

Military Family Readiness Council Meeting Minutes
The Pentagon Conference Center, Room B6
August 29, 2017
1-3 p.m.

Meeting Attendees:

Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD):

Ms. Stephanie Barna, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Chair
Ms. Carolyn Stevens, Director, Office of Military Family Readiness Policy

Army:

LTG Gwen Bingham, USA, Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management
SGM Rodney Rhoades, representing Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey
Ms. Laura Conley, U.S. Army National Guard Spouse (By phone)

Army National Guard:

MG Kevin McNeely, Director, Manpower and Personnel, National Guard Bureau (By phone)

Marine Corps:

Ms. Marie Balocki, representing BGen Kurt Stein, USMC, Director, Marine and Family Programs
Ms. Julie Margolis, Marine Corps Active Duty Spouse

Navy:

RDML Karl Thomas, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office
Ms. Jennifer Luscher, Navy Reserve Component Spouse
Ms. Elka Franco-Giordano, Spouse of Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Steve Giordano

Air Force:

Mr. Carl Buchanan, representing Brig Gen Kathleen Cook, USAF, Director of Air Force Services
CMSgt Manny Pineiro, representing Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright
Ms. Michelle Padgett, Air Force Active Duty Spouse

Military family organizations:

Dr. Mary Keller, Military Child Education Coalition (By phone)
Dr. David Rubin, Children's Hospital Association
Ms. Karen Ruedisueli, National Military Family Association

Also present:

Ms. Kristen McManus, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (MC&FP) (Morale, Welfare and Recreation)
Dr. Ed Tyner, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (MC&FP) (Office of Special Needs)
Mr. Marcus Beauregard, Director, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (MC&FP) (Defense State Liaison Office)
Dr. Kelly Mohondro, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness)
Mr. Lernes Hebert, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Personnel Policy)
Ms. Anita Blair, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy)
Ms. Julie Blanks, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy)
Ms. Ellyn Dunford, Spouse of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford
Ms. Nancy Rice, Spouse of the Director of the Air National Guard

COL Donna McDermott, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Integration)
Mr. Anthony Wickham, Director of Family Programs, National Guard Bureau
Mr. Brett Stevens, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Warrior Care Policy)
Mr. Ed Chan, Defense Health Agency
Dr. Patricia Moseley, Defense Health Agency
CAPT Ed Simmer, Deputy Director, TRICARE/Defense Health Agency
LTC Ray Buckner, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Personnel and Readiness (J1)
Ms. Jennifer Dailey-Perkins, Department of Defense Education Activity

MFRC Designated Federal Officer:

Dr. Randy N. Eltringham

MFRC support staff:

Ms. Betsy Graham
Ms. Melody McDonald
Mr. Frank Emery
Ms. Maia Hurley

Public Submissions:

Public submissions received in advance of the August 29, 2017 meeting include the following:

- Remount Foundation for Equine Therapy
 - CAPT Simmer previously reviewed this submission and said the program is approved for TRICARE.
- Special Needs Family Outreach
 - The council engaged with CAPT Ed Simmer (TRICARE/Defense Health Agency) and Mr. Ed Tyner (Office of Special Needs) who confirmed this family is receiving the resources and support it needs.
- Decision Brief: Pediatric Health Care Services Tasking
- Pediatric Health Care Services: A Report by the Defense Health Board

Proceedings of the Meeting:

On Tuesday, August 29, 2017, the third Military Family Readiness Council (MFRC) meeting of fiscal year (FY) 2017 was held in the Pentagon Library & Conference Center (Room B6). The purpose of this meeting was to deliberate and draft 2017 recommendations for the Secretary of Defense and propose focus areas for the Council to review during FY2018.

A full transcript of the meeting and attendance of members and advisers present was recorded.

