

The **Guard and Reserve Support Network** is a Department of Defense partnership of programs supporting the needs of the National Guard and Reserve community. **GRSN** is comprised of:



TABLE OF CONTENTS



IT CAN TURN ON A DIME

Readiness of the Guard and Reserve

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Mark Fayloga

A coordinated terrorist attack occurred in Brussels recently, shaking the core of the European Union. This follows similar atrocities in Turkey, Syria, France, the Ivory Coast, and here in the United States.

If there's one thing we should take to heart, it's this: life can turn on a dime.

But this is nothing new for Guard and Reserve Service members. At any moment, they can be tagged for mobilization, and their lives can take a sudden and unpredictable turn. Yet, it's what they train and prepare for. Also, it's the environment we have been operating under consistently for more than fifteen years.

More than 920,000 Guardsmen and Reservists have deployed since 9/11, and nearly 25,000 Guard and Reserve Service members are currently mobilized around the world. Deployments haven't stopped for the Reserve Components, and it's unlikely they will. In fact, the opposite is true: Guard and Reserve deployments will most likely increase in the coming years.

In the past few weeks, the Army has asked Congress to nearly double the funding for involuntary mobilizations. If the proposed budget for 2017 is passed, we may see a doubling of mobilizations of Guardsmen and Reservists. These additional deployments by the Reserve Components will offset readiness strains within the active duty force and support combatant commands with emerging missions across the world.

These facts shows us that the National Guard and

Reserve are continuing to be relied upon—now more than ever—as we transition from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and face increasing active duty force reductions.

This is exactly why we talk about readiness so often. It's not just a buzzword; it's an axiom, a drumbeat, and a new normal. We use the word to communicate the capability and necessity of our military to deploy when they are needed during prolonged conflict.

But, what is readiness? It means a lot of different things depending on whom you ask.

One form of readiness is portrayed in our Guardsmen and Reservists, who can be called on to mobilize by the thousands at the drop of a hat. No one can predict when the next disaster will occur, intentional or not. This uncertainty requires the Guard and Reserve to be well-equipped, administratively prepared, and properly manned with trained, combat-ready personnel to support whatever mission comes their way.

And in another sense, we talk about the readiness of the Service members as it relates to their families, their employers, and their communities. If those aspects of Service members' lives are out of balance, they aren't ready to deploy or focus on their mission.

This is where the Guard and Reserve Support Network comes into play.

We're not just making sure Guard and Reserve Service members are financially, legally, physically, and psychologically ready, but that their families and employers

are, as well. If the Service members are facing problems in any of these areas, or if they have conflict in their relationships with their families and employers, they risk being unable to deploy and support missions at home and abroad.

Mobilizations put a heavy strain on families, and we're just beginning to fully understand and address the problems deployments have on marriages, children, and psychological health. Families need to know what to expect, know the resources available to them, and have access to the support they need to weather the challenges they face when their loved ones are deployed and when they return. This is why we push for Service members and their families to attend our Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program events.

Simultaneously, employers of Guard and Reserve Service members need to be aware of upcoming mobilizations, employment rights and obligations of Service members, and the responsibilities they have as part of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Our employers have been stalwart supporters of our Guard and Reserve Service members. They make sure that when our members deploy and come back, they return to their civilian jobs, helping to ensure a smooth transition for the Service member and their family before and after

deployment.

This is why Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve exists and why more than 4,500 volunteers work with, mediate between, and recognize the outstanding support employers provide to the Reserve Components. (If you haven't seen the finalists for the 2016 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom award, see them here.)

But, our support network is only as successful as the partnerships we build at the local, state, and national levels to provide services and support to all corners of the nation. We collaborate with a host of veterans' organizations and other agencies, including the Department of Labor, Military OneSource, Veterans Affairs, and the Military Family Learning Network to reach folks where they live. Together, we provide support to more than 800,000 Guard and Reserve members, their families, and employers.

Whether you're an employer, a partner, a child, a service provider, or a friend, you, too, can be a part of the Guard and Reserve Support Network.

Take a look at our resources online. Become a volunteer. Share information about our upcoming events and award ceremonies. Help us ensure the Guard and Reserve community is prepared and ready.

Because it can all turn on a dime.



Throughout history and across cultures, families have been, and continue to be, one of the most enduring institutions in the world. And, as you probably know, they're also one of the most complex and inter-dependent institutions in existence.

