

Leading “your”

Family program

The Family Program is unlike any other National Guard program. As Commander, you can not appoint a Military Family Program POC and walk away thinking you have someone to run your program. You need to support, promote, and know not only what your family program can do for you, but also what it should not do. The State Family Program Office (SFPO) can help educate and prepare your Family Readiness Group (FRG) to assist you in providing a family program that compliments your recruiting efforts, your retention goals, and your unit readiness. Your role as Commander is:

1. SUPPORT – Give your FRG the direction you want them to go. Provide them space in the unit, and access to any resources the unit can provide. The FRG is a sanctioned military entity and should have access to addresses and phone numbers of unit members, copiers, computers, typewriters and supplies.

Commander approval is all that is needed. Your Unit Military POC does not run the program. He/She is your liaison to the FRG and assists them with getting organized and sustaining their group. Approval of any FRG activities should be by the Commander only.

2. PROMOTE – Your unit members will not support the Family Program (FP) if they do not understand the program or if they believe you don’t support the program. Push the need for Family Readiness at staff meetings, role calls, and Commander’s Calls.

3. GUIDE – As a sanctioned entity, they are functioning as your “unpaid staff” which can assist you with functions. Remember, they are volunteers. The next section deals with specific areas you can use to give your FRG guidance.

GUIDANCE

FRGs need to know what general direction you want them to pursue. Here are some suggestions:

- **Contact Families** - FRG will need to establish a telephone tree so they can designate who calls whom. This means they need a listing of members with addresses and phone numbers. (Note: This does not violate the Privacy Act as long as the FRG knows it’s for official business and not to be released to non-DOD sources, and there is a need to know.) Getting information out to family members is critical in participation in the FRG.

- **Family Readiness** - FRGs play a valuable role in helping you attain family readiness. They can provide checklists (available in the SFPO) and a number of other products designed to help Guard members ensure their family is prepared for any separation, and that their personal affairs are in order so once they deploy they can stay focused on their military mission and not be worried about “loose ends” they didn’t take care of back home. Family readiness deals primarily with communication and education.
- **Family Support** - is a key area your FRG can provide your families. However, the FRG role is to educate and assist, not to “assume” a family’s problems. They can be your “staff” to assist families and refer them to the appropriate office or agency to help resolve the problem. Difficult problems should be elevated to the SFPO, and as always, if you are available, you need to be informed of family problems and action taken by the FRG, and assist when appropriate.
- **Unit functions** - Family Day, Thanksgiving or Christmas parties are unit socials, not FRG socials. FRGs roles during these events should be to ensure family members get to know one another, and to recruit new FRG volunteers. They can assist unit members with putting such functions on, but should not be given total responsibility for planning and handling the event.

FRG GENERATED FUNDS

It is often thought that raising money is the first priority - - - it isn’t! FRG generated funds are only needed for such areas as when they want to provide refreshments at FRG meetings or need postage for FRG newsletters, if not incorporated in the unit newsletter/paper. FRG funds should not be mixed with unit funds and should not be used to fund unit-sponsored events. FRGs do not need large amounts of money. They are limited to no more than \$1,000. More guidance on establishing a bank account and other specific guidance FRGs need to know on managing funds is available in the FRG leader handbook.

TOOLKIT

The Guard & Reserve Family Readiness Programs Toolkit is an invaluable resource for you. A limited number of copies may be available at your SFPO. Web URL: <http://dod.mil/ra/family/toolkit/>

INAPPROPRIATE FRG INVOLVEMENT

FRGs need specific guidance in what “not” to get involved in. Some areas are:

- Notifying families in the event of a death of a Guard member.
- Giving or lending money to Guard families.
- Notifying families on unit/mission matters, without your knowledge, direction, or approval. This includes areas such as: where the unit is going next; how long they will be gone. Families need to know some basics on communications security and operations security.
- The FRG should not be just the “juice and cookie” staff for whatever function comes along. Assisting and supporting unit events should be the call of the FRG, and not directed by the Commander or Unit Family Readiness Liaison.

If unsure about any FRG activity or you need further guidance, contact the SFPO.

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