The MFRC Designated Federal Officer, Dr. Randy Eltringham, opened the meeting by welcoming Council members, advisors, and public guests. She announced that the MFRC Chair, Mr. Anthony Kurta was called away and that Ms. Stephanie Barna would chair the meeting.

Dr. Eltringham introduced Ms. Barna for opening remarks.

Ms. Barna welcomed the following individuals:

- RDML Karl Thomas, Director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office (N17) [New Council Member]
- Ms. Julie Blanks, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy) [New Council Advisor]

Dr. Eltringham then explained that the official MFRC website could be found on Military OneSource, which was recently redesigned and relaunched. She noted that the minutes for the April 27, 2017 MFRC meeting will be posted on this site as well as an updated set of MFRC orientation slides.

Dr. Eltringham then discussed the status of the written public submissions (listed above) before highlighting the laws that govern the Council. Next, she advised that the Council is available via email at osd.pentagon.ousd-p-r.mbx.family-readiness-council@mail.mil, via the web at www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers/mfrc, and via mail at Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, Attention: Military Family Readiness Council, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Suite 03G15, Alexandria, VA 22350-2300.

Dr. Eltringham noted that there were 27 military family readiness related policies published during FY2017. She asked Council members to let her know if there were any questions about these policies.

Dr. Eltringham then explained the new process for deliberating and voting on MFRC FY2017 recommendations to be sent to the Secretary of Defense. She reminded Council members that three MFRC members were participating in today's meeting through an audio bridge. Ms. Barna included them in Council deliberations and voting.

Council deliberations resulted in the drafting and MFRC endorsement of the following FY2017 MFRC Recommendations for the Secretary of Defense and selection of MFRC Focus Areas to be reviewed by the Council during FY2018.

Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense:

Recommendation #1: Endorsed

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.

Discussion/results: The relaunch of Military OneSource, with its broad range of tools, programs and resources, fully supports the work of the Military Family Readiness Council.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Direct the Services and other agencies to educate and inform their stakeholders to engage with Military OneSource at the following touch points:
 - 1) Service-level headquarters
 - 2) Military treatment facilities
 - 3) Recruiters
 - 4) Non-federal entities
 - 5) Service schools designed for leadership at all levels, including military spouses

- b. Promote the use of innovative strategies through an Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (P&R)-led working group composed of representatives from all Services and OSD Public Affairs (Outreach and Public Liaison) with a requirement to report back to the Council within six months of the group's establishment.

Recommendation #2: Endorsed

Support the integration of military family programs and resources into military treatment facilities through new and innovative avenues.

Discussion/results: This recommendation is intended to improve education, communication, and collaboration between healthcare and family support service providers. The specific pilot mentioned takes advantage of a family's pediatrician as the trusted agent and point of entry to support resources a family can use. This pilot program is only one element of this multi-dimensional recommendation.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Support the implementation of a HealthySteps pilot in the pediatric clinics of three military treatment facilities.
- b. Raise awareness of family program resources at military treatment facilities to include specialty-tailored kits for primary care, behavioral health, and pediatrics.
- c. Support an ongoing drumbeat of training focused on family programs for medical professionals within and outside of military installations.

Recommendation #3: Endorsed

Support the expansion of a "Partnering for Readiness" initiative between the Defense Health Agency and military family readiness organizations, providing access to expanded TRICARE health benefits for children of deployed members.

Discussion/results: The goals of the "Partnering for Readiness" initiative are to connect children to prevention and treatment based on their needs and to provide life skills, education, and guidance for their caregivers.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Acknowledge the fact that children at risk of mental health conditions due to parental deployment is a medical and family readiness issue.
- b. Identify and link parents and children in need of mental health services to targeted military family support prevention programs and expanded TRICARE interventions.
- c. Examine evidence-based strategies to reduce the stigma often associated with seeking mental and behavior health treatment and support.
- d. Promote a co-sponsored Defense Health Agency — Military OneSource "Help Starts Here" anti-stigma campaign, which encourages parents and children to use targeted mental and behavioral health resources.

