their Community Health Promotion Council and High Risk Assessment Team.
- **Military Services Community Collaboratives Panel:**
  - **Army Community Covenant Initiative (CCI):** The Army reported that their Community Covenant Initiative has been very successful since it was established in 2008. CCI partnership networks have expanded beyond installation partners to include Chambers of Commerce, individuals, and military serving organizations on and off base. Today, there are over 1,000 CCI partnerships in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Each is unique and finds ways to garner needed resources and connect them to those in need.
  - **Navy "zero8hundred" Initiative:** The Navy reported that "zero8hundred" is a transition assistance program that serves about 7,000 Sailors and 13,000 Marines who separate from military service in the San Diego, California area each year. Seventy-seven percent of those separating are E3-E5 Service members and families who are leaving military service without a paycheck or benefits. Roughly 30 percent of these separating members stay in the San Diego area. Transitioning military members participate in a needs assessment process and are given the opportunity to self-navigate or work with a trained navigator who can help them connect to one or more of their 6,000 appropriate resources which are vetted by their San Diego resource database.
  - **Marine Corps Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program:** The Marine Corps reported that the initial purpose of SAPR was to find out how to take care of victims and to do it properly. Marine Corps quickly learned that in order for successful prevention programs to work, organizations have to be collaborative and understand how large a role relationships and community play. To date, Marine Corps SAPR has reached over nine million people with targeted messages and linked over 3,000 people to support resources. They are now working to debunk myths about male victims and promote responsible use of

social media with their Navy partners to send positive, effective leadership messages.

- Air Force Air National Guard Teen Leadership Summits: The Air Force explained how they are building future leaders. Each year, they sponsor a Teen Leadership Summit which takes teens who do not live near military bases and introduces them to the Air Force and community resources. They talk to teens about the issues and challenges they face, core values, citizenship, and resilience. Since inception, over 1,000 teens have participated in Summit camps where they take leadership courses and use high-risk adventures to build leadership skills. They are provided opportunities to apply for American Legion scholarships and to connect with counselors from 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and Military OneSource. Teens then take their new-found knowledge, skills, and resources back to their communities and become Air Force ambassadors to other youth in their communities.

## **Council Recommendations**

Council members developed and submitted draft recommendations on topics for which they had received information and educational briefings during FY 2017. These recommendations were presented by sponsoring Council members for full Council deliberation and voting at the August 29, 2017 MFRC meeting.

The following is a list of seven recommendations that were endorsed by the Council to be forwarded to the Secretary of Defense. Six additional recommendations (also to be forwarded) were endorsed for immediate action. Four focus area topics were selected to guide the work of the Council in FY 2018. Additional information regarding the intent of the Council with regard to each recommendation can be found in the August 29, 2017 MFRC meeting minutes.

### **FY 2017 Recommendations to be forwarded to the Secretary of Defense**

1. Use the relaunch of the Military OneSource website as an opportunity to engage all stakeholders and influencers regarding Military OneSource and its associated programs, resources, and tools.
2. Support the integration of military family programs and resources into military treatment facilities through new and innovative avenues.
3. Support the expansion of a “Partnering for Readiness” initiative between the Defense Health Agency and military family readiness organizations.
4. Expand efforts in community partnerships and collaboratives to gain greater access to a broad range of military family readiness resources, services, and expertise needed by Service and family members, which are especially useful for Reserve Component members and families.
5. Continue standardization of the Exceptional Family Member Program across all military Services. Strengthen collaboration between service providers caring for family members with special medical and educational needs.
6. Maintain Defense State Liaison Office efforts with states to increase licensure and certification transferability between states. This remains a top concern for military spouse



employment and affects Service member and family financial readiness, quality of life, and retention.

7. Update the MFRC on Defense State Liaison Top 10 Military Lifestyle Issues and Veterans Employment Protections.

### **FY 2017 Recommendations Taken for Immediate Action (IA)**

1-IA: Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children: Assess current status and parental satisfaction level with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children in each state.

2-IA: Veterans Online Shopping Benefit (VOSB): Use Military OneSource and other community outreach strategies to educate military Service and family members about the impact of VOSB on current sales and the customer shopping experience at military resale facilities.

3-IA: Financial Literacy and Blended Retirement System: Monitor implementation of the Blended Retirement System.

4-IA: Support for Gold Star Families: Ensure DoD and Military Service policies for Gold Star family support are consistent.

5-IA: Continue Support for Families with Special Needs, including Family Support, Healthcare and Special Education: Focus on improving the medical care aspects and integration of services between medical, education, and family support for families with special needs.

6-IA: Reduce the Risk of Child Abuse and Neglect: Review research findings related to the unique challenges female Service members may experience with regard to reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect.

### **Focus Area Topics for FY 2018**

1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury
2. Community Collaboratives (Focus: Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response)
3. Child and Youth Well-Being
4. Spouse Licensure

## **Conclusion**

The Military Family Readiness Council remains committed to carrying out its mission to review, evaluate, and monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of a full range of military family readiness policies and programs. Council recommendations and associated initiatives are tracked to document progress made on recommendations forwarded to the Secretary of Defense. Updates will be provided to the Council in preparation for each Council meeting. The Council is also exploring ways to facilitate greater awareness and connection to resources brought to the Council's attention.

MFRC encourages the full participation of the Military Services, senior leaders and leadership spouses, and constituents in an effort to bring forward issues and opportunities that affect and strengthen military family readiness and resilience. Written public submissions may be sent to the Council's mailbox at [osd.pentagon.ousd-p-r.mbx.family-readiness-council@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pentagon.ousd-p-r.mbx.family-readiness-council@mail.mil) at any time during the year and will be forwarded for Council member review and consideration.

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **Members of the Military Family Readiness Council**

*For FY2017*

#### **MFRC Chair: Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness**

The Honorable Anthony M. Kurta, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Alternate Chair: Ms. Stephanie Barna, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

#### **Department of Defense Office of Military Family Readiness Policy**

Ms. Carolyn Stevens, Director

#### **Service Member Representatives from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps**

Lieutenant General Gwendolyn Bingham, Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation  
Management, U.S. Army

Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Karl Thomas, Director, Twenty-first Century Sailor Office,  
U.S. Navy

Brigadier General Kathleen Cook, Director, Air Force Services, U.S. Air Force

Brigadier General Kurt Stein, Director, Marine and Family Programs, U.S. Marine Corps

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

Major General Kevin McNeely, Director, Manpower and Personnel (J1), Army  
National Guard

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

Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey

Ms. Elka Franco-Giordano, Spouse of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright

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 Corps**

Ms. Laura Conley, U. S. Army National Guard Spouse

Ms. Jennifer Luscher, U.S. Navy Reserve Spouse

Ms. Michelle Padgett, U.S. Air Force Active Duty Spouse

Ms. Julie Margolis, U.S. Marine Corps Active Duty Spouse

#### **Representatives of Military Family Support Organizations**

Dr. Mary Keller, Military Child Education Coalition

Dr. David Rubin, Children's Hospital Association

Ms. Karen Ruedisueli, National Military Family Association

**APPENDIX B:**

**MFRC Fact Sheet (Attached)**