



American Legion
Auxiliary



ALA MILITARY FAMILY READINESS ACTION GUIDE

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1. The American Legion Auxiliary and Military Family Readiness

Since 1919, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) has dedicated itself to our nation's veterans, servicemembers and their families. More than a century later, our organization remains a fundamental component of the nation's military readiness system. Auxiliary members, operating at the community level, are integral to the system of support for our servicemembers and their families. Armed with personal experience and an understanding of military culture, Auxiliary members can and do direct military families in need to resources and services in their communities, including to Legion Family programs. Also, Auxiliary members, as current or former military family members, provide a level of empathy and care to their military peers that large institutions will never match.

Throughout its long history, the American Legion Auxiliary has stood as an example of service to others. We cannot rest on our laurels. We have a responsibility to continue our efforts to ensure that the servicemembers who protect us may remain assured that their families are also supported. We are confident that this Guide will help ensure our members are well informed and up to the task of supporting the families of our servicemembers.

2. The ALA National Security and Children & Youth Programs

The American Legion Auxiliary organizes its mission outreach programs by topic area. Program implementation is accomplished through national, department and unit mission outreach committees comprised of ALA member-volunteers. Two Auxiliary programs of greatest relevance to military family readiness are National Security and Children & Youth.

2.1 Purposes

National Security – The ALA’s National Security Program maintains and promotes a strong national defense by strengthening and supporting military servicemembers and their families. To do this, the National Security Committee promotes activities that contribute to the practical, emotional and social wellbeing of currently serving and transitioning servicemembers and their families.

Children & Youth – The Children & Youth Program emphasizes protecting, caring for and supporting children and youth, particularly those of veterans’ and military families. To do this, the Children & Youth Committee promotes activities that contribute to the physical, mental and emotional health and wellness of children and youth, with a focus on military families and veterans’ families.

2.2 Program Ideas

National Security – The National Security Committee, through its annual Plan of Action, suggests that ALA members take the following actions to support military families:

- Support active, reserve and transitioning servicemembers and their families by matching ALA units to a Family Readiness Group or to an individual military family in need.
- Refer servicemembers and their families with practical needs to The American Legion’s Family Support Network.
- Assist Legion departments and posts in raising funds for Operation Comfort Warriors and Heroes to Hometowns.
- Greet servicemembers and families as they deploy and/or return from a deployment, including through local Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs and welcome-home events.
- Identify and present Blue Star commemorative materials to individuals and businesses.
- Identify and present Gold Star materials.
- Collaborate with other organizations relied upon by the military community, such as the American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces, Operation Homefront and USO.

Children & Youth – The Children & Youth Committee, through its annual Plan of Action, suggests that ALA members take the following actions:

- Convene community groups to identify ways to better address the needs of military children and children of veterans. The groups could include military parents, school counselors and teachers, state National Guard units and youth-serving organizations.
- Develop and implement public awareness events to increase community support of military children and children of veterans. Consider participating in Month of the Military Child (April) or Military Family Month (November).
- Collaborate with other organizations that support military children like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Josh and Friends, Boys and Girls Clubs of America and Armed Services YMCA.

2.3 Further Information

Further information about the ALA's National Security and Children & Youth programs may be found on the program pages of the ALA website (www.ALAforVeterans.org). The program pages include the programs' Plans of Action and support materials such as action guides and how-to sheets. Also, members and others may contact the committees' chairmen and staff at nationalsecurity@ALAforVeterans.org or children&youth@ALAforVeterans.org.

3. Purpose of the ALA Military Family Readiness Action Guide

Within the United States military, there are approximately 1.4 million active-duty servicemembers and 843,000 Reservists and National Guard members. Many of these servicemembers are spouses and parents. They have grandparents, parents and siblings. Military service affects the whole family.

Many government programs, nonprofit agencies and grassroots community groups support servicemembers and military families. Some, such as The American Legion Family's troop and family programs, are longstanding; many other programs and initiatives have emerged recently. Some have specific missions, while others work broadly. Some operate nationally, while others do so only regionally or in specific communities. This collection of activities forms what the U.S. Department of Defense, a government agency in charge of our country's national security and our Armed Forces, calls the Family Readiness System (FRS). The FRS is the network of programs, services, people, agencies and the collaboration among them, that promotes the readiness and quality of life of servicemembers and their families. Non-military community organizations, like the American Legion Auxiliary, are considered part of the FRS. The American Legion Auxiliary has developed this Military Family Readiness Action Guide to help its grassroots units and individual members in appreciating their role and activating their participation in this system.

It can be difficult for anyone to keep track of all the agencies, organizations, programs and services that help servicemembers and their families. This Guide will help Auxiliary units and members match military community members in need and who for any number of reasons come to the attention of the unit/member to resources designed to ease those needs.

Equally important, the Guide seeks to inform Auxiliary members as to what services are already available to the military community nationally and locally, thereby assisting units and members in establishing supplemental – rather than redundant – support programs and services for our servicemembers and their families.

This Guide provides Auxiliary members with the knowledge to effectively navigate the rapidly expanding field of public and private organizations to support servicemembers and their families. The American Legion Auxiliary Military Family Readiness Action Guide:

- discusses major support programs available in a range of areas, including enabling services, emergency financial relief, education, employment and transition, financial services, health, legal assistance, morale and youth development, peer support and service coordination
- provides a methodology to determine where the Auxiliary's capacity will be most beneficial
- explains how to locate servicemembers needing assistance
- helps Auxiliary members report their impact
- summarizes basic military structure, function and operations
- defines many military-specific terminology

4. About Military Family Needs

The current conflicts have been the subject of intensive public concern for more than a decade. Medical and sociological research focused on the military community has greatly expanded to align with technological advancements in warfare. Developments in medical research have substantially furthered our understanding of topics like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), also known as post-traumatic stress (PTS), and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Developments in the medical field have allowed servicemembers with major physical wounds to be treated more effectively today than ever before. Similarly, we possess far greater knowledge about the behavioral effects of military life on the servicemember's children and spouse than we did at any point previously. Unemployment, transition struggles, fragile family functioning and resilience – these things, too, are understood better today than ever before.

Resources such as Blue Star Families' annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey indicate that servicemembers and military families are concerned with a broad range of issues. Among them are military pay and benefits; changes to retirement benefits; military spouse employment; the effects of deployment on children; the disconnection between military and civilians; and military lifestyle uncertainty.¹ Additional surveys by the Department of Defense and the personal experiences of military family advocates, such as our own members, support these findings.

Yet while we understand the circumstances of servicemembers and military families better than ever before, we also understand that the scale of these needs far outpaces the ability of public support structures, primarily the Department of Defense and military branch programs, to provide aid. The collective needs of servicemembers and their families are large, and the military family readiness activities of the American Legion Auxiliary remain necessary.

¹ "2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey." Blue Star Families, Web. 17 Dec 2014. Retrieved from www.bluestarfam.org/resources/2014-military-family-lifestyle-survey

5. Know the Services Provided to the Military Community

This section summarizes the most well-known and prevalent organizations, programs and services for the military community. It is in no way intended to be a catalog of every needed resource.

Unless noted otherwise, programs listed are available to servicemembers and families of all military branches. Additional programs and services may be available to servicemembers and their families in your area on a local, regional or state basis. The National Governors Association (NGA) surveyed each state and territory to see what resources they provide; to view this report, visit: www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/15GUARDSURVEY.PDF

5.1 Enabling Services

Enabling services are those that connect servicemembers and their families to information, referrals and case management. The following resources and organizations are good places for military families to reach out to who are just beginning to look for support.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Army OneSource/Army Family Action Plan** – www.myarmyonesource.com
 - Army OneSource is a website that connects servicemembers in the Army and their families to an array of programs and services.
 - One program in particular, the Army Family Action Plan, is an opportunity for servicemembers, Department of Defense civilians, retirees and their family members to bring up issues at the installation or unit level with the chance of those issues moving up to Headquarters. Other branches of service benefit from this program because many of the same issues are present.
- **Military OneSource** – www.militaryonesource.mil
 - Military OneSource is a free information and crisis response service provided by the Department of Defense to servicemembers and their families. Military OneSource counselors provide initial guidance and referrals to more extensive services. The range of concerns addressed through Military OneSource includes money management, spouse employment and education, parenting skills, child care, relocation, deployment, reunion, stress, grief and the particular concerns of families with special-needs members.
 - Services are available 24 hours a day, every day, by telephone and online.
- **National Resource Directory** – www.nrd.gov
 - The National Resource Directory is a website that connects wounded warriors, servicemembers, veterans, military families and caregivers to an array of programs and services. It provides information about services and resources at the national, state and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration.
 - Programs and services are organized under topic areas of benefits and compensation, education and training, employment, family and caregiver support,

health, homeless assistance, housing, transportation and travel, volunteer opportunities and other services and resources.

- **Branch Support Organizations – See below for website addresses.**
 - Each military branch offers a centralized entry point where servicemembers and their families may address a range of needs. These points of entry are called “family support centers” and are staffed by professionals. Services offered include information and referral to services within the military and from outside groups in areas such as crisis intervention, financial management, relocation assistance, spouse employment assistance, parenting education and deployment support. Most, but not all, military installations have a family support center. There are also 396 National Guard Family Assistance Centers located throughout the country that can assist any geographically displaced servicemember or family.
 - Though each branch’s support organizations are functionally similar, their names differ.
 - **Army — Army Community Services (ACS)**
 - There is no central ACS webpage. Search for your local Army installation’s ACS online for contact and program information. Usually searching “ACS + your base name and location” (quotes and plus sign not needed in search) will be sufficient to find the page. You may find you will have to spell out Army Community Services because there are other organizations that have the same acronym of ACS.
 - **Navy — Fleet and Family Readiness (FFR)**
 - www.cnic.navy.mil/CNIC_HQ_Site/WhatWeDo/FleetandFamilyReadiness/index.htm
 - **Marine Corps — Family Services Center (FSC)**
 - www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MF
 - **Coast Guard — Office of Work-Life Programs**
 - www.uscg.mil/worklife
 - **Air Force — Airman and Family Readiness Centers (AFRC)**
 - www.afrc.af.mil/library/airmanfamilyreadiness/index.asp
- **Branch Reserve Commands – See below for website addresses.**
 - Each military branch with a Reserve component maintains a Reserve Command website that offers information and referrals related to topics such as family support, career and employment training, benefits information, retirement and transition. Though principally focused on Reservists, National Guard members may find some of the available resources useful as well.
 - The websites for Branch Reserve Commands:
 - **Army –** www.usar.army.mil
 - **Navy –** www.navyreserve.navy.mil
 - **Coast Guard –** www.uscg.mil/reserve
 - **Air Force –** www.afrc.af.mil
- **National Guard Joint Services Support (JSS) –** www.jointservicesupport.org
 - JSS is a Web-based National Guard initiative that leverages a network of strategic partners in order to foster and enable a resilient operational reserve. JSS connects

National Guard members and their families to a variety of services in the areas of reintegration, career support, family, finances, behavioral health, sexual assault prevention and transition support.

