

# Welcome to the Commander's Family Readiness Toolkit



**Family readiness programs are a command responsibility.** The command's leadership (which includes senior unit enlisted personnel as its most vital element) and demonstrated concern for families before, during, and after a deployment/mobilization can directly impact the success of many of your unit's efforts. Commanders must clearly articulate their goals and vision for family readiness. Senior non-commissioned officers' full support of this command vision is also critical. Empowering families to be self-sufficient, especially during times of mobilization and training, pays immeasurable dividends to unit commands and personnel.

Family readiness cannot be achieved through "catch-up" activities conducted just before or during training or a unit deployment. Instead, **family readiness must be continuously promoted through a well-planned and thoughtfully executed program.** Family readiness has a direct impact on:

- Overall unit morale
- Unit retention
- Participation in family related unit activities
- Common understanding and access to available government benefits/entitlement programs (e.g., SGLI, TRICARE, and Exchange/Commissary benefits)

All too often, **family readiness programs mistakenly over-focus on the immediate family** (spouse and children) to the exclusion of others. **Every individual has personal concerns outside of your command**, whether it is with parents, siblings, significant others or even a pet. While it is not specifically your command's task to yield to all of the details in your member's lives, it is extremely important to be all-inclusive in the efforts you make to ensure everyone in your unit is ready to deploy whenever and wherever required.

## **The Command Family Readiness Program**

Educating unit members about their benefits and entitlements is the most fundamental and yet most challenging aspect of any Family Readiness Program. It is fundamental because every member must understand their basic benefits and entitlements and be aware of the vast network of support agencies and organizations created to support them and their families. It is also complex because the regulations and laws that govern them change often so it is critical that your unit members have the most current and relevant information. There are literally tens of thousands of people in many organizations who make it their duty to support Military Families. Connecting them to members of your unit is a continual task and **no command staff can do it well without the assistance of volunteers and organizations that can fill the gaps.**



## **Benefits and Entitlements**

There are a vast array of benefits and entitlements for every service member and they are too numerous to outline in this Toolkit. Provided here are links to valuable documents and presentations that will provide your command the tools necessary to educate and brief your personnel and their families.

### **[Guard and Reserve Family Member Benefits Guide](#)**

### **[USERRA / ESGR Power Point Presentation](#)**

Because TRICARE is such an important benefit it is subject to continually legislated improvements, it is most appropriate to consult the TRICARE web site for the latest changes to this entitlement. The TRICARE web site has several PowerPoint briefings designed to accurately inform members of their medical entitlements. Follow the link below to access this site:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/briefings/>

### **Other Publications**

There are many regulations and directives in every service to guide you in the conduct of any unit Family Readiness Program. Although you are responsible for knowing those of your particular component, if your unit has its members scattered over a wide area, understanding what the other services have to offer can better equip your personnel to handle personal and family issues. **Do not limit yourself to one (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard) specific site and resource.** Be familiar with them all. Listed below are some outstanding command resources:

All-Service Deployment Link Military Family Support Information:

[http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/deploy/family/family\\_support.shtml](http://deploymentlink.osd.mil/deploy/family/family_support.shtml)

### **[Air Force Readiness Edge Commanders and Supervisors Guide](#)**

### **[Air Force Readiness Edge Family Guide](#)**

### **[Family Readiness Supporting Directives, Regulations and Orders](#)**

Each Guard and Reserve component follows Department of Defense Instructions (DoDI's) and their service specific regulations and orders on family readiness. There are also manuals and pamphlets that provide useful information on family readiness within each service. Service web site addresses are provided in the Website Resource section. As a starting point, the following link provides access to specific DoD service directive sites:

<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/links.html>

### **The Personal and Family Readiness Toolkit**

To identify more resources you can use to educate and inform your unit members and their families, refer to the Family Readiness Toolkit. This Toolkit addresses issues ranging from Personal Financial Planning to Mortuary affairs. If every military member in your unit became familiar with the contents of this Toolkit, your task of caring for their welfare will become far easier.

