

## **FAMILY SUPPORT**

**Q1. What have the Services learned about family readiness/family support since the Persian Gulf War and other contingency operations?**

**A1.** Over the past decade, the Military Services have substantially strengthened family support infrastructures and programs. Each Service has trained their members and families to be ready for unexpected contingencies; this training includes both the Active component (AC), and the Reserve component (RC). The realization that family readiness is a key component of mission readiness has led to the expansion of family support programs. The Military Services and their Reserve components are ready to meet the challenges associated with the current mobilization.

**Q2. What have the Services done to prepare their family members for contingency operations?**

**A2.** Each Service has Family Centers that are designed to support members and families from the AC and the RC. The Department of Defense (DoD) has promoted Total Force collaboration so that any service or family member can access the nearest family support services regardless of military affiliation.

The Services have come to rely on their Reserve components for more and more mission support. With that in mind, family readiness has gotten more and more attention. Each RC has a family support infrastructure in place. These family support infrastructures have been continually exercised, for example during the Presidential Call-ups for Southwest Asia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Units, through the family service centers, offer pre- and post-deployment briefs. Family support organizations are directly tied in with the chain of command in order to keep the families “in the loop” and self-reliant while Service members are mobilized and/or deployed.

**Q3. What information is available concerning family support services to families of Reservists, and whom should they contact?**

**A3.** Families should always maintain contact with the military member’s Reserve or National Guard unit. Each unit has a command-designated representative who has responsibility for family readiness. Designated family readiness points of contact at the unit level will have information unique to that unit and will be best able to keep families informed, within security constraints. Additional resources include the Family Centers operated by the Services aboard major installations. Family Centers are staffed by knowledgeable personnel who can assist Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard members and families by providing information, referral services, emergency family assistance, and related family support.

**Q4. Are there any specific places where Reserve and National Guard members and their families can get more information?**

**A4.** Yes. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OASD/RA) has a website that has information on family readiness. The website address is: <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/html/family.htm>. The OASD/RA website includes the “Guide to Reserve Family Member Benefits”, information on TRICARE, and links to other items of interest.

Additionally, the seven Reserve components all have informative websites. The addresses are:

Army National Guard: <http://www-ngb5.ngb.army.mil>

Army Reserve: <http://www.army.mil/usar>

Naval Reserve: <http://www.lifelines2000.org/ombudsman/index.asp>

Marine Corps Reserve: <http://www.marforres.usmc.mil>

Air National Guard: <http://www.ang.af.mil>

Air Force Reserve: <http://www.afreserve.com>

Coast Guard Reserve: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/reserve/reshmpg.html>