- National Guard members can also find their closest Family Support Center by looking under the “Contacts and Resources” pull down menu at the top of the welcome page.

- **National Guard State Family Programs**

- Each state National Guard has a family programs division responsible for delivering human needs programs to Guard members and their families. There are three main family programs that every state provides. These include a youth program, family readiness group and family assistance center. States differ in other programs they may offer depending on the needs of the Guard members and their families as well the resources available in the state. For example, some may have a suicide prevention program, offer TRICARE referrals or a survivor outreach service.
- At the state level, a State Family Program Director (SFPD) leads the family programs division.
- Contact information and locations for state family programs personnel (State Family Program Directors, Airman & Family Readiness Program Managers, Family Readiness Support Assistants, Senior Family Readiness Support Assistants, Family Assistant Specialists, Family Assistance Coordinators and Child & Youth Program Coordinators) is available through the Joint Services Support website. (www.jointservicesupport.org/ResourceFinder/SearchResource.aspx). On the right side of the page, you will see “Topic” with a scroll-down menu; select “Family Support” in the scroll-down menu. On the left side of the page, you will see “Find a Contact” and “Find a Resource.” Determine whether you would like to contact a specific person or an organization, such as the YMCA or American Red Cross. On the bar to the left, filters are available to better define your search by state, program and role.
- The same contact information can also be found at the Joining Community Forces website (www.joiningcommunityforces.org). At the top left of the home page, select the state you wish to display and staff members for family support will be displayed in the “Contacts” box.
- If you know the person or organization you would like to contact already, you can type their name in the “Search by Keyword” space.
- Also, Guard members and their families may find the contact information for their family programs through their state’s Army/Air National Guard websites. Army National Guard members should contact their Family Assistance Specialists for information regarding resources. Air National Guard members should contact their Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager assigned to their Wing (2 or more groups/see Appendix A for more information about Wings).

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **American Legion Troop & Family Support Center** – www.legion.org/family
 - The American Legion has grouped the resources and services it offers to servicemembers and their families into its Troop and Family Support Center – an online hub for military families to connect with multiple Legion programs.
- **American Legion Family Support Network** – www.legion.org/familysupport
 - The Family Support Network is part of the Troop & Family Support Center. This Network connects military and veteran families with volunteers from local Legion posts who help with practical needs such as babysitting, lawn care or auto maintenance.
 - The American Legion has a nationwide toll-free telephone number, (800) 504-4098, for servicemembers and their family members to call for assistance. Calls are referred to the American Legion department in which the call originated. Departments then relay the request to a local post. The post then contacts the servicemember or family member directly to determine how it can be helpful.
 - The Auxiliary can support this Legion Network by referring people to this number and by supporting posts in their area.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **2-1-1** – www.211.org
 - 2-1-1 provides free and confidential information and referral, segmented by ZIP Code, in the areas of health and human services. While 2-1-1 is a system developed for all individuals in need, military- and veteran-specific resources have recently been integrated. In addition to the above website, 2-1-1 also functions as a nationally available phone information service.
- **American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces (SAF)** – www.redcross.org/what-we-do/support-military-families
 - The American Red Cross, through its SAF division, organizes and delivers an array of services for the military community including emergency services, family strength programs, hospital programs and bringing a touch of home to those deployed. Armed Forces Call Center caseworkers are available 24 hours a day at (877) 272-7337 to assist servicemembers and their families connect to resources and services of the Red Cross, and in local communities. (For more information, see the National Security Program page on the ALA's website for a PDF on the American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces.)
- **Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA)** – www.asymca.org
 - A national member association of the YMCA of the USA, ASYMCA's 31 branches and affiliates offer many services, including childcare, hospital assistance, spouse support services, food services, deployment support, emergency support, computer training classes, counseling, wounded warrior support, wounded family support and health and wellness programs.

- ASYMCA provides programs and support services to military servicemembers and their families with particular focus on junior-enlisted servicemembers (rank of sergeant or below). Programs are offered at low or no cost with no dues or membership fees.
- **Code of Support Foundation (COSF) – www.codeofsupport.org**
 - The Code of Support Foundation bridges the growing divide of understanding and engagement existing between the military and civilian communities.
 - COSF offers a case management program (www.codeofsupport.org/case-coordination). A team of case coordinators work one-on-one with servicemembers, veterans and their families to listen, assess and help solve their issues by connecting them with the necessary public and private resources.

5.2 Emergency Financial Relief

Emergency financial relief comprises grants and loans of cash to servicemembers and military families who need immediate assistance to pay for goods and services essential to living. Also emergency relief organizations may provide tangible goods or services other than cash.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) – www.military.com/benefits/military-pay/allowances/basic-allowance-for-subsistence.html**
 - Active duty servicemembers receive a BAS to offset the cost of a servicemember's meals. BAS is not intended to cover the meals for family members (dependents). A monthly rate is given based on the price of food; each year it is readjusted based upon the increase of the price of food as measured by the USDA food cost index.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **Auxiliary Emergency Fund – www.ALforVeterans.org/Members/Auxiliary-Emergency-Fund**
 - The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is a grant assistance program that provides temporary emergency help to eligible members of the American Legion Auxiliary who have suffered a significant financial setback as the result of an act of nature or other personal crisis. An individual may receive up to \$2,400.
 - Temporary assistance may be considered when 1) a natural disaster or weather emergency leaves a member without shelter or food; 2) a financial crisis hits; and 3) an individual is in extreme circumstances.
 - Funds may only be used for emergency shelter, food or utilities. Funds do not cover medical expenses or credit card debt.
 - Eligibility depends on membership. An individual be a current member and must have maintained membership for three consecutive years at time of emergency.

- **American Legion National Emergency Fund** – www.legion.org/emergency
 - The National Emergency Fund provides emergency funding to Legionnaires and Sons of The American Legion members in the wake of disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and wildfires. Qualified Legion Family members may receive up to \$3,000, while posts may be given up to \$10,000.
 - To qualify for assistance, Legion Family members must meet certain eligibility requirements such as 1) applicant must have been displaced from their primary residence due to a declared natural disaster; 2) applicant must provide copies of receipts of items required to meet immediate assistance (temporary housing, food, water, clothing, etc.); and 3) Legion membership must be active at time of disaster and the time of application.
 - Application must be received within 90 days of the disaster, and only one grant is permitted per household.
- **American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)** – www.legion.org/financialassistance
 - The Temporary Financial Assistance program awards cash grants to minor children of veterans who are eligible for American Legion membership. (Those currently serving in the military are eligible for Legion membership.) These grants help families meet the cost of shelter, food, utilities and health expenses, thereby keeping the child or children in a more stable environment.
 - Legion membership is not required to receive assistance. However, TFA is only available to minor children (17 years or younger) whose biological parent or legal guardian is a veteran and is, or would have been, eligible for American Legion membership. Children 18-20 may be considered if a current disability requires special schooling or indefinite in-home care, or if they are enrolled in high school and unmarried.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Military Relief Societies**
 - Military relief societies provide financial assistance to servicemembers. This support typically comes in the form of low-interest loans, though grants are occasionally disbursed. Each service branch and each state National Guard has a nongovernmental relief society associated with it.
 - **Army Emergency Relief:** www.aerhq.org
 - **Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society:** www.nmcrs.org
 - **Coast Guard Mutual Assistance:** www.cgmahq.org
 - **Air Force Aid Society:** www.afas.org
 - **National Guard Emergency Funds:** Contact your local Family Assistance Center for requests
- **Nonprofit Financial Support**
 - A number of nonprofit agencies provide emergency relief to veterans and servicemembers. Unlike military relief societies, these organizations operate principally through grants, and generally do not require repayment. Also, these

organizations may provide donated goods or services in lieu of or in addition to cash. The eligibility, availability, type and amount of support vary among organizations. Dominant nonprofit providers of emergency financial relief to servicemembers and their families:

- **American Red Cross:** www.redcross.org/find-help/military-families/financial-assistance (See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for a how-to sheet promoting the ALA's collaboration with American Red Cross for more information)
- **Hope For The Warriors:** www.hopeforthewarriors.org
- **Operation Gratitude:** www.operationgratitude.com
- **Operation Homefront:** www.operationhomefront.net (See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for an action guide promoting the ALA's collaboration with Operation Homefront for more information)
- **Soldiers' Angels:** www.soldiersangels.org
- **USA Cares:** www.usacares.org
- **Yellow Ribbon Fund:** www.yellowribbonfund.org

5.3 Child & Youth Education

Educational services are those that ensure access for children and youth of military families to elementary, secondary and higher education. As most military children and youth attend public schools for the general population, education services also include resources to prepare public and private school leaders to properly address the unique circumstances of military children and youth.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) – www.dodea.edu**
 - The Department of Defense Education Activity manages schools specifically for military children and youth in the United States and abroad, typically located on military installations.
 - The DoDEA website provides resources for students and parents.
 - **Military K-12 Partners (DoDEA Partnership) – www.dodea.edu/partnership**
 - The K-12 Partnership program provides information and support to increase understanding of the unique needs of military children as well as academic support to improve their education opportunities. Working collaboratively with the U.S. Department of Education, the partnership offers a variety of programs that promote quality education, seamless transitions and deployment support.
 - **School Liaison Officers – www.dodea.edu/Partnership/schoolLiaisonOfficers.cfm**
 - Each service branch has school liaison officers who act as intermediaries between the military and schools. These officers provide information to nearby school districts, assist military families

with school issues and help relocating families with the transfer of credits.