### **[The Personal and Family Readiness Toolkit](#)**

## **The Family Readiness Group**

The goal of an FRG Family Readiness Group (FRG) is to establish a network that enables unit members to effectively gather and distribute information, resolve problems, and maintain family mutual support. The FRG is a command-sponsored organization of volunteer family members, civilian employees, service members and other individuals associated with your unit. (FRGs should strive to include all unit members: officer, enlisted and civilian.) The mission of the unit FRG is to:



- Foster knowledgeable and resilient families - Using local resources
- Act as the extension of the unit - Providing official and accurate command information
- Provide family mutual support - Connecting unit families with needed assistance
- Provide the vital link between command and family – Building unit morale and cohesion
- Provide feedback to the command - Closing the loop between command and personnel
- Directly support rear detachments - Ensuring that no one gets left behind or forgotten

## **FRG Funding**

The FRG is not a MWR activity. FRG activities are supported through appropriated funds like other Command program. Government Office Space and Equipment is authorized. They may be staffed with volunteers and must be supervised. Volunteer expenses may be paid using appropriated funds and reimbursable expenses must be handled in accordance with local regulations. Use of official mail, vehicles, equipment and spaces may be authorized provided that they are for official use only in support of Unit FRG activities through the commander's approval.

## **FRG Designated Office Space**

Empower and legitimize your FRG by designating specific office space and equipment for the unit's family readiness program. Ideally this space (often referred to as the family readiness center- FRC) includes Internet capable computers, telephones, a copier, a scanner, administrative supplies, and bulletin boards with the latest deployment information. A space for FRG meetings and a separate area for children is a plus. The family program staff should be available to meet and assist family members or refer them to the appropriate service agencies. If available, computers should be accessible for family members to send e-mails to deployed members. If your unit has a toll-free phone number, an extension should be located in that office.

## **FRG Structure**

FRGs must be organized and structured to be effective. Draft a memorandum and establish standard operating procedures (SOP). There is no set organizational chart or standard that must be followed. The actual organization you choose depends on the need of your unit, the support system, and the needs and desires of its members. A basic FRG structure includes:

- The commander
- A chairperson or coordinator
- A treasurer
- A unit administrator or personnel specialist
- A secretary
- An information or outreach coordinator
- A sponsorship coordinator
- Family readiness program representatives

## **FRG Informal Funds**

For FRGs, financial resources often come from fundraising. In accordance with local policy and DoD 5500.7R Joint Ethics Regulation, commanders may authorize FRGs to maintain informal funds limited to expenses consistent with the fund such as:

- Newsletters
- Purely social unit activities
- Holiday parties
- Volunteer recognition
- Unit send-off and welcome home activities

### **Training FRG Leadership**

Effective training of FRG staff and volunteers is the product of careful planning and execution. It's important for training to be productive and professional. Since time is a precious commodity for everyone, to reduce the personal impact of training, plan for it in advance and devise training calendars and agendas. To make volunteer training more palatable, offer childcare if possible.

Capitalize on the experience and knowledge of your entire family readiness team. Both unit members and volunteers can provide valuable training. Look to your chain of command for other training resources. Community resources are often low cost or free and can provide valuable expertise and information.

Tailor volunteer training to the needs and desires of your volunteers. Review volunteer job descriptions to make sure that essential skills and informational needs are identified. Be sure to ask your volunteers what they believe are their critical training needs. Volunteer training is not a one-time event. Like unit training, volunteer training should be viewed as a continuous development process. Augment Formal classes with on-the-job training. Whenever possible, pair experienced volunteers with new volunteers to serve as coaches and mentors.

Some units go to great lengths to train their FRG volunteers. One unit conducted extensive training prior to deployment to support the effective execution of FRG tasks at home station. Training topics included:

- Family crisis response and referral
- Suicide warning signs
- Legal information
- Family readiness group organization and operations
- Family advocacy
- American Red Cross capabilities
- Childcare options
- Sponsorship standards
- Basic military justice
- Supply accountability
- Personnel policies and accountability
- Chaplain support services
- Casualty procedures
- Basic finance
- Public affairs
- Physical security

One unit conducted situational training exercises to ensure FRG and rear detachment personnel would respond effectively to challenges that could arise during deployment. Some services have extensive training programs specifically designed for volunteers ranging from two days to a week. The extended training includes role-playing and scenarios that are excellent training models for problem solving and allows volunteers to learn how to react in certain situations.