Recommendation #4: Endorsed

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, and especially useful for Reserve Component members and families.

Discussion/results: By expanding partnerships and community collaboratives, every Military Service will have greater access to needed resources either within the government or private sector.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Work with other similar boards (e.g., Defense Health Board and CAPE) to ensure intergovernmental and integrated practices include information technology, public participation, and performance measurements.

Recommendation #5: Endorsed

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.

Discussion/results: In order to improve service delivery to special needs families, it is important to continue the standardization of the Exceptional Family Member Program, including the healthcare-related components families face. Ms. Stephanie Barna recommended this initiative move forward with special emphasis placed on coordination between EFMP and TRICARE.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Encourage standardization of EFMP family support staff employment type and grade level across all Military Services.
- b. Continue efforts to standardize family support service provision across all military branches.
- c. Encourage all Military Services to share access to their EFMP databases on a needs basis to improve enrollment and enrollment updates, and to provide family support services to all Service members regardless of branch.
- d. Promote coordination between health services and family support systems.

Recommendation #6: Endorsed for Immediate Action

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

Discussion/results: Because relocating families continue to experience challenges when transferring children between schools, it is time to assess the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children. The Council was informed that such an assessment is possible as there are now military liaisons assigned at all 50 state councils and Washington, D.C. Ms. Stephanie Barna recommended such an initiative move forward in the report to the Secretary of Defense, but to include the Council's intent to address the issue immediately through those who have authority to take action.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Identify and promote Interstate Compact best practices, especially in geographic areas where military parents are experiencing frustrations.
- b. Promote Interstate Compact resources and training tools for parents and local school officials provided by DoDEA and accessible online at <http://www.dodea.edu/partnership/interstatecompact.cfm>.

Recommendation #7: Endorsed

Maintain Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) 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.

Discussion/results: Spouse professional licensure across state lines continues to be a concern for many military families because far too many spouses are unable to earn income in their career fields because of license and credential restrictions from state to state. Mr. Marcus Beauregard told the Council that he expects spouse licensure and credentialing to be a key DSLO issue in 2018. He added that DSLO is looking at Interstate Compacts as a way to improve licensure portability.

With this in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to:

- a. Review programs that support military spouses who have professional licenses or certifications and who PCS to other states.
- b. Monitor progress on spouse licensure and certification efforts.
- c. Publicize state policies and practices, which allow licenses to transfer (e.g. license transfers, license reciprocity, license by endorsement) while continuing to standardize acceptance of good standing licenses across state lines.
- d. Hire additional personnel to support DSLO work on this issue.

Recommendation #8: Endorsed for Immediate Action

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

Discussion/results: Ms. Stephanie Barna told the Council that Mr. Tom Shull, CEO of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, will provide an information paper and/or an update briefing to the Council on the impact of the Veterans Online Shopping Benefit. She will ask those with authority to take action.

Recommendation #9: Reduce the Risk of Child Abuse and Neglect (Council agreed to further review and discuss this recommendation before taking any further actions)

Review research findings related to the unique challenges female Service members may experience with regard to reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Discussion/results: Following a brief discussion, Dr. David Rubin suggested that this recommendation be considered as a potential focus area topic for review once research findings become available.

Recommendation #10: Endorsed

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

Discussion/results: LTG Gwen Bingham told the Council that while good progress is being made on important DSLO issues, there is still more to be done.

With that in mind, the Council specifically requests the Department of Defense to continue providing briefing materials, support resources, and updates for community educational purposes to MFRC and Military OneSource on topics of high importance, including:

- a. Financial readiness and education of Service members and their families
- b. Blended Retirement System (BRS) and required training at various touchpoints across the military lifecycle; monitor BRS implementation
- c. Military OneSource
- d. TRICARE and health care related issues that affect family readiness

Presented as an FY2018 Focus Area: Support for Surviving/Gold Star Families -- Endorsed as a Recommendation for Immediate Action.