- Within the Army, a School Liaison Officer program is active on each installation. The Army School Liaison Officers serve active duty, National Guard, Reserve members and their families of up to one hour away from the installation.
- School liaisons are available for Marine Corps families. Its role is adapted to each installation and the needs of the community.
- The Navy is implementing K-12 support to military families at all major installations.
- Each Air Force base has a point-of-contact for local military child education matters.
- Family Resource Specialists and/or Child Development Service Specialists are available at each Health, Safety & Work-Life – Regional Practice to assist with school-related issues.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **American Legion Auxiliary Scholarships²** - www.ALforVeterans.org/scholarships
 - **Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship:** 15 students who are direct descendants of wartime veterans who served on active duty are eligible. Students must excel in academics and volunteer in their communities. One scholarship is awarded per Auxiliary division.
 - **Non-Traditional Student Scholarship:** Helps people who are members of the Legion Family pursue a college degree later in life or allow them to pick up where they left off when their studies were interrupted. One scholarship is awarded per five Auxiliary divisions. Applicant must be a member and have been a member of the Legion Family for at least two years before applying.
 - **Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund:** Three separate scholarship opportunities are available under this fund.
 - **ALA Girls Nation Program Scholarships:** ALA Girls Nation awards scholarships for the following: ALA Girls Nation President; ALA Girls Nation Vice President; ALA Girls Nation Outstanding Senator.
 - **Honorary National Junior President Scholarship:** Honorary National Junior President receives a scholarship in recognition of her term of service.
 - **Spirit of Youth Scholarship for Junior Members:** One Junior member in each of the five ALA divisions receives a scholarship.

² Please note: These are national scholarships. Departments and units might have additional scholarships as well.

- **American Legion Scholarships³** – www.legion.org/scholarships
 - **The American Legion Legacy Scholarship:** Available for children whose parents have been killed in action after 9/11 while serving. The amount of aid varies annually.
 - **The American Legion Baseball Scholarship:** Each Department Baseball Committee may select a player from their Department. The American Legion awards several scholarships depending on number of applicants and interest earned from the trust fund.
 - **Samsung American Legion Scholarship:** Scholarship provided by Samsung. It is available to high school juniors who attend the current session of either Boys State or Girls State and who are direct descendants of a wartime veteran who served on active duty.
 - **National High School Oratorical Contest:** Scholarships are awarded to three finalists. Each individual state winner who participates in the first round of the national contest also receives a scholarship. Each first-round winner who advances but does not qualify for finals receives an additional amount of money.
 - **Eagle Scout of the Year:** Honored to the Eagle Scout of the Year at the National Convention. There are three runners-up.
 - **The Eight and Forty Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund:** Established to assist registered nurses with advanced preparation for positions in supervision, administration or teaching. To be eligible, students must have employment prospects in specific positions in hospitals, clinics or health departments upon completion of their education and the position must have a full-time and direct relationship to pediatric lung and respiratory control.
- **Veterans in the Classroom** – ALA website: www.ALAforVeterans.org/Programs/Education
The American Legion website:
www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/publications/veterans_classroom_history.pdf
 - Veterans in the Classroom is an activity endorsed by the Legion Family that brings history to life by connecting veterans with students in classrooms or at school assemblies in conjunction with history lessons.
 - In addition to sharing their experiences, veterans may also discuss a wide range of topics including how to help a family who has a deployed servicemember, how to show support for our troops, proper respect for the flag, or why The American Legion was formed and its values.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)** – www.militarychild.org
 - MCEC is a national organization that supports school systems, leaders and professionals in educating and supporting military children and youth in their schools, primarily through training and technical assistance at the school district, school and professional levels.

³ Please note: These are national scholarships. Departments and posts might have additional scholarships as well.

- MCEC offers many programs to support children and parents relating to visual arts and writing, student transition and leadership.

5.4 Employment & Transition

Employment services are those that provide servicemembers and military spouses with the resources and support necessary to return to, prepare for and find meaningful jobs and careers. Transition services are those that prepare servicemembers and their families for their separation from military service and their return to civilian life.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **American Job Centers** – www.jobcenter.usa.gov
 - American Job Centers serve as one-stop portals for employment assistance, whether it is a job search, development of soft skills or connecting to formal training. Many American Job Centers (AJCs) have employees who specialize in the employment of veterans, returning servicemembers and military spouses. These employees may be called Local Veterans Employment Representatives or Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists. Locate the AJC serving your community by visiting the above website.
- **Hero 2 Hired (H2H)** – <http://h2h.jobs>
 - H2H is a U.S. Department of Labor initiative that matches the Guard and Reserve to jobs they deserve.
 - H2H has transitioned its online capabilities to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Employment Center (VEC). (www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs). This transition supports the White House Joining Forces initiatives to combine Federal efforts to hire veterans under one Web portal and strengthens interagency collaboration among the VA, Department of Defense and Department of Labor. The VEC is available for transitioning servicemembers, veterans and their families.
 - H2H Employment Coordinators provide career readiness assistance to Reserve Component servicemembers preparing for the next civilian career. Each state, territory and the District of Columbia has an H2H Employment Coordinator who can assist with VEC enrollment and local employment resources. To find your supporting H2H Employment Coordinator, visit <http://h2h.jobs/coordinators.html>
- **My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship Program** – www.aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa/default.aspx
 - A Department of Defense initiative, MyCAA is a workforce development program that provides up to \$4,000 of financial assistance to civilian spouses of active-duty members in the paygrades of E-1 to E-5, W-1, W-2, O-1 and O-2 who are pursuing a license, certification or associate's degree in a portable career.
- **Spouse Education & Career Opportunities** – www.militaryonesource.mil/seco
 - The Department of Defense Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program works in conjunction with installation employment readiness programs to help military

spouses explore careers, receive information on education, training and licensure, ready themselves for careers and connect with more than 160 partner employers.

- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP) & Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) –**
www.dodtap.mil
 - TAP is a program organized by the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies to assist servicemembers and families prepare for their exit from the military and their return to civilian life.
 - Federal law requires all separating servicemembers to participate in Transition GPS, a part of Transition Assistance Program's outcome-based curriculum with standardized learning objectives. It is a transformative opportunity for servicemembers to pursue their post-service career goals.
 - TAP/Transition GPS includes comprehensive workshops led by professionally trained facilitators. The course emphasizes employment, but covers a broad range of social and psychological topics as well.
- **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) –**
www.osc.gov/userra.htm
 - USERRA is a federal law intended to ensure that persons who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, Reserves, National Guard or other "uniformed services" (1) are not disadvantaged in their civilian careers because of their service; (2) are promptly reemployed in their civilian jobs upon their return from duty; and (3) are not discriminated against in employment based on past, present, or future military service.
 - Several websites are available to assist servicemembers and employers in understanding their respective USERRA rights and responsibilities:
 - **U.S. Department of Labor VETS:** www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra
 - **Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR):**
www.esgr.mil/USERRA/What-is-USERRA.aspx
 - **United States Office of Special Counsel (OSC):** www.osc.gov/userra.htm
- **Welcome Home Events –** www.volunteer.va.gov/Welcome_Home_Events.asp
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs organizes Welcome Home events in each Veterans Affairs Medical Center catchment area. Welcome Home events are similar to those organized through the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. (See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for a how-to sheet on welcoming home separating servicemembers)
- **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) –** www.jointservicesupport.org/yrrp
 - For deploying reserve component servicemembers and their families, Yellow Ribbon events inform servicemembers and their families about the assistance and services available to them. Events use local, state and federal organizations in order to ensure the readiness and resiliency of servicemembers, their families, employers and affected communities for the rigors of deployment and separation. YRRP services include information on health care, education/training opportunities, financial planning and assistance and an overview of legal benefits.

- YRRP events are conducted throughout all phases of the deployment cycle. YRRP holds events during pre-deployment, deployment, 30 days post-deployment, 60 days post-deployment and 90 days post-deployment.
- YRRP events are implemented by the reserve components of each military branch. They are mandatory for National Guard members being activated or deactivated from federal service. Reservists' attendance is optional, but they are highly encouraged to participate throughout their deployment cycle. Many events strongly advise family members to attend as well. Some events also offer child and youth activities.
- See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for a how-to sheet promoting the ALA's collaboration with Yellow Ribbon programs for more information.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **The American Legion's Veteran Employment Center** – www.legion.org/careers
 - Located on The American Legion's Veteran Employment Center website is a search engine for veterans to find jobs within their area, a military skills translator, a transition center for those getting ready to separate and provides information on employment.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **American Corporate Partners (ACP)** – www.acp-usa.org
 - ACP assists servicemembers and veterans in their transition from the armed services to the civilian workforce. Working with business professionals nationwide, ACP offers servicemembers and veterans tools for long-term career development through mentoring, career counseling and networking opportunities.
 - ACP has two distinct professional-development programs for veterans:
 - **ACP AdvisorNet** – An online business Q&A community that connects servicemembers, veterans and their immediate family members with business leaders across the country. Servicemembers and veterans can ask questions about career development, employment and small business; browse questions based on topics; read articles and message users to initiate private conversations. Business leaders nationwide looking to share their expertise and advice can sign up as Advisors. All users are able to see the professional and/or military backgrounds of other users, promoting an environment of accountability and trust.
 - **Mentoring Program** – Connects servicemembers and veterans with professionals from some of America's top corporations and select universities. This year-long, private mentorship allows currently serving and recently separated veterans (including members of the Reserve and Guard) who have served on active duty for at least 180 days since September 11, 2001 and spouses of those wounded or killed in action to be mentored on

topics ranging from resume building and job market knowledge to networking and leadership. All mentors are employees of one of ACP's Participating Institutions. The Mentoring Program is not a formal job-placement program, but a tool for networking and long-term career development.