### **The basic necessities for a FRG**

Essential components for an effective FRG volunteer program include:

- Communication
- Flexibility
- Recruitment
- Job descriptions
- Retention
- Training
- Recognition

Each service branch has well designed training programs for family members such as Family Team Building, Army Family Team Building, Operation Ready, and the Key Volunteer Network. All of them have training modules on the Internet. Take advantage of the standardized and well-written training modules and presentations.

Volunteers must know what is going on in the organization and what is expected of them. Communicate with FRG members through telephone calls, e-mail, newsletters, and most importantly face-to-face. The FRG requires:

- Command guidance
- Guidelines or a SOP
- Specific positions with job descriptions – some units appoint individuals to positions
- Training
- Outreach to family members
- Publicity/marketing
- Volunteer recruitment and recognition
- Funding or the opportunity for fund raising
- Administrative supplies, equipment, facilities, and support
- A family readiness web site (if possible) linked to critical documents and access to telephone trees which can be used to contact rear detachment staff and FRG volunteers.

When planning or sponsoring a family readiness group meeting, develop and follow an agenda. Create an open sharing atmosphere of teamwork. Form committees as needed for specific events. Encourage member participation.

### **FRG Volunteers**

The success of an FRG is often directly proportional to the amount of resources (including financial), energy, and time that the unit devotes to its volunteers. For Guard and Reserve families the need for family support groups is strong – these families are forced to balance two often very different lifestyles and may live far from military support services and agencies. FRGs offer essential services to Guard and Reserve families; however, their ability to provide effective services is directly tied to their own human resources. Volunteers are often the only means to meet unit needs with limited FRG resources.



Seeking volunteers for family readiness programs requires finding the right position for each volunteer. Obtaining volunteers results largely from a willingness to ask the right people and an ability to offer something they can do. Volunteers bring unique skills, experience, creativity, and energy. The challenge is retaining them and sustaining and encouraging their motivation. As a FRG member, volunteers can contribute much more than they can as individuals. A key part of recruiting and retaining FRG volunteers is a clear outline of unit expectations and requirements for their FRG task or position.

A sample job description for FRG Chairman may include specific duties such as:

- Help staff and organize the unit family readiness group.
- Plan and facilitate unit FRG meetings (in conjunction with unit commander and family readiness program staff).
- Recruit, train and manage volunteers using unit family readiness resources.
- Ensure that communication is maintained among members.
- Call “key callers” to activate telephone tree/roster.
- Work in conjunction with unit leadership to minimize stress and improve morale
- Submit information to unit newsletter.



Retaining volunteers and developing their skills must be a continuous process. Provide new opportunities, listen to their suggestions, and return telephone calls. Commanders should personally follow up on new volunteers to see how they like their volunteer duties and to thank them— show them that their willingness to volunteer their time and talents is appreciated. Every volunteer you retain is one less volunteer you must recruit and train.

### **Volunteer Management – Recognition**

The need for volunteer recognition cannot be overstated. Appropriate recognition of volunteers and their contributions pays huge dividends for both the individual and the unit. While expressions of personal appreciation are essential, public recognition can emphasize the commands presence and foster volunteerism in the unit. Most units hold periodic events to honor volunteers such as volunteer appreciation lunches and ceremonies.