Discussion/results: On behalf of Brigadier General Kathleen Cook, USAF, her representative Mr. Carl Buchanan recommended that DoD synchronize language and department-wide requirements to extend support to surviving and/or Gold Star family members for consistency between the Military Services. After considerable discussion, the Council agreed to recommend that DoD take the following for immediate action:

- a. Ensure DoD and Military Service Gold Star family support policies are consistent.
- b. Expand DSLO efforts with states regarding dependent education for Survivors/Gold Star family members as there is no clear consistency between states for entitlements and coverage.

Presented as an FY2018 Focus Area: Continue Support for Families with Special Needs, including Family Support, Health Care, 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. Endorsed as a Recommendation for Immediate Action.

Discussion/results: Recommendations regarding on-going support for special needs families were submitted and subsequently integrated by three Council member sponsors: LTG Gwen Bingham (U.S. Army), Ms. Karen Ruedisueli (National Military Family Association), and Ms. Jennifer Luscher (Navy Reserve Component Spouse). Four key sub-topics were identified and endorsed by the Council: (1) Improved integration of Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), health care, and special education components of service delivery; (2) Standardization of Respite Care across all Military Services; (3) On-going briefings (progress updates) requested for MFRC; and (4) Help for families who need to understand any and all family support services beyond “inform and refer.”

With that in mind, the Council specifically requests that the Department of Defense:

- a. Build on the progress and synergy already created as a high priority effort.
- b. Break down barriers that limit availability and access to needed services at any location, for all families, regardless of Military Service.
- c. Address mobility and portability areas of concern, especially for specialty care and education needs of special education students.
- d. Standardize the funding and delivery of Respite Care.
- e. Address family expectations regarding the EFMP assignment screening process for special education services for relocations of families within the continental United States.
- f. Address family expectations regarding the Individual Education Plan process, State Medicaid Waiver application process, and process for identifying and connecting with community-based resources.
- g. Explain available family support services to special needs families -- go beyond "inform and refer."

Recommendations for FY2018 MFRC Focus Areas:

There were 18 military family readiness topics presented, reviewed and discussed by Council members as potential FY2018 Focus Areas. Due to an anticipated limited number of FY2018 MFRC meetings, a goal was set for selecting three or four Focus Area topics from the list of 18. Several topics were subsequently integrated at the suggestion of their Council member sponsors and one topic was dropped. Following the first round of voting, the following decisions were made:

- a. **Financial Literacy & Monitoring of Blended Retirement System Implementation**
Endorsed as an FY2017 Recommendation for Immediate Action
- b. **Dental Insurance Coverage Access to Care**
Not selected
- c. **Naval Services FamilyLine Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Educational Materials**
Integrated with item "o" below
- d. **Spouse Licensure**
Endorsed as an FY2017 Recommendation and as an FY2018 Focus Area
- e. **Emergency Readiness Training for Family Members**
Integrated with item "o" below
- f. **Reliance on Medicaid for Children After Service Member Discharge**
Not selected
- g. **PTSD and TBI Invisible Wounds of War**
Selected as an FY2018 Focus Area
- h. **MFRC Futures Planning**
Integrated with item "i" below
- i. **Child and Youth Well-Being**
Selected as an FY2018 Focus Area

- j. **Data Sharing Agreements with School Districts, Communities, and Youth Serving Organizations**
Integrated with item “i” above
- k. **Scalable Partnerships with School Districts, Communities, and Youth Serving Organizations**
Integrated with item “i” above and “p” below
- l. **Special Needs Families**
Endorsed as an FY2017 Recommendation and FY2017 Recommendation for Immediate Action
- m. **Education Benefits**
Not selected
- n. **Installation Child Care Programs as a Readiness Issue**
Integrated with item “i” above
- o. **Defense State Liaison Office Updates**
Endorsed as an FY2017 Recommendation and FY2017 Recommendation for Immediate Action
- p. **Community Partnerships and Collaboratives**
Integrated with item “c” and “e” above; Selected as an FY2018 Focus Area
- q. **Support for Surviving/Gold Star Families**
Endorsed as an FY2017 Recommendation for Immediate Action
- r. **Morale, Welfare and Recreation Funding Standards** – Dropped by Council member sponsor

FY2018 Focus Area Intent:

Members of the MFRC Council selected the following Focus Areas and explained their intent for FY2018 reviews.