- **Business and Professional Women's Foundation Joining Forces Mentoring Plus – www.bpwfoundation.org**
 - Business and Professional Women's Foundation operates the Joining Forces Mentoring Plus program to match women veterans, military and veteran spouses, caregivers and survivors to career mentors in an online setting.
 - Business and Professional Women also offers a Career Center that job seekers and employers can both use. Employers can be recognized as women- and veteran-friendly. No fee is associated with posting your resume and/or creating a profile.
- **Corporate America Supports You (CASY) – casy.msccn.org**
 - CASY provides no-cost employment readiness, vocational training and one-on-one job placement services for National Guard, Reserves, transitioning servicemembers and veterans of all branches of service.
 - CASY works directly with its sister organization, the Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN), functioning as one military job-placement unit serving two target audiences. Where CASY offers an outlet for the servicemember, MSCCN focuses on military spouses, family members and caregivers. CASY-MSCCN operates as an employment partner to all branches of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Coast Guard, through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).
- **Hiring Our Heroes – www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes**
 - Hiring Our Heroes is a program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation designed to help veterans, transitioning servicemembers and military spouses find meaningful employment. Hiring Our Heroes leverages a network of more than 1,600 state and local chambers of commerce and other strategic partners from the public, private and nonprofit sector to implement job fairs and employment soft skills coaching.
- **Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN) – www.msccn.org**
 - The Military Spouse Corporate Career Network provides no-cost employment services and assistance needed to facilitate job placement to all military spouses, adult dependents and caregivers. MSCCN operates under a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with each branch of service, including the National Guard.
- **Military Spouse eMentor Program – www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/about**
 - The MilSpouse eMentor Program is open to all spouses or widow(er)s of servicemembers and veterans. Divorced spouses are also welcome to participate. By completing an online profile, members can search for and select a mentor who assists with job searching and gives career guidance, advice, support and inspiration. Career mentors are members of military spouse-friendly organizations and other career professionals.

- **Military Spouse Foundation (MSF)** – www.militaryspousefoundation.org
 - Military Spouse Foundation was created by and for military spouses. By joining the Military Spouse Foundation, community members can connect with other military spouses, connect with an online mentor, participate in career “prep rallies” and workshops to determine individual career paths and take self-paced, interactive courses. Representatives of community organizations can reach out to MSF to become a partner in this effort. Interested individuals may contact MSF to become industrial expert volunteers.
- **The National Guard Employment Network (NGEN)** – www.msccn.org/NationalGuard
 - NGEN’s mission is to provide a network for servicemembers and their families to connect directly with employment resources, service providers and employers.
 - The NGEN, with alliance members Corporate America Supports You (CASY) and the Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN), offers each state National Guard Employment Division career readiness support and placement through a broad network of resources and services to find jobs, training and education opportunities for servicemembers and their families.
- **VetNet** – www.vetnethq.com
 - VetNet is a collaboration between the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Hiring Our Heroes initiative, Hire Heroes USA, Syracuse University’s Institute for Veteran and Military Families and Google. VetNet serves as a “one-stop shop” to ease the transition of servicemembers and their spouses from the military to the civilian workforce. This is accomplished primarily through three distinct content areas: Basic Training, Career Connections and Entrepreneurship. VetNet also provides networking tools, job market information and an extensive resource library.

5.5 Financial Services

Financial services are those that offer information and guidance to assist servicemembers and their families in managing money and investments. They also help servicemembers understand the financial protections and opportunities unique to the military community.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)** – www.consumerfinance.gov/servicemembers
 - The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau seeks to protect American citizens from predatory financial practices. The CFPB has created a servicemember-specific website to provide information on germane financial issues, such as VA benefits, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and more.
- **Personal Financial Management Program (PFM)** – www.militaryonesource.mil/pfm?content_id=267421
 - The Personal Financial Management Program is offered by every service branch to help servicemembers and their families keep track of their finances, save for the

future and resolve any financial issues. The PFM Program also offers classes and confidential counseling.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **American Legion USAA Financial Center** – www.legion.org/usaa

USAA Website: www.usaa.com/legion

- USAA is the American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. The relationship gives American Legion and family members access to industry-leading insurance, banking, investment and financial counseling services.
- USAA is also the preferred provider of credit card services for the American Legion Auxiliary.
- Public access to resources is available on the USAA website above.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Hands on Banking for Military** – www.handsonbanking.org/financial-education/hands-on-banking-for-military

- Program launched by the Wells Fargo Foundation to deal with the financial education challenges facing servicemembers, veterans and their families. Hands on Banking for Military is designed to address military member's unique financial needs at every stage of their career. The program presents 10 individual lesson topics ranging from the basics of banking to career transition and planning for retirement.
- Wells Fargo has joined forces with the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) to bring Hands on Banking for Military to service members in the continental United States. Through close to 700 locations across the country, NFCC's Member Agencies will teach local Hands on Banking for Military classes. In addition to the group education designed to keep military personnel and their families on a path to financial stability, more than NFCC 2,200 agency counselors will provide one-on-one personalized financial reviews, budget planning and concrete solutions to pressing financial concerns. Military and veteran groups wishing to have a representative teach a class, or individuals interested in scheduling a session with a financial specialist can contact the NFCC at (855) 374-2773 or contact your local Wells Fargo Branch.

- **Military Saves** – www.militarysaves.org

- Military Saves is a social marketing campaign to persuade, motivate and encourage military families to save money. Those who take the Military Saves pledge can opt to receive a monthly e-newsletter from Military Saves, as well as a quarterly e-newsletter from America Saves, its parent organization. Military Saves also works with the defense credit unions, military banks and other non-profit organizations to promote savings and debt reduction.

5.6 Health

Health services are those that provide servicemembers and their families with the resources and support necessary to prevent, treat and care for illnesses, diseases, disabilities and conditions.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **TRICARE** – www.tricare.mil
 - Members of the military and their families and some military retirees participate in a health care system called TRICARE. TRICARE operates, broadly speaking, as a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) for those on active duty.
 - Reservists and National Guard members may qualify for specific types of TRICARE. The above website provides detailed information about many of the most common scenarios.
- **VA Healthcare** – www.va.gov/health
 - Reservists, National Guard members and transitioning servicemembers may qualify for healthcare from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
 - Typically families are unable to receive healthcare at the VA. However, exceptions may include service-connected disabilities and servicemembers killed in action.
 - The above website provides information on how to apply online or in person.
- **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** – www.healthcare.gov
 - Reservists, National Guard members, transitioning servicemembers and their families may find the Affordable Care Act may be a better fit for their circumstances.
 - The above website provides information on how to enroll.
- **Military/Veteran Crisis Line** – www.veteranscrisisline.net/activeduty.aspx
 - The Military/Veteran Crisis Line is a resource provided by the VA. The Military/Veteran Crisis Line connects servicemembers and veterans in crisis as well as their families and friends with qualified, caring responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text.
 - Servicemembers, veterans and their loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 and Press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, every day.
 - This service is available to all servicemembers, including members of the National Guard, the Reserve and veterans, even if not registered with the VA.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **American Legion Department Service Officers** – www.legion.org/veteransbenefits/departmentserviceofficers
 - Legion Service Officers can assist veterans, servicemembers and their family members in navigating VA health benefits, including disability claims.
 - An individual in need does not need to be member of the Legion to receive help from a service officer.

- **American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors –** www.legion.org/operationcomfortwarriors/about
 - Operation Comfort Warriors delivers comfort items and activities for servicemembers recovering in hospitals and warrior transition units around the world. Most military medical centers are not equipped to store large quantities of care packages.
- **American Legion Heroes to Hometowns –** www.legion.org/heroes/about
 - Heroes to Hometowns is a program where Legionnaires provide direct assistance to veterans or military personnel coming home to changed circumstances (such as prosthetic limbs, traumatic brain injuries or PTSD).

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Give an Hour –** www.giveanhour.org
 - Give an Hour provides free mental health services for servicemembers and their families affected by the post-9/11 conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.
 - Those who are eligible include but are not limited to the following: spouses, children, parents, siblings, extended family members, unmarried partners and National and Reserve members who have not yet deployed.

5.7 Housing

Housing services are those that assist servicemembers and military families locate, pay for and maintain a home while serving.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Automated Housing Referral Network (AHRN) –** www.ahrn.com
 - The Automated Housing Referral Network, sponsored by the Department of Defense, assists active-duty servicemembers, veterans, military retirees, Coast Guard, Reservists/National Guard members, recruiters, Department of Defense civilians/contractors and their families with locating available housing near their duty station. AHRN compiles and provides information on currently and soon-to-be available housing.
- **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) –** www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bah.cfm
 - The Basic Allowance for Housing is given to active-duty servicemembers who are not provided government housing and is intended to provide equitable housing compensation based on the cost of the local civilian market. The BAH allotted to each servicemember varies based on several factors, including geographic location, pay grade and dependency status (i.e., number of dependents, such as a spouse and/or children).
 - The above site provides a BAH calculator that takes these factors into account and estimates a monthly payment.

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Servicemembers Q&A –** portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/housing/sfh/nsc/qasscra1
 - This webpage, maintained by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides a summary of the housing provisions of the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA). Broadly speaking, these provisions include mortgage interest rate limitations, debt payment relief, foreclosure protection while deployed and eligibility for SCRA housing benefits. While the linked page provides critical information, servicemembers with questions about the application of the SCRA to their individual circumstances should contact their unit's judge advocate or installation legal officer (see Legal Assistance).
- **Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) Program –** benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs administers the SAH program, designed to help severely disabled veterans and servicemembers purchase or construct an adapted home, or modify an existing home to accommodate a disability.
 - **Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant:** The SAH grant helps disabled veterans and servicemembers by providing a barrier-free living environment, such as a wheelchair accessible home. Veterans and servicemembers with service-connected disabilities (including loss/loss of use of both lower extremities) may be entitled to a grant of up to \$70,465.
 - **Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant:** The SHA grant can be used to increase the mobility of eligible veterans and servicemembers throughout their residences. Veterans and servicemembers with service-connected disabilities (including severe visual impairment or loss/loss of use of both hands) may be entitled to a grant of up to \$14,093.
 - For those who do not yet own a home, a temporary grant may be available to SAH/SHA eligible veterans and servicemembers who are or will be temporarily residing in a home owned by a family member. The maximum amount available through the SAH grant is \$30,934 and for the SHA grant is \$5,523.
 - Contact information for a SAH Agent in your area can be found on the following website (www.benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS/contact_agents.asp).