Types of recognition may include but are not limited to:

- Letters of Appreciation from the commander
- Certificates of Recognition
- Volunteer of the Month
- Volunteer of the Quarter
- Volunteer of the Year

### **FRG benefits**

There is no doubt that an effective FRG can facilitate command efforts to “take care of its own”. To reap these benefits, commanders must:

- Make family readiness a unit asset – not a liability
- Make the family readiness program a part of the unit’s daily life
- Include family readiness activities on unit training schedules and calendars
- Plan unit level (and higher) volunteer recognition events
- View family readiness as a work in progress requiring continuous care

### **Communication- The Command/Family Link**

Especially for a guard or reserve component command staff, the most pressing and ongoing task is connectivity with unit members. It is a requirement for service members to provide specific personnel information including address, telephone number, and family information. In compliance with Privacy Act requirements, personal information (name, address, and phone number) can be released only to authorized personnel. Ensuring this information is accurate and current is a continuous task. E-mail and current mobile phone numbers are a plus and should, in the future, be an absolute necessity.

For the FRG, telephone rosters, or “trees” for spouses, differ significantly from unit rosters. These lists are voluntary by nature. *Spouses are not required to provide their name or telephone number.* Many units provide a form to be completed by a spouse that given permission for release of their telephone number. Each family member should be informed as to how this information will be used. Participation is directly proportional to confidence in the FRG program.

### **Newsletters**

Unit newsletters are the commander’s best vehicle for speaking directly to family members and should include a column from the commander informing service members and family members of important issues. It is also an effective means for increasing family member participation in key programs devoted to family readiness. The newsletter can also include specific unit activities, training cycles, and items of interest.

Newsletters may be official or unofficial. The status dictates the funding for mailing and distribution. Official newsletters generally include:

- Unit heading and title.
- The terms, "Official Information" will be listed under the return address.
- The signature or signature block of the commander under his/her column to authenticate the official capacity of the newsletter.
- Information related to unit mission and combat readiness, including family readiness.
- Notification of field exercises, deployments and redeployments.
- Information that is educational and designed to promote informed self-reliant families. This could include financial management topics, parenting topics, and general information about community resources.
- Information on activities for members and families that promote unit cohesion and promote esprit de corps such as Family Days, Organization Days, and reunion activities. It can include activities sponsoring "Bring a Boss to Work Day" to educate civilian employers about the unit and mission.

Newsletters encourage unit involvement and family member participation. Ask for articles, provide a deadline, and include important topics like welcoming new service members and families, promotions, and retirements. Topics can vary widely and may include:

- Drill schedule
- Benefits & entitlements
- TRICARE / Benefits information
- Photographs and articles about FRG events
- Recognition of volunteers



For some families, a FRG newsletter may be the only useful means of communication. Guard and Reserve families also live varied distances from the unit and, due to family and work schedules, some spouses may not be able to attend FRG meetings or unit sponsored family activities. In order to maintain communications with unit families a newsletter should be published regularly (each quarter) as a matter of routine. Consider a monthly publication schedule during deployments.

Newsletters should be succinct and interesting. Determine what informational needs family members have and meet those needs. Remember the purpose in publishing a newsletter. You must reach out to unit members and families and to provide them the information they need to promote family readiness and a sense of community within the unit.

### **Social Activities**

Planned social activities before and during deployments and long separations are beneficial ways to share important unit information with service members and family members. These activities provide an opportunity for family members to meet unit staff and other family members. Social gatherings facilitate this connection by building a relationship and trust with members and their families. There will also be a ready-made opportunity for the command to personally deliver important information and to openly recognize personnel and their families. Family members are more likely to attend if events are associated with a major deployment, are free or low cost, are held locally, and some form of child care is offered. For Guard and Reserve members, deployment briefings, "Family Days", and FRG meetings require more advance planning since families are dispersed throughout the community, state, and may even be several states away. As such, careful choice of the date and location of the meeting will maximize participation. Avoid holding activities on major holidays.



## Pre-Deployment & Mobilization

### Timely and effective communication is the best means to limit the stresses of deployment

A unit deployment is perhaps the most stressful major event for unit personnel and their family members. As soon as possible after receiving orders to deploy, commanders should deliver a pre-deployment briefing/meeting that includes unit and family members. Explain as openly as possible within the limits of operational security, the mission the unit is preparing for, the location, estimated time to be deployed and the latest available information to be relayed. Invite and introduce key unit members, family readiness program staff and volunteers. When a commander personally conducts the pre-deployment briefings, it sets the tone and clearly demonstrates the command's commitment to its members and their families. Relate that their concerns are also your concerns. Engage your audience while emphasizing the relationship between mission readiness and self-sufficient families.