So what exactly makes a family strong, and what does "strong family functioning" have to do with it?

Strong families are dynamic and responsive to changing needs, developmental tasks, and challenges. Strong families celebrate their successes and learn from their failures. They also have clearly defined roles, especially between parents and their children.

It's important that professionals, institutions, and organizations who work with families recognize two key features in order to help develop strong families:

- Diversity of families
- Key skills and competencies found in healthy and well-functioning families.

Here is a list of 10 components you can use to build strong families:

1. Communication. Communication involves family members sharing meaningful information among each other. Family members communicate with one another in a variety of methods, including verbal, non-verbal, written, and electronic messages. Supportive communication has the potential to increase intimacy and connections among family members; while hurtful, angry communication can

damage relationships.

2. Emotional Regulation. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to modulate emotional reactions to other people and stressful situations. People who can regulate their emotions can cope effectively with significant challenges, and don't become easily overwhelmed with emotional distress.

3. Family Cohesion. Family Cohesion is the level of support and commitment family members have towards one another. This is often reflected in supportive family involvement, family bonding, and family climate.

- A key component of intimate relationships is intimacy, or the level of connection and closeness partners feel towards each other. Couples that have a strong positive relationship support one another, regularly express appreciation, communicate openly, have high levels of trust, they know they can depend upon each other.
- Parent-Child. A strong bond between the parent and child is important for family cohesiveness. Children are well-served when they feel a strong bond with the adults most responsible for their physical and psychological development.

4. Family Recreation and Leisure Time. Strong families spend time together doing activities that do not involve work or household chores. Family leisure time can be divided into two different categories.



- Core family leisure is defined as those activities that are “common, every day, low-cost, relatively accessible, often home-based activities that many families do frequently.”
- Balance family leisure consist of “activities that are generally less common, less frequent, more out of the ordinary, and usually not home-based thus providing novel experiences.”

5. Financial Management. Strong families work hard to minimize negative stress and to cope effectively. In this way, they strive to create a family culture that operates from a healthy, mutually supportive standpoint. Strong families use healthy communication and coping skills related to financial issues and work together to avoid accruing large amounts of debts.

6. Prosocial Family Values. Parents are always teaching their children about family norms and values both verbally and nonverbally. How families spend their time, treat one another, help others, and work together when challenges arise all communicate individual and family values. Prosocial family values can help prevent children and especially adolescents from engaging in negative and antisocial behavior.

7. Resilience. Resiliency relates to a family’s ability to adapt to change. Some common changes that families face include parenting children birth to adulthood, caring for an aging family member, or adjusting to parental development. Families that are resilient to change generally have adequate social and economic resources.

8. Religiosity and Spirituality. Families that engage in religious or spiritual activities are promoting healthy development. Although no universal definition exists for the two terms, research continues to be widely cited by scholars who study the impact of religion and spirituality on individuals.

- Religiosity and spirituality provide a context from which couples can view their marriage and parenting as an

important institution that deserves their attention. This can lead to better family interactions and cohesiveness, while decreasing the risk of divorce, marital conflict, infidelity, domestic violence, and child physical abuse.

- Parent-Child. Parental involvement in formal religious organizations is a predictor for positive parent-youth relationships. Parental involvement in a religious organization increases parental supervisory, affective, and disciplinary practices within the relationship. Additionally, having active religious or spiritual life decreases negative behaviors in adolescents such as substance abuse, early sexual involvement, delinquent behavior, etc.