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Homes for Heroes –** www.homesforheroes.com
 - Homes for Heroes affiliates itself with real estate-related service providers who offer substantial rebates and discounts to the heroes. Heroes include servicemembers, firefighters, law enforcement officers and others who make communities a safer place to live in.
- **HOPE NOW –** www.hopenow.com
 - HOPE NOW is an alliance between counselors, mortgage companies, investors and other mortgage market participants. This alliance will maximize outreach efforts to

homeowners in distress to help them stay in their homes and will create a unified, coordinated plan to reach and help as many homeowners as possible. The members of this alliance recognize that by working together, they will be more effective than by working independently. This resource is applicable to all populations groups, to include military.

- Homeowners in distress can call (888) 995-HOPE. This hotline is staffed by HUD-approved credit counselors who can guide you through possible options.
- **Homes for the Troops (HFOT) – www.hfotusa.org**
 - HFOT builds specially adapted, mortgage-free homes nationwide for the most severely injured veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of these veterans have sustained life-altering injuries including multiple amputations, partial or full paralysis, or severe traumatic brain injury. These homes are designed for maximum freedom and movement and the ability to live more independently at no cost to the veterans we serve.
 - To be eligible for HFOT: one must have been injured while on active-duty post September 11, 2001; retired or in the process of medical retirement; received a letter of eligibility for the VA Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant program; and accept the responsibility of home ownership and have the resources to maintain a home.
- **Operation Homefront – www.operationhomefront.net**
 - Operation Homefront is a national organization that provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of servicemembers (E-1 to E-6) and wounded warriors. Housing programs for military families:
 - **Operation Homefront Villages:** Operation Homefront Village provides transitional housing in Washington, D.C., San Antonio and San Diego to wounded or injured servicemembers and their families to live rent free while they go through the transition process. Upon placement in a Village, Operation Homefront counselors set up a mandatory schedule that these servicemembers, veterans and their families must follow. They are required to attend support groups, workshops, benefits briefings and resume writing classes, as determined by their counselor. Counselors meet with each military family every 30 days to review their financial situation, determine where they are in the transition process, review their attendance in the required workshops and classes and determine if they still present adequate need to continue living in the Village. Once they have become self-sufficient, counselors help them find suitable housing in the area where they intend to live on a permanent basis.
 - **Homes on the Homefront:** Military families with permanent housing needs may apply for homes through this program and are notified when an eligible house becomes available. If the family wishes to pursue the house, they are then assigned a client services representative who determines their eligibility based on factors such as financial need and connection to the community. If approved, the family resides in the property for one to two years as a tenant of Operation Homefront. The family is responsible only for property taxes, insurance and homeowner's association fees. After this period, Operation

Homefront works with the family to create a customized transition plan with benchmarks such as financial counseling, ability to maintain the property and other activities. Once the plan is fully satisfied, the family is deeded the property.

- See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for an action guide promoting ALA's collaboration with Operation Homefront for more information.

5.8 Legal Assistance

Legal assistance services are those that provide information, counsel and representation to servicemembers and military families. They assist servicemembers in understanding and applying laws and legal protections unique to the military community.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program** – legalassistance.law.af.mil
 - The Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program offers free consultation and guidance to members of the military, provided by the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps of each branch. The extent of legal advice provided is limited, however, and may be determined on a case-by-case basis. Generally speaking, the program does not handle complex or overly complicated issues.
 - JAG refers to the legal specialty within the Armed Forces. Each branch of service has its own JAG Corps. Members, typically referred to as Judge Advocates or JAGs, are regular members of the Armed Forces, and may be either active duty or of a Reserve Component. Their usual purpose is to provide legal counsel to the command to which they are assigned. Senior Judge Advocates may also serve as judges in courts-martial cases.
 - Servicemembers may locate their nearest Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program from the website above.
- **Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA)** – www.military.com/benefits/military-legal-matters/scra/servicemembers-civil-relief-act-overview.html
 - The Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act provides extensive protections for active duty military personnel, including activated Reservists and National Guard members. The following topics are covered by the Act:
 - Rental agreements, security deposits, prepaid rent and eviction
 - Installment contracts
 - Credit card interest rates
 - Mortgage interest rates and mortgage foreclosure
 - Civil judicial proceedings
 - Automobile leases
 - Life and health insurance
 - Income tax payments

- Please note that the above link is a general overview of the SCRA provided by www.military.com. Servicemembers with questions about the SCRA are encouraged to contact their unit's judge advocate or installation legal assistance officer.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **American Bar Association (ABA) Home Front –** www.americanbar.org/portals/public_resources/aba_home_front.html
 - The American Bar Association Home Front portal provides legal information and resources for military families. The Directory of Programs helps military families find the legal aid they need. The Military Pro Bono Center facilitates pro bono opportunities for attorneys looking to volunteer their time to help military families.
- **Yellow Ribbon Fund –** www.yellowribbonfund.org
 - The Yellow Ribbon Fund provides pro bono legal services when injured servicemembers need an advocate to represent them.

5.9 Recreation Services & Youth Development

Recreation services are those that provide servicemembers and their families respite from their responsibilities and stresses. Youth development services are those that provide leadership and skill-building opportunities to young people.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (FMWR) – See below for website addresses.**
 - Each military branch offers morale activities for servicemembers and their families through the office of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (often referred to as FMWR, Family and MWR or MWR). FMWR programs are delivered at military installations. Commonly provided services, facilities and programs include fitness centers, pools, marinas, bowling centers, golf courses, arts and crafts rooms, restaurants, conference centers, catering services and social events for single servicemembers. Accredited family child care and youth and school-aged services are also typically offered through FMWR departments. Websites for each branch of service's FMWR programs, including directories of available programs by installation:
 - **Army** – www.armymwr.com
 - **Navy** – www.navymwr.org
 - **Marines** – www.usmc-mccs.org
 - **Coast Guard** – www.uscg.mil/mwr
 - **Air Force** – www.afpc.af.mil
- **National Guard Child and Youth Services –** www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/Youth.aspx
 - The Child and Youth Program (CYP) is an integral component of the National Guard's comprehensive approach to Family Readiness. By upholding the wellbeing of the entire family, the CYP offers outcome based activities designed to promote

- positive youth development and support the unique strengths and challenges of National Guard children. This high quality, out-of-school time program exists in 54 States, Territories and the District of Columbia to lessen risky behaviors, enhance resilience, develop positive coping strategies and assist National Guard youth.
- Age-appropriate activities and support services are offered in four service delivery areas: art, recreation and leisure; sports, fitness and health; life skills, citizenship, character development and leadership; and academic support, career development, mentoring & intervention.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **American Legion Auxiliary Girls State and Girls Nation – www.ALAforVeterans.org/Programs/ALA-Girls-State---Girls-Nation**
 - ALA Girls State exists in all states except Hawaii. Every summer, approximately 16,000 young women participate in a weeklong ALA Girls State program across the nation. Every Girls State program is run with the same patriotic values through a nonpartisan curriculum where students assume the roles of government leaders, campaigning as “Federalists” and “Nationalists” to become mayors and county and state officials of the ALA Girls State.
 - Two representatives are sent from every Girls State to attend Girls Nation, where they become “senators” who meet for weeklong immersive learning in Washington, D.C.
- **American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation – www.legion.org/boysnation**
 - Boys State exists in all states except Hawaii. Legion posts select high school juniors to attend the program.
 - At Boys State, participants learn the rights, privileges and responsibilities of franchised citizens. The training is objective and focuses on the structure of city, county and state governments.
 - Boys Nation is held in Washington D.C. in which two representatives from each participating state all come together to learn about the structure and function of the federal government.
- **American Legion Baseball – www.legion.org/baseball**
 - The American Legion provided the first national baseball tournament for teenagers in the world. The league serves in the development of youth by instilling the value of courage and respect for others as well as encouraging their growth to be active citizens.
 - Today, the program registers more than 5,400 teams in all 50 states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Almost 100,000 youths, ages 15-19, play annually.
- **American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program – www.legion.org/shooting**
 - The Junior Shooting Sports Program is a gun safety education and marksmanship program that encompasses the basic elements of safety, education, enjoyment and competition. Shooters use the .177 caliber air rifle.
 - This program is open to males and females up to the age of 18 through Legion sponsorship; disabled youth are also encouraged to join.

- Junior Shooting Sports is comprised of three parts: Basic Marksmanship Course, Qualification Awards and Air Rifle Competition.
- **American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors –**
www.legion.org/operationcomfortwarriors
 - Operation Comfort Warriors delivers comfort items and activities for military personnel recovering in hospitals and warrior transition units around the world.
 - Request for assistance is available on the American Legion’s website (www.legion.org/operationcomfortwarriors/assistance).
- **American Legion Scouting Program –** www.legion.org/scouting
 - The American Legion has sponsored Boys Scouts of America ever since its foundation in 1919. Today, Legion posts sponsor more than 2,500 scouting units across the country.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Armed Services YMCA –** www.asymca.org
 - A national member association of the YMCA of the USA, ASYMCA’s 31 branches and affiliates offer many services, including childcare, hospital assistance, spouse support services, food services, deployment support, emergency support, computer training classes, counseling, wounded warrior support, wounded family support and health and wellness programs.
 - The ASYMCA provides programs and support services to military servicemembers and their families with particular focus on junior-enlisted servicemembers (rank of sergeant or below). Programs are offered at low or no cost with no dues or membership fees.
- **Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) –**
www.bgca.org/meetourpartners/Pages/MilitaryPartnership.aspx
 - BGCA offers programs and services that promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence. BGCA offers education and career programs; character and leadership programs; health and life skills; arts programs; and sports, fitness and recreation programs. Chapters are located in communities across the country.
 - BGCA and the Armed Forces partner to help children of military families face the unique challenges of military life. The BGCA Military Programs provide services to military children and youth at youth centers on military installations and by referring military children and youth to traditional community clubs.
- **Operation Homefront –** www.operationhomefront.net
 - Operation Homefront organizes and delivers a variety of morale programs across the country out of its network of regional offices. Operation Homefront morale programs include back-to-school supply drives, Hearts of Valor military spouse support groups and holiday celebrations.
- **USO (United Service Organizations) –** www.uso.org
 - United Service Organizations offers a variety of programs and services to support the morale, welfare, social and entertainment needs of troops and their families, free

of charge. (See the National Security Program page of the ALA website for an action guide promoting ALA's collaboration with USO).