The objectives of the Pre-deployment Briefing include:

- Introduce yourself and key staff members – this is especially important for family members who live some distance away and may have little direct contact with the unit.
- Provide family members the most up-to-date information on what's going on in the unit.
- Emphasize to family members the resources available to assist in resolving problems that may arise (unit Family Program staff, Red Cross, Family Service Center, Chaplains, finance and legal points of contact, and community resources).
- Inform family members of preventive actions that facilitate household/estate functions while the service member is deployed (i.e. Power of Attorney, financial accessibility, ensuring that all family members have identification cards...).
- Provide a calendar and deployment timeline. Include notations of unit events prior to and during the deployment.
- Provide a list of names and telephone numbers of rear detachment personnel (introduce the rear detachment personnel at the briefing – it is often easier to identify with someone you have seen or met).
- Discuss security concerns.
- Include a tailored question and answer period for the deployment so family members can address their concerns (i.e. "Top Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions").

Above all, encourage teamwork and the attitude that "we're all in this together." Nothing is more effective than the pride, professionalism, and determination of a unit preparing for a mission. Capitalize on this and embrace the family members as part of your "team."

Emphasize the responsibilities of the service member to provide a viable family care plan, update DEERS information and complete legal documents prior to the deployment / mobilization.



Pre-deployment briefings can be as formal or informal as desired. Power point presentations and handouts may be useful. It is a good idea to provide copies of the briefing, which family members may take home for future reference. It may be useful to send the briefing as outreach to family members who were unable to attend, but who could benefit from the information.



## Rear Detachment (Stay-behind Personnel)

Especially in the case of organizations that deploy in detachments, the designation of competent, dedicated, rear detachment personnel is essential. Regardless of the number of members that deploy, families must see that the commander has placed emphasis on the issue of family readiness for those members. Rear detachment personnel normally have responsibility for personnel and equipment remaining at home station during the deployment and shoulder family readiness duties. A positive and supportive relationship between rear detachment personnel, the deployed unit, and family readiness leaders is crucial for morale.

**Organization and training of rear detachment personnel is essential.** The rear detachment is the link and facilitator between the deployed unit and the family members dispersed throughout the community and often spread over several states. These individuals have a difficult task of keeping abreast of the unit's mission status, responding to family members, and maintaining close coordination with family readiness program staff and volunteers. Rear detachments must be competent and knowledgeable about community resources.

**“No news” is not always “good news”. False rumors are a detriment to morale and often begin when information does not come directly from the command. Information voids are often filled through unreliable sources.**

### Spreading the Word

A very important aspect of your family readiness program is the dissemination of information before, during and after a deployment or mobilization. Every commander has the responsibility to disseminate accurate and relevant information via the most efficient means available. Effective tools are:

- The use of the Internet (a unit web page and e-mail)
- A command information newsletter
- Teleconferencing (VTC)
- A telephone tree
- A toll-free family readiness phone number located within the unit

Family members will want access to the latest news about their spouse and the unit; however, they must understand that the service member's first responsibility is to the mission and accomplishment of his or her operational duties. Commanders should caution family members in pre-deployment briefings that delays may occur and that there may not be sufficient time for individual service members to call home in transit to the deployment area. A message should be sent from the deployed unit to the home station (FRG or Rear-detachment) upon the unit's arrival at its deployment destination. This message should be disseminated quickly to family members to eliminate unnecessary anxiety.



Use the most appropriate talents of unit members. Assign the task of maintaining a unit website to someone who is savvy with web page programming. A unit web page can provide valuable information about available resources, family counseling, communications with family members and unit Points of Contact (POC). Commanders can go the extra mile with a web-page that has a ‘unit-dairy’ with photos and the latest news (within operational security constraints). One caution is that unit web sites need to be frequently updated. **Stale information is a detractor.** If you do not have the means to effectively maintain a web page, than there are other alternatives.