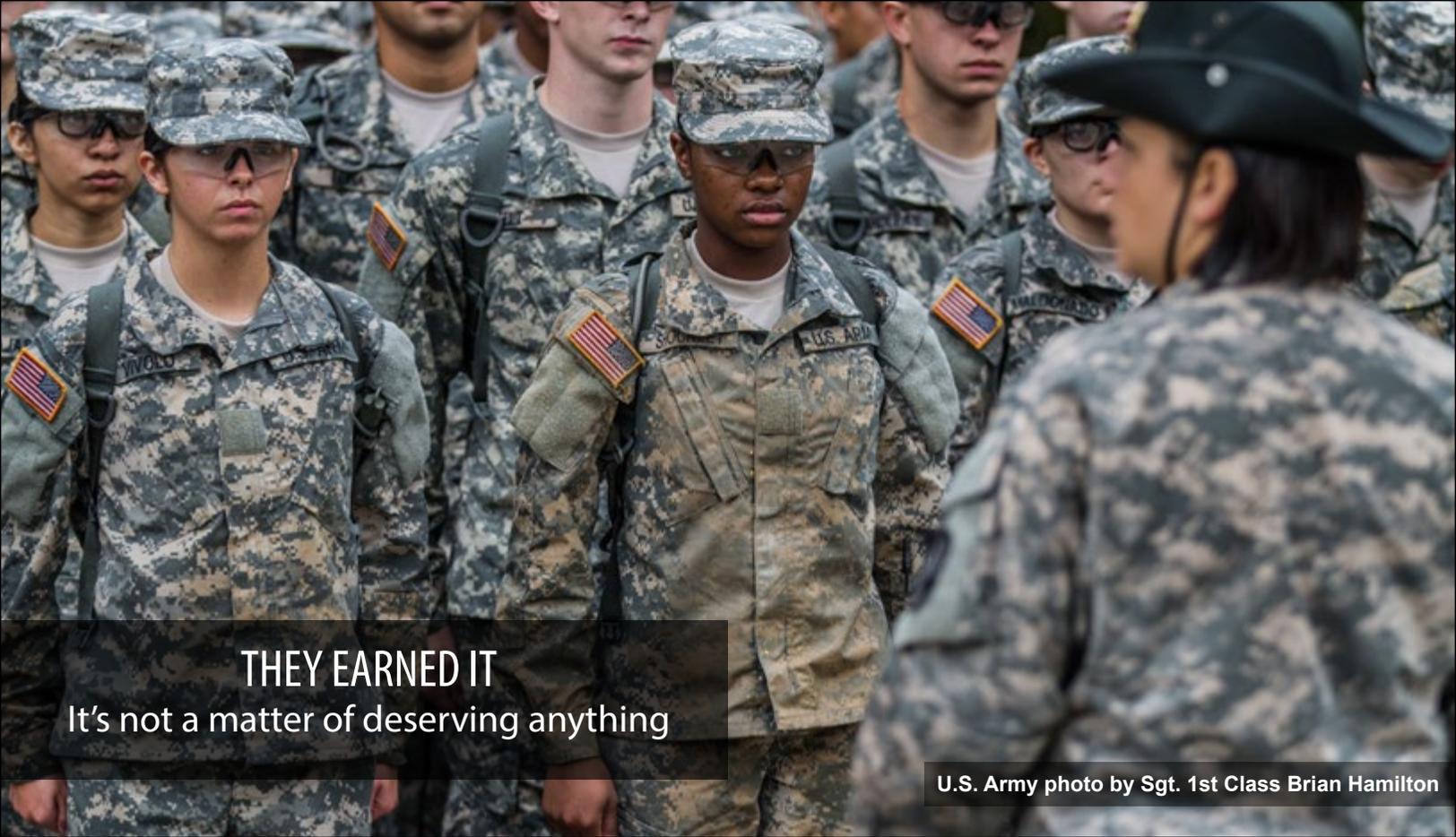
9. Routines and Rules. Routines and rituals play an important role in increasing predictability in family life, providing opportunities for regular communication, and strengthening the cohesion in relationships through the celebration of life events.

- While many families benefit from routines and rituals, they can serve as a particularly important factor in counteracting the negative stresses associated with moving to a new country or location.

10. Military Readiness. This term refers to the abilities of military families to acclimate to the military life cycle, including notification of deployment, absence of the Service member(s), and reintegration of the Service member(s) into the family unit.

You can find this information, discussion points, plus the complete Research Brief at: <https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu>. Military REACH project is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Family Readiness Policy and the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with the University of Minnesota.





THEY EARNED IT

It's not a matter of deserving anything

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brian Hamilton

How often have you heard the phrase National Guard and Reserve Service members “deserve our support?”

I hear it a lot. Then again, I've worked with thousands of employers over the years who have committed their support to employing our country's uniformed Service members. And it's not just employers—we hear the phrase being rebounded across the country by politicians, veterans' organizations, and countless patriots who have served or know someone who has.

And I've used it too, a lot. I've worked with Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve for many years, and I've echoed that sentiment in speeches, ceremonies, meetings, and engagements with the media ... a thousand times at least.

But the more I think about the phrase, the less I believe “deserve our support” fits. It's not a matter of deserving anything. It's not that they deserve any of the entitlements, benefits, or support they receive. It's not that they are owed it, are worthy of it, or have some claim to it as a reward for their service—though I believe they do.

Rather, they've earned it, and they continue to earn it every day.

They earn it by responding to domestic emergencies, like they're doing now in Flint, Michigan, like they did with Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Sandy, the California state fires, and the South Carolina floods. They showed the world that their compassion, professionalism, and courage continually safeguards our way of life, not just abroad, but here at home as well.

We also rely heavily on Guardsmen and Reservists to augment active-duty forces. More than 900,000 have deployed

since 9/11, and more than 25,000 are deployed at this very moment. They are the backbone of our Total Force, and they are becoming more and more important as the military transitions from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Reserve service is not easy. National Guard and Reserve members strike a complicated balance between civilian and military commitments. They not only mobilize and deploy for months—sometimes years during their career—but are also required to participate in ongoing training and fulfill a variety of additional service requirements. These commitments take them away from their families, friends, jobs, and education. But we ask it of them because we need them; it's important, it matters.

This is why thousands of employers have signed Statements of Support and work together to hire Reservists, provide support when they're activated, and help them reintegrate when they come home.

This is also why employers haven't grown tired of supporting our men and women in uniform. They know when the time comes, our Guard and Reserve members need to be ready to deploy, to respond when disaster strikes, and to provide the crucial support our nation needs during times of conflict.

National Guard and Reserve members earn our support every time they put on that uniform and provide training to security forces in Afghanistan, protect the waterways to ensure international trade, stop drugs from entering into the United States, or save thousands of lives when natural disasters affect entire communities.





USAFR UNVEILS COUPLE'S PROGRAM

The Couples Enrichment Program

The Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program has added a class aimed at couples to its weekend slate of deployment-related training options.

The Couples Enrichment Program is designed to help those who are married, engaged or dating delve into their relationships to better understand themselves and their partners in a more profound way so they can build and maintain healthy unions, said Chaplain (Maj.) Joshua Kim, the instructor.

He adapted the program from one aimed at civilians and taught the first version to 17 couples Jan. 30-31 at a Yellow Ribbon training weekend in Denver.

"It's a privilege to have a couple tell you about who they are, what their challenges are and to look for ways to become stronger as a couple," said Kim. "My favorite moment is always being invited into people's lives."

The chaplain is a member of the 459th Air Refueling Wing at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, and served the past two years as its fulltime wing representative for Yellow Ribbon, which promotes the well-being of reservists and their families by connecting them with resources before and after deployments.

Kim saw the need for couple's training when the spouses of two 459th reservists committed suicide in 2015. Afterward, he said, he kept trying to figure out what he and the wing could do to help reservists and their families so such deaths never happened again.

"My initial thought was some type of marriage conference," Kim said.

He reached out to his wing and higher headquarters, but was told there was no money to fund it.

By coincidence, he talked about Air Force suicides with Mary Hill, the Yellow Ribbon program manager, and told her about his vision for a couple's conference. Hill asked him to develop some breakouts for couples to provide something new for those who had previously attended several Yellow Ribbon events.

Kim researched various programs for possible course material and ultimately tailored a program that the Air National Guard was already using to fit into the Yellow Ribbon agenda parameters. Seventeen couples attended his initial class.

"The material is definitely pertinent to what I believe everybody in the military is going through both pre- and

post-deployment," said Master Sgt. Eric Amidon of the 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis-St Paul Air Station, Minnesota. "I believe it could help strengthen relationships prior to leaving and also strengthen relationships after returning."

Amidon's wife, Lynn, liked that the material had an encouraging start.

"It was about looking at what's right with you, instead of what's wrong with you," she said.

The Amidons appreciated Kim's openness and ability to relate to everyone in class.

"He shares his own personal stories and his own personal experiences with you so it makes you go, 'Oh yeah, he's a regular guy talking to us,'" Lynn Amidon said. "Plus he kept it positive and geared in a growth direction."

Kim was impressed with the willingness of participants to open up about their marriages to him and the other couples.

"I love teaching (it)," Kim exclaims. "I just explain the curriculum and the material pretty much teaches itself."

The Couples Enrichment Program is aimed at pairs attending their second post-deployment Yellow Ribbon event. Kim sent them home with material to complete as a workbook and said he thinks couples who completed the course now have the tools to get their marriages where they want them to be.

"I couldn't have asked for more for what I was trying to accomplish," he said.