1. Spouse Licensure.

The Council specifically wants to:

- a. Determine how the spouse’s ability to use a professional license or credential immediately after a Permanent Change of Station relation impacts military families.
- b. Learn how to educate military family members on programs that are already in place that allow family members to work outside of the states they are licensed in.
- c. Explore ways to appeal to states that do not recognize licenses earned outside of their states.
- d. Learn how DSLO will share information to keep MFRC and spouses informed of progress made to recognize professional licenses and certifications by each state.

2. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury as Signature Injuries of Current War.

The Council specifically wants to address the following:

- a. DoD's progress in PTSD treatment
- b. Eliminating mental health stigma
- c. Ability to provide vicarious trauma treatment to spouses and children
- d. Incorporation of complementary alternative medicine to treatment (e.g. Build Spiritual Support offered by VA for moral injury; Equine Therapy offered by VA)
- e. Standards of medical practice for veterans versus active duty
- f. Removal of barriers that restrict the ability for military medical services to provide flexible evidence-based care

3. Make Child and Youth Well-Being for those with parents serving as active duty, national guard or reserve forces an ongoing priority for MFRC.

The Council specifically wants to:

- a. Review the current and future state for Military Services capabilities and capacities to support quality programs for children and youth, both on and off installations as well as for the reserve components.
- b. Address priorities for young children and parents (e.g. New Parent Support Programs).
- c. Address implications for Child Find and children and youth with special needs.
- d. Address the trends, progress, and areas for concern associated with child abuse and neglect.
- e. Address access to quality behavioral health providers, both military and through civilian providers (address TRICARE challenges, etc.).
- f. Monitor the efficacy of the follow-up process for immediate family members after a Service member ideates or commits suicide (risk for children).
- g. Review standards, including how data is used, who uses the data, and for what purpose the data is used (e.g. the process and actions taken by the Office of the Secretary of Defense to evaluate or sunset programs).

4. Continue to Use 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 specifically wants to address:

- a. Explore how Military OneSource can be incorporated into this effort, especially using existing technology, social media platforms, and mobile applications.
- b. Learn about scalable local examples of partnerships with school districts, communities and youth serving organizations. Special emphasis areas should include:

1. DoDEA Education Partnership Initiatives
 2. Standards and efficacy data of the Military and Family Life Consultant programs related to children and families
 3. Medical “Home” concepts in practice:
 - a) School-based behavioral health (Army initiative -- Mike Faran, MD and Paul Ban, PhD)
 - b) Autism clinics (Col Eric Flake, MD)
 - c) Teen wellness clinics in schools (Col Keith Lemmon, MD)
- c. Promote or advertise community programs that help train the community for disaster preparedness whether natural or man-made.

Closing remarks:

Ms. Stephanie Barna thanked members for their strong, on-going commitment and outstanding contributions during 2017. She reminded them to make a note of meeting dates for FY2018.

The meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

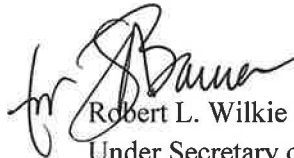
Next meeting: December 4, 2017, from 1300-1500, Pentagon Library & Conference Center, Room B6.

Submitted by:



Randy N. Eltringham, EdD
Designated Federal Officer
Military Family Readiness Council

Certified by:



Robert L. Wilkie
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel
and Readiness