Unit personnel with good writing skills will enhance your unit newsletter and it can be distributed via email and perhaps published by the rear-detachment or unit FRG for distribution to those families who do not have email access. (Unit newsletters are discussed in the Family Readiness Group section.)

A toll-free telephone number is well worth the cost and effort. Guard and Reserve families are geographically dispersed and having access to a toll-free number can alleviate anxiety and facilitate calls for assistance. The toll-free line can be placed in the family readiness center or family readiness program office manned by family program staff and volunteers. Access to VTC portals will allow families to see and feel closer to the service member.

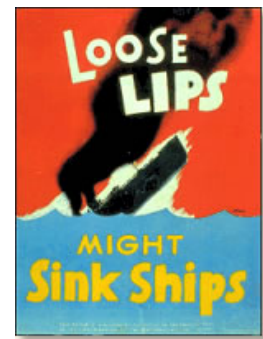
## Operational Security

Operational security consists of measures taken to prevent compromise of sensitive information. Deployment areas and times, location of spouses and families during deployment, the planned re-deployment date, and any special pre-deployment training are major concerns. It is wise to address these issues forthrightly and candidly. This information is not for public knowledge. As part of your pre-deployment briefing, and throughout the deployment, the need for operational security must be emphasized. Family members often do not realize that a simple statement made in passing may jeopardize the safety of those involved in the conduct of operations and the morale of those back at home. Family readiness program personnel should emphasize to families the importance of practicing operational security.

Provide the following guidance to the unit and family members:

- Avoid discussing operational information over the telephone.
- Avoid discussing operational information in public areas.
- Avoid discussing knowledge of military events with the media.

It is essential to note that *operational security must be particularly emphasized among the members of your unit and the FRG*. Member access to e-mail is important for morale, however it can be very damaging to unit and family morale if members within your unit “leak” sensitive information or rumors to loved ones back home (i.e. casualty details and unit disposition and movements). There are specific regulations regarding “vlogs” and “blogs” that must be emphasized to members of your unit and their families. If there is bad news that must be relayed to the home-front, it needs to come from the command first. Operational security is everyone’s responsibility. Commands must be vigilant with enforcement.



## Post-Deployment and Reunion

**Redeployments are difficult to plan because the timeline is affected by so many variables**

Return/redeployment is perhaps the most challenging phase for any unit. The safe return of unit members hangs over every deployment or mobilization; hence, it is an emotionally-charged event. Perhaps more than at any other time during mobilization, commands will have limited means to relay the latest information.

Disseminating the latest redeployment information to the home station unit, family readiness program and family members in a timely manner may be more of a challenge than it appears. Elements such as weather, available aircraft, delays enroute, and equipment problems are all possible factors.



Actions a command can take to mitigate the uncertainties of redeployment:

- Be prepared for delays
- Maintain the flow of information both within your unit and with associated external groups (rear-attachment, FRGs, etc.).
- Utilize the web site and send out e-mail messages, if possible

**Take advantage of available time BEFORE you re-deploy or when your unit is staging for return.** Demobilization briefings and checklists can be lengthy and involve external agencies (i.e. Veterans' Administration, TAMP briefs). Make available briefings and support services from unit chaplains, available family readiness program personnel, and other resources on reunion issues. It is best to accomplish those items required for unit de-activation before arriving at the home base/armory/station. If possible, arrange for events such as return of weapons and equipment to warehouses and armories *in advance of or enroute* to the final staging area before releasing members of your unit to their families.

If it is at all possible, let the moment you release your unit into the crowd of awaiting families and loved-ones be the last command action in the deployment. Few items can adversely impact morale than forcing families to wait all-day for their service member to be released from the return formation. If some delay is unavoidable, arrange for the reception area to have snacks, beverages and accessories to accommodate waiting family and friends. From the viewpoint of morale, how your unit ends its deployment is just as, if not more important as how it embarks.