Kim said he hasn't forgotten the Airmen and their families who motivated him to create the Couples Enrichment Program.

"Not only do deployers and their families need this program but young Airmen who aren't deploying and their families need (it)," Kim said. "My long-term goal would be to find a way to get some type of relationship enhancement to every local base and every traditional reservist."

The training will be a permanent class for Yellow Ribbon, which began in 2008 following a congressional mandate for the Department of Defense to assist reservists and National Guard members in maintaining resiliency as they transition between their military and civilian roles.

Each year, the Air Force Reserve program trains 7,000 reservists and loved ones in education benefits, health care, retirement information and more through a series of weekend conferences around the nation.





DoD FAMILY READINESS AWARDS Seven Reserve units named

The Defense Department today honored Guard and Reserve units for their outstanding support of family readiness efforts that ultimately strengthen the total force and nation, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs said.

Stephanie Barna told attendees at the 16th Annual Reserve Family Readiness Award ceremony at the Pentagon that the event brings together people who believe in one core truth, “That the readiness and well-being of our National Guard and Reserve families is absolutely critical to the readiness of the Reserve Component, to the readiness of our total force, and to the readiness of our nation.”

Barna cohosted the event with retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, president of the Military Officers Association of America.

The accomplishments of the honorees range from individual acts of service and support for families to the establishment of programs that serve Guard and Reserve families across entire geographical regions, Barna said.

She said she was proud to read the nomination packages, and was grateful for the caring, selfless and “truly amazing” acts that supported the Guard and Reserve military families.

“I and everyone else in this room cannot thank you enough,” she said. “We are in your debt.”

The contributions of family readiness groups underwrite the success of the Defense Department’s mission and collective national defense, Atkins said.

“We’re here today to recognize that group of superstars that gives so much to the families of our American heroes,”

he said.

The support of family readiness groups gives service members comfort and peace of mind, Atkins said. When the nation calls, members of the guard and reserve are ready, he added.

“You’ve made the lives of those who you serve with less daunting, you’ve allowed our heroes to truly focus on the mission, and quite frankly, you’ve made America better,” Atkins said.

The winners received plaques from the Defense Department and Military Officers Association of America. In addition, MOAA contributed \$1,000 to each of the winning units to support family programs.

This year’s winners are:

- **Army National Guard:** Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Normal, Illinois
- **Army Reserve:** Forward Support Company, 980th Engineer Battalion, Austin, Texas
- **Marine Corps Reserve:** Combat Logistics Battalion 453, Aurora, Colorado
- **Navy Reserve:** Navy Operational Support Center North Island, San Diego, California
- **Air National Guard:** 157th Air Refueling Wing, Pease ANGB, New Hampshire
- **Air Force Reserve:** 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- **Coast Guard Reserve:** Port Security Unit 308, Kiln, Mississippi 



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About

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a DoD-wide effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their families and communities, by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle.

YRRP LAUNCHES UPGRADED WEBSITE

www.YellowRibbon.mil

ensuring that National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families can access information on healthcare, education, employment, and financial and legal benefits.

Latest News



WHAT MAKES A STRONG FAMILY?

April 4th, 2016

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is proud to unveil its newly upgraded website at www.yellowribbon.mil. The upgrade was conducted to improve access to vital information and resources supporting National Guard and Reserve Service members, their families, and YRRP support staff.

The website upgrade features a streamlined and easy-to-navigate design that accommodates the growing use of mobile devices and tablets. Service members and their families can now easily find and register for YRRP events, as well as access a large catalog of virtual courses, news, information, and resources.

The site also offers Service members and their families the chance to connect with a variety of military-related service providers, including YRRP staff and program coordinators who can assist them with event registration and additional resources.

“Our goal is to connect Guardsmen and Reservists with information they can use to address whatever challenges they face,” said Peter Weeks, YRRP’s Director. “Wherever they may be in the deployment-cycle—whether they’re about to leave or have come back and are reintegrating into their communities—YRRP is here to provide the support they need.”

The upgrade was coordinated in partnership with the Reserve Components and Joint Knowledge Online, a Department of Defense organization that provides access to online joint training and information resources.

Website visitors can also subscribe using their e-mail to stay connected with YRRP and the Guard and Reserve Support Network, a partnership of programs comprised of YRRP, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Hero2Hired, and Service Member and Family Readiness.