- **Yellow Ribbon Fund** – www.yellowribbonfund.org
 - The Yellow Ribbon Fund provides family caregiver support (childcare, family-oriented activities, massages, spa visits, dinners out, etc.) and social events and outings.

5.10 Child Care

Child care services are those that offer care and supervision of a servicemember's and family's children.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Child Care Aware of America** – www.naccrra.org/military-families
 - Child Care Aware of America helps military families find childcare in their local communities and provides financial assistance to families who are eligible.
 - Child Care Aware of America also helps military families find childcare who are located off of installations.
- **Military Child Care Portal** – www.MilitaryChildCare.com
 - The Department of Defense has launched this website that will provide a listing of military-operated or military-approved child care programs around the world. Servicemembers and their families must first create an account with information of their family unit. Families can then search for the child care option that best fits their needs and place themselves on waiting lists.
 - Those who are eligible are active-duty military personnel, Department of Defense civilian employees, Reserve Component military personnel on active-duty assignment, combat-related wounded warriors, surviving spouses, those taking care of a dependent child of an otherwise eligible individual and eligible employees of Department of Defense contractors.
 - The website will be operational worldwide by September 2016. The first 13 installations available on the website are Navy bases, located in five states, but the portal will be available to all branches once the website is complete. If an installation is not yet on the portal, parents may call the customer service number where representatives will help the parents get information.

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **Child Minding Services**
 - Units may offer child minding services. Child minding is when the parent/family member is on site with the child, but in another location, such as when a parent goes to a job fair or is attending a post-deployment briefing.
 - Check with your local unit to see if these services are already available.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Sittercity** – www.sittercity.com/dod
 - Sittercity helps military families find babysitters, nannies (part time and full time), last minute care, pet sitters, housekeepers and Permanent Change of Station (PCS) help. Free standard background checks are taken on all caregivers.
 - The Sittercity military program works with the Department of Defense to provide free membership for servicemembers and families in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force (includes active duty, Reserve and Guard).

5.11 Peer Support

Peer support services are those organized by servicemembers or family members themselves to support each other socially, emotionally and practically. They offer each other aid, comfort, friendship, solidarity and problem-solving strategies and recommendations.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Family Readiness Groups (FRGs)** – See below for website addresses
 - Each military branch sponsors organizations of family members, volunteers, servicemembers and civilian employees associated with military units. These FRGs provide activities and support to assist both servicemembers and families before, during and after deployment. Specifically for spouses and family members, FRGs promote a sense of belonging to the unit and the branch of service at large. Friendships are developed, important information is shared, referrals are obtained and morale support is shared during difficult times. Though each branch's Family Readiness Groups are functionally similar, their names differ.
 - **Army — Family Readiness Group**
 - www.armyfrg.org/skins/frg/home.aspx
 - **Navy — Ombudsman Program**
 - ombudsmanregistry.org/?m=login
 - **Marine Corps — Family Readiness Program**
 - www.marcorssyscom.marines.mil/CommandStaff/FamilyReadinessOfficer%28FRO%29.aspx
 - **Coast Guard — Spouse Club Program**
 - www.uscg.mil/worklife/contact.asp
 - **Air Force — Key Spouse Program**
 - www.usafservices.com/Home/SpouseSupport/Keypouseprogram.aspx

2) Legion Family Resources and Services

- **American Legion Posts and American Legion Auxiliary Units**
 - One of the Legion Family's purposes is to promote a peer support network for servicemembers, veterans and their families. Peer support can be found in communities around the country, either at American Legion posts or American Legion Auxiliary units. Members and guests can form friendships with others who have similar backgrounds in relaxing settings.
 - American Legion Post Locator – www.legion.org/posts
 - ALA Department Locator – www.ALForVeterans.org/About/Department-State-Headquarters (will need to contact Department Headquarters)

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **American Gold Star Mothers** – www.goldstarmoms.com
 - American Gold Star Mothers is an organization of mothers who have lost a son or daughter in the service of our country. The mission of Gold Star Mothers is to continue to provide emotional support to its members, do volunteer work with veterans and promote patriotism.
 - American Gold Star Mothers is a membership organization. National dues are \$20 while local and department dues may vary.
- **Blue Star Families** – www.bluestarfam.org
 - Blue Star Families is a national organization composed of servicemembers' and veterans' spouses that works to support, connect and empower military families. Blue Star Families operates more than 45 chapters throughout the world, each of which works to support military families in their area. The organization engages in a wide array of programs:
 - **Books on Bases:** A donation program that collects and distributes books to military children.
 - **Blue Star Museums:** A partnership program through which art centers, museums and exhibit halls offer free entry to military family members.
 - **Blue Star Theaters:** A partnership program through which theaters offer free or discounted admission to military family members.
 - **Blue Star Neighbors:** An initiative to recognize civilians who are supporting servicemembers and military families through acts big and small.
- **National Military Family Association** – www.militaryfamily.org
 - The National Military Family Association is a nonprofit organization focused on issues important to military families. They advocate for providing all military families with comprehensive child care, accessible health care, spouse employment options, great schools and caring communities, a secure retirement and support for widows and widowers.
- **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)** – www.taps.org
 - TAPS offers compassionate care to all those grieving the death of a loved one serving in our Armed Forces. TAPS provides comfort and hope 24 hours a day,

seven days a week through a national peer support network and connection to grief resources, all at no cost to surviving families and loved ones. (See the National Security Program page for a How-To Sheet promoting ALA's collaboration with TAPS).

5.12 Service Coordination

Service coordination is a process of bringing together organizations and individuals who serve the military community in order to create a seamless system of support, identify and fill gaps in resources and services and reduce duplication of resources and services.

1) Government Resources and Services

- **Joining Community Forces** – www.joiningcommunityforces.org
 - Joining Community Forces is an initiative of the National Guard Bureau with the purpose of mobilizing community organizations in support of the local military population.
 - Joining Community Forces is implemented by state National Guard groups. Regional and local Community Forces focus the efforts of service providers and advocates toward a common goal: the strengthening of the military community. Because Community Forces work in communities around the country, they are uniquely positioned to find and consolidate the best local resources, and that means providing better and faster service to veterans, servicemembers and their families when they need it.
 - Visit the link above and click on the “Connect to Your State” and select “Community Groups” to find the Joining Community Forces contacts and community forces (community networks) in your geographic area.

3) Other Community Resources and Services

- **Community Blueprint** – www.pointsoflight.org/programs/military-initiatives/community-blueprint
 - The Community Blueprint is a Call to Action for grassroots organizations to collaborate and share tools to better serve the military and veteran communities at the local level. The Community Blueprint offers a suite of “Community Solutions” – step-by-step project instructions for volunteer projects that address one of the eight impact areas – to help communities work smarter together and create lasting change.
 - The eight impact areas are employment, volunteerism, family strength, behavioral health, financial and legal, education, housing and reintegration.

6. Identify How the ALA Can Help

For nearly a century, the American Legion Auxiliary has honored the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of veterans, servicemembers and their families, both at home and abroad. The public sector has developed an array of resources and services to support the military community, as made evident in earlier sections of this Guide. Also, the general population, and veterans and servicemembers themselves, give generously to organizations that deliver brief interventions to members of the military community, such as morale-boosting comfort items, emergency financial assistance and welcome-home celebrations.

While all sectors of society have a responsibility to support members of the military and their families, the American Legion Auxiliary has accepted additional responsibilities as a membership organization comprised of woman veterans and female relatives of individuals who once served in the military. Our contribution to the military family readiness system is that ALA members, who are or were in some way connected to the military, are able to serve members of the military community effectively. We lean toward meaningful, long-term and continued support to servicemembers and their families. They can count on us to be with them on their journey for the long haul.

Resources and services that the ALA offers servicemembers and their families can be grouped into three types: practical, emotional and social.

- Examples of practical support are meal preparation, errands, transportation to appointments, child care, emergency financial assistance, yard work and minor house or appliance repairs.
- Examples of emotional support are peer support, mentoring and simply being a good listener.
- Examples of social support are involving servicemembers and their families in the Legion Family's Americanism, community service, morale and youth development activities.

ALA members deliver these practical, emotional and social services to servicemembers and their families through four mechanisms:

- 1) **Legion Family National Brand Programs** – Legion Family national brand programs include but are not limited to the Family Support Network, scholarships offered by both the Legion and ALA, Temporary Financial Assistance, Operation Comfort Warriors, the Legion Boys State/Nation and ALA Girls State/Nation.
 - The **Family Support Network** provides immediate assistance to service personnel and their families through a toll-free telephone number or an online assistance form. The individual's or family's need is passed down to a local post, which then contacts the servicemember or family to determine how assistance can be provided.

- The American Legion Family supports a number of **scholarships** that benefit veterans, the children of servicemembers and veterans and the members of the organizations within the Legion Family.
- The American Legion's **Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)** program awards cash grants to minor children of veterans who are eligible for American Legion membership.
- **Operation Comfort Warriors** resolves to meet the needs of wounded, injured or ill military personnel by providing comfort items not usually supplied by the government.
- **American Legion Boys Nation** is an opportunity for two representatives from each of the 49 Boys State states to represent their state in Washington DC.
- The same experience is available through **American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation**.

2) Local Unit Service Provision – The ALA's strength lies in our worldwide presence in 9,000 communities and our individual membership base of nearly 800,000. It is at this grassroots level where most of our support to servicemembers and their families takes place. The type of assistance varies across units, is dependent on the capacity of the unit and its sponsoring post, and is tailored to the specific needs of the servicemember/family or group of servicemembers/families being supported.

Admittedly what this means for servicemembers and their families is that they cannot necessarily count on each ALA unit to deliver a common "benefits package." But they can count on ALA to do something which is certain to help.

3) Individual Member Helpfulness – ALA members are of great value to servicemembers and their families. ALA members take on roles as mentors by providing guidance in areas they have experience in and as helpers by volunteering to fill needs in a neighborly fashion.

4) Community Collaboration – Many ALA units and their sponsoring posts are connected to formal and informal networks of organizations which share the purpose of supporting servicemembers, veterans and their families in their local communities. Servicemembers and their families who first come into contact with an ALA unit well connected in their community can count on an information or service referral when the unit or its sponsoring post cannot meet the request directly.

ALA units and members reading this section should assess how they fit into the ALA's military family readiness. What are you confident in being able to do if a servicemember or military family reaches you for help? Are you sufficiently knowledgeable about what is available in your community from other groups? What more could you or your unit do to ready yourself to support servicemembers and their families when they reach out to you? What ways will you go about giving a warm Legion Family welcome and appreciation to servicemembers and their families?

7. Finding Servicemembers and their Families in Need

7.1 Finding Military Families Indirectly

One question American Legion Auxiliary members ask frequently is, “We want to help military families, but how do we find them?” One answer is that the unit should establish referral arrangements with other organizations serving the military population. ALA units must be visible in their local communities! Make introductions to the organizations and individuals in close contact with servicemembers and their families. Let them know how your unit is able to help and support servicemembers and their families. Below are the types of organizations that ALA unit leaders and ALA members should contact and get involved with.

1) Family Readiness Groups (FRGs)

- Each military branch sponsors groups of family members, volunteers, servicemembers and civilian employees associated with their military units who all make up these Family Readiness Groups. FRGs provide activities and support to assist both servicemembers and families before, during and after deployment.
- Community members (such as ALA members) are allowed to participate in FRGs. ALA members could join a FRG communications list and/or attend FRG meetings. Doing so will enable you to keep a pulse on what is of concern to military families generally. You might also uncover a military family with a specific challenge that you or your ALA unit could address.
- ALA units may consider offering meeting locations (the post/unit home), hospitality services, or refreshments to FRG meetings.
- By joining an FRG, ALA units and members may gain an opportunity to promote Legion Family events and activities to FRG participants.
- FRGs are led by volunteers and supported by defense employees. (See the following table for position titles of each military branch.) ALA units and members wishing to make an introduction to the FRG(s) operating in your area should contact the FRG employee, as they have published phone numbers and addresses (unlike the volunteers, whose privacy is protected).
- If you are in a unit or are a member near an active-duty military installation, use MilitaryINSTALLATIONS (www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil) to find detailed profiles on installations, including contact information.
- Search for the Family Center or Family Advocacy Program contact of that installation.
- Call or email and ask to speak to or correspond with the employee with oversight over family readiness.
- Introduce your ALA unit or yourself and inquire how your unit/you may get involved in the FRG.
- State National Guard units have Family Readiness Programs. Since many state National Guard units exist and are geographically dispersed across a state, your

unit/you will have high likelihood of being able to connect with a Family Readiness Program.

- Each state National Guard has a family programs division responsible for delivering human needs programs to Guard members and their families. There are three main family programs that every state provides. These include a youth program, Family Readiness Group and family assistance center. States differ in other programs they may offer depending on the needs of the Guard members and their families as well the resources available in the state. For example, some may have a suicide prevention program or a survivor outreach service.
- At the state level, a State Family Program Director (SFPD) leads the family programs division.
- Contact information and locations for state family programs personnel (State Family Program Directors, Airman & Family Readiness Program Managers, Family Readiness Support Assistants, Senior Family Readiness Support Assistants, Family Assistant Specialists, Family Assistance Coordinators and Child & Youth Program Coordinators) is available through the Joint Services Support website. (www.jointservicessupport.org/ResourceFinder/SearchResource.aspx). On the right side of the page, you will see “Topic” with a scroll-down menu; select “Family Support” in the scroll-down menu. On the left side of the page, you will see “Find a Contact” and “Find a Resource.” Determine whether you would like to contact a specific person or an organization, such as the YMCA or American Red Cross. On the bar to the left, filters are available to better define your search by state, program and role.
- The same contact information can be found at the Joining Community Forces website (www.joiningcommunityforces.org). At the top left of the homepage, select the state you wish to display and staff members for family support will be displayed in the “Contacts” box.
- If you know the person or organization you would like to contact already, you can type their name in the “Search by Keyword” space.
- Also, Guard members and their families may find the contact information for their family programs through their state’s Army/Air National Guard websites. Army National Guard members should contact their Family Assistance Specialists for information regarding resources. Air National Guard members should contact their Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager attached to their Wing (2 or more groups/see Appendix A for more information about Wings).
- Family Assistance Centers are service centers dispersed across the state to support all servicemembers, veterans and families in need regardless of service or status. The National Guard Bureau encourages ALA units to connect with their local Family Assistance Center to ensure referrals.

Branch and Component	FRG Program Name	Volunteer Position Title	Staff Position Title
Army	Family Readiness Group	Leader	Family Readiness Support Assistant
Army Reserve	Family Readiness Group	Leader	Family Program Center Specialist
Army National Guard	Family Readiness Program	Leader	Family Readiness Support Assistant
Navy	Ombudsman Program	Ombudsman	Family Readiness Officer
Navy Reserve	Ombudsman Program	Ombudsman	Family Readiness Officer
Air Force	Key Spouse Program	Key Spouse	Key Spouse Program Manager
Air Force Reserve	Key Spouse Program	Key Spouse	Key Spouse Program Manager
Air National Guard	Key Spouse Program	Key Spouse	Airman & Family Readiness Program Manger
Marine Corps	Family Readiness Program	Family Readiness Assistant / Advisor	Family Readiness Officer
Marine Corps Reserve	Family Readiness Program	Family Readiness Assistant / Advisor	Family Readiness Officer
Coast Guard	1. Work-Life Program 2. Spouse Club 3. Ombudsman	2. Spouse Club Manager	1. Regional Work-Life Field Staff 3. Ombudsman Program Manager
Coast Guard Reserve	1. Work-Life Program 2. Spouse Club 3. Ombudsman	2. Spouse Club Manager	1. Regional Work-Life Field Staff 3. Ombudsman Program Manager

2) Department of Defense Enabling Services & Personnel

- Each military branch offers central points of entry to help active-duty servicemembers and their families. These services are offered through family support centers staffed by professionals.

- ALA units and members should make introductions to family support center staff members in their area.
- Use MilitaryINSTALLATIONS (www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil) to find detailed profiles on installations, including contact information.
- Search for the Family Support Center contact information for the installation.
- Ask to speak to or correspond with the Family Support Center director.
- Introduce your ALA unit or yourself and inquire how your unit/you may get involved in any on-base activities that the Family Support Center organizes and are open to community members.
- Make sure the family support center knows what your unit is capable of offering to servicemembers and their families in need. The Family Support Center staff may or may not be able to make referrals (due to conflict of interest rules), but there is no harm in ALA units and members providing this information to the Center.
- In the case of state National Guard groups, ALA unit leaders should make introductions to the Family Assistant Center Specialist operating in the regions of the state where the unit/member is located. Directions on how to navigate the Joint Services Support website is located in the previous section on Family Readiness Groups and Programs. Joint Services Support has a search engine to help find contact information and locations for state National Guard family readiness personnel.

3) Military Service Organizations

- Several military service organizations (MSOs) have regional and community network structures. These MSO regional offices and local chapters serve as the first points of contact between the MSO and servicemembers and their families in need.
- ALA unit leaders should make their capabilities known to the MSO regional office and local chapter staff and volunteers. The MSOs may refer military families to the ALA when the MSO does not offer the requested service or its funding for such services have expired.
- MSOs with regional and local network structures:
 - **The American Red Cross:** www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter (See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for a how-to sheet promoting the ALA's collaboration with American Red Cross)
 - **Blue Star Families:** www.bluestarfam.org/connect/chapters
 - **Operation Homefront:** www.operationhomefront.net (See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for an action guide promoting the ALA's collaboration with Operation Homefront)
 - **USO:** www.uso.org (See the National Security Program page on the ALA website for an action guide promoting the ALA's collaboration with USO)

4) Community Outreach

- Community events organized for the military population are excellent venues for Auxiliary units to promote the organization and its support to servicemembers and their families.
- Military-specific community events that occur across the country include Hiring our Heroes job fairs, VA Welcome Home events and Yellow Ribbon events.
- Consider renting booth space at county fairs, state fairs, community walks and races and other community gatherings where servicemembers and their families may be in attendance.
- See the National Security page of the ALA website for the “How to Support Hiring Events for Veterans and Military & Veteran Spouses” and “How to Welcome Home Separating Servicemembers” documents.

5) Community Collaborations

- Some states and communities have organized themselves to be attentive to the unique needs of their servicemember and veteran residents. Whether called a “council,” “coalition,” “network” or “collaboration,” these military and veteran planning and action groups are great forums for ALA units and members to join. Involving your unit in these forums could result in service referrals to the unit from other organizations participating in the forum.
- Joining Community Forces is an initiative of the National Guard Bureau with the purpose of mobilizing community organizations in support of the local military population. Joining Community Forces is implemented by state National Guard groups where they advocate for the creation of “Community Forces” at each community within their state. Visit their website to find the Community Forces initiative in your area (www.joiningcommunityforces.org).
- The Community Blueprint is a Call to Action for grassroots organizations to collaborate and share tools to better serve the military and veteran communities at the local level. The Community Blueprint offers a suite of “Community Solutions” – step-by-step project instructions for volunteer projects that address one of the eight impact areas – to help communities work smarter together and create lasting change.
- The eight impact areas are employment, volunteerism, family strength, behavioral health, financial and legal, education, housing and reintegration.
- To find if your area is supported by the Community Blueprint, visit www.pointsoflight.org/programs/military-initiatives/community-blueprint. If your area is not supported, you can always create a Community Blueprint Community by collaborating with two or more organizations.

7.2 Finding Military Families Directly

A second answer to the question of how to find military families is to pay attention to chatter and participate in online groups where military family members gather. Below are some direct “family finding” methods ALA members may consider.

1) Attentive Listening

- Uncover the needs of servicemembers and their families in your community through attentive listening. For examples, someone may offer a prayer for a veteran or servicemember at a church service. Or you may overhear a conversation about a difficulty a military family is encountering at your workplace lunch room or at the post home. Maybe you have a neighbor who is military-connected and they appear to be tired, frazzled, or always bustling. These and similar situations provide an opportunity for you to inquire discretely about the servicemember or family member’s wellbeing.
- Don’t assume the servicemember or family member is experiencing a struggle and/or wants help. But you could ask someone with knowledge of a servicemember or family in need to pass along to that person that the American Legion Auxiliary is active in their area and happy to help if needed. That lets the servicemember or family member follow-up if she or he wishes.

2) eMentoring Programs

- Several organizations have established programs for military spouses to receive support in career development and job search by being matched to individuals in the workforce and retirees willing to give advice and feedback. Often the mentoring relationship ends up going beyond career-only considerations to include other areas of mutual interest of the mentee and mentor.
- Examples of these mentoring programs are the Business and Professional Women’s Foundation Joining Forces Mentoring Plus Program, Military Spouse eMentor Program and the (forthcoming) Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network.
- Mentoring provides ALA members the opportunity to form and sustain a direct, robust relationship with a military family member.
- To join as a mentor or subject matter contributor to mentoring programs, see the National Security Program page for a how-to sheet on joining the Military Spouse eMentor Program. Members can look forward to a How-To Join the Joining Forces Mentoring Plus Program on the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program page. Information for Caregivers Peer Support Network forthcoming.

3) Social Media Sites

- Some military family members find social media sites a space to support each other and swap solutions. While some of the sites are open only to current military family members, others are open to all community members.
- ALA members with a fondness for social media may want to subscribe to an open site or two. Follow the conversation threads. If you see a need being expressed and have a solution to offer, post it. If someone asking for help lives in a different state than you, refer them to the ALA department of that state.
- Below is a listing of popular online gathering spaces for military spouses. Websites are a mixture of Facebook and blogging pages. If you have a preference for a particular social media outlet, each site has multiple ways of connecting with them (even if they aren't listed).
 - **Adrianna Lupher:** “tales of leaning and kicking ass from the homefront”: adriannalupher.com
 - **Afterdeployment:** Peer to Peer Forum: afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/blog
 - **Army Wives Network:** www.facebook.com/ArmyWifeNetwork and www.armywifetwork.com/blogs
 - **Battling BARE:** www.facebook.com/BattlingBare/timeline
 - **Blue Star Families:** www.facebook.com/BlueStarFamilies
 - **Defense Centers of Excellence Outreach Center:** www.dcoe.mil/Families/Help
 - **Faith Deployed:** www.facebook.com/FaithDeployed
 - **Family Caregiver Alliance:** lists.caregiver.org/mailman/listinfo/caregiver-online_lists.caregiver.org
 - **Her War, Her Voice:** www.herwarhervoice.com
 - **Military Spouse:** www.facebook.com/MilitarySpouse and community.militaryspouse.com
 - **Molly Gross:** www.facebook.com/molliegrosscomedy
 - **National Military Family Association:** www.facebook.com/militaryfamily
 - **NextGen MilSpouse:** www.facebook.com/NextGenMilSpouse
 - **Operation Homefront:** www.facebook.com/OperationHomefront
 - **Sesame Street for Military Families:** www.facebook.com/SesameStreetForMilitaryFamilies
 - **SpouseBUZZ:** www.facebook.com/spousebuzz
 - **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors:** www.facebook.com/TAPS4America
 - **Wounded Warrior Project Connect:** www.woundedwarriorproject.org/connect/Login.aspx

8. Report Your Impact

The American Legion Auxiliary encourages members serving in their communities to identify themselves as such. When interacting with members of the military community, however, it is important that members not push ALA membership, as that is not the primary need of those being assisted. Please do feel free to mention why you value association with The American Legion Family as appropriate.

To compile impact numbers that truly depict what the American Legion Auxiliary does, we need every member to report her service to her unit, and for each unit to complete a report. When completing the annual Impact Report, units should report “best estimate” numbers that include whatever ALA mission-related activities were completed by ALA members. Unit, district/county and department treasurers can track donations or dollars used for mission-related activities.

Additionally, we encourage members, units and departments to submit narratives and pictures of their service. Narratives should highlight your successes and share your stories with other Auxiliary members. As a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, it is important you report your contributions to support the efforts of our organization. Our collective impact matters!

Appendix A: Military 101

Military Branches

The U.S. military is one of the largest Armed Forces in the world, as well as the most technologically advanced. U.S military personnel are stationed in 150 countries across the globe, with the largest concentrations (outside the United States) in Germany, South Korea, Japan and Italy.

There are five military branches:

- **U.S. Army** – Established in 1775, the Army is responsible for “preserving the peace and security, and providing for the defense of the United States, the Territories, Commonwealths, and possessions, and any areas occupied by the United States.” The Army is capable of supporting the national policies of the United States, implementing its national objectives and overcoming any aggressive acts by other nations that imperil the peace and security. It also possesses a significant air presence, which includes both rotary- and fixed-wing craft, such as attack helicopters and jets. As of 2013, the Army is the largest branch of service with 528,070 active duty members, 198,209 Reservists and 357,735 National Guard members, for a total of 1,084,014 soldiers.⁴
- **U.S. Navy** – Established in 1775, the mission of the Navy “...is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas.” The Navy operates submarines, ships and other seafaring vessels, as well as aircraft. The Navy also operates a number of aircraft carriers in coordination with the Air Force. As of 2013, there are 319,838 active-duty members of the Navy and 62,444 Reservists, for a total of 382,282. There is no Navy National Guard.⁴
- **U.S. Marine Corps** – Established in 1775, the mission of the Marine Corps is to act as “America’s expeditionary force...soldiers of the sea, providing forces and detachments to naval ships and shore operations.” Marines operate primarily as a rapid-deployment force used to secure beachheads and other forward positions. The Marine Corps has its own detachment of air support, as well as a number of naval vessels. As of 2013, there are 195,848 active-duty Marines and 39,501 Reservists, for a total of 235,349 members. There is no Marine Corps National Guard.⁴
- **U.S. Coast Guard** – Established in 1790, the mission of the Coast Guard is to “safeguard our Nation’s maritime interests in the heartland, in the ports, at sea, and around the globe.” Today the Coast Guard operates in a number of areas, including drug

⁴ Department of Defense. (2013). *2013 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*. Retrieved from www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2013-Demographics-Report.pdf

interdiction; search and rescue operations; ensuring the security of ports, waterways and coasts; law enforcement; marine environment protection; and many others. As of 2013, there are 40,420 active-duty and 8,000 Reservist members of the Coast Guard, for a total of 48,420 members. There is no Coast Guard National Guard.⁵

- **U.S. Air Force** – Established in 1947, the mission of the Air Force is to “fly, fight and win...in air, space and cyberspace.” The Air Force operates an extensive array of air carriers, jets, unmanned aircraft and other technologies. As of 2013, there are 326,573 active duty servicemembers, 70,913 Reservists and 105,708 National Guard members, for a combined total of 503,194 Air Force personnel.⁵

Military Components

Each branch of service has two or more components:

- **Active Duty** – Servicemembers on an active-duty component are full-time military personnel. They are contractually obligated to serve for a specified amount of time. Active-duty personnel comprise 56.1-percent of the U.S. Armed Forces as of 2013.⁵
- **Reserves** – Servicemembers in the Reserves are individuals who can be “activated” during times of war or national emergency, meaning they are temporarily transferred to active duty. Reservists serve a minimum of 39 days annually, usually broken into monthly drill weekends and fifteen days of annual training. Reservists comprise 25.4-percent of the U.S. Armed Forces as of 2013.⁵
- **National Guard** – Servicemembers in the National Guard are individuals who can be activated by their state’s governor in response to emergencies and natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and public disorder. Servicemembers cannot be activated directly by the president, but a unit can be activated. Each of the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa, independently operate federally recognized, statewide Army and/or Air Force National Guard components. National Guard members serve a minimum of 39 days annually, usually broken into monthly drill weekends and fifteen days of annual training. National Guard members comprise 18.5-percent of the U.S. Armed Forces as of 2013.⁵

Military Command Structure

The United States military is led by the President of the United States, who operates as the Commander-in-Chief. This placement of the military under civilian control dates back to the foundation of the country, and was unprecedented at the time.

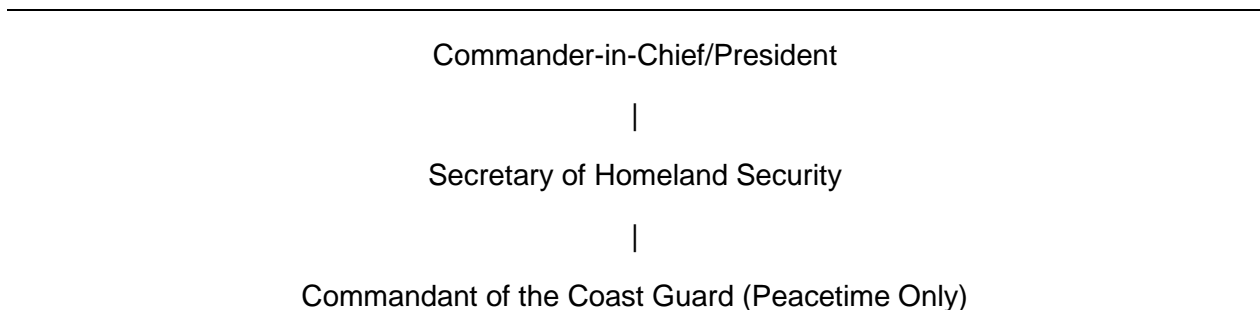