The command staff's leadership, guidance, and compassion are invaluable during the entire pre-deployment, deployment, and reunion process. Reuniting families after a separation may be stressful. Routines and family roles have changed. Families and members may unconsciously set unrealistic and high expectations. Once released from the last formation, allow unit members sufficient time to re-acclimatize to their return home.

### **FRG Disaster/Trauma Readiness**

The preparedness of a unit FRG is tested in times of emergency or distress. It is extremely important to have a well-developed and time-tested system in place for notifying family members of a service member who has been injured or killed. Military units provide casualty assistance and emergency notification in an official manner through the casualty assistance team or Casualty Assistance Calls Officer.



Family members are not included in the casualty assistance team. However, the FRG Coordinator or Ombudsman may be notified to assist with information about the affected family and to support them (Organize meals, assist with childcare, etc.). The biggest consideration is to respect the needs of the family and follow their cues as to how the unit can support them.

Tragedy can strike family members and friends as well as entire neighborhoods or regions. When it does, the morale of the service member as well as that of all other unit members and their families could be impacted. Serious illness, injury, or death of a service member's parent, spouse, child, or close relative may occur and FRG members should be able to provide support. **Provide training for the unit and FRG on helping in times of trauma.** Elicit support for training from the unit chaplain and identify local resources for assistance within the community. Most medical facilities (military or civilian) offer support groups. Trauma, death, serious illness, and miscarriages are subjects that are difficult to discuss, but they are events that need to be addressed by the command and FRG. Another resource to prepare members is:

### **[Family Planning for an Emergency or Disaster](#)**

#### **Crisis Intervention / Facilitation**

The FRG could be the primary means of getting information about an individual or family crisis within the unit. The possibility of receiving emergency calls reinforces the importance of training FRG volunteers to handle such calls. Having an up-to-date resource file with emergency numbers easily accessible to the FRG is important. These numbers should include (but not be limited to) police, fire, ambulance, hospital emergency room, rescue squad, family service center, and the poison control center.

Every FRG staff member should be familiar with basic crisis intervention techniques. Training can be accessed from many sources and may pay large dividends when it comes to getting the most accurate information to the right people in a timely manner.

Some basic guidelines for crisis intervention:

- Let the family involved talk- Actively listen for what is being conveyed
- Be non-judgmental.
- Do not give advice or try to solve problems. Aid the process and talk through options.
- The goal of crisis intervention is to allow individuals involved to become responsible for their situation and to be aware of the consequences of their actions. Help them make their own decisions.
- Your role is to listen and provide referrals to resources as appropriate.
- Provide attention to all family members. The crisis is affecting them also.
- If you refer someone, be specific. Provide the name and telephone number of the agency and the person who can help.
- Do not call the police, hospital or another agency to assist without the permission of the person you are helping.
- Protect their confidentiality. Their trust in you must be developed and maintained.



A [Crisis Action Plan and Counseling Guide](#) will help the FRG help the family through a crisis and help the command to follow-up on the situation. FRGs assisting families in crisis should stay in close contact with the command. Commanders should stay visible. A carefully planned crisis notification system is crucial to unit, family, and mission readiness and morale.

Family Advocacy Command Guide:

[http://www.defenselink.mil/fapmip/module4/mod4\\_9.htm](http://www.defenselink.mil/fapmip/module4/mod4_9.htm)

Red Cross Guard and Reserve Page

[http://www.redcross.org/services/afes/0,1082,0\\_481\\_,00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/afes/0,1082,0_481_,00.html)

### **Remember to reference the Personal and Family Member Readiness Toolkit**

This Toolkit offers specific tools for your unit members and their families to prepare for almost anything. It will also provide specific guidance that commands can review and emphasize to their personnel. Within the toolkit you will find the [Guard and Reserve Family Member Benefits Guide](#) as well as forms and checklists that provide detailed planning guidance. Some of the most beneficial topics covered include Financial Self-Assessments, Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Mortuary Affairs Planning and care for elderly or special-needs dependents. These topics can be accessed through this toolkit or directly from these links:

[Personal & Family Readiness Toolkit](#)

[Mortuary Affairs Planning Guide](#)

[Family Planning for an Emergency or Disaster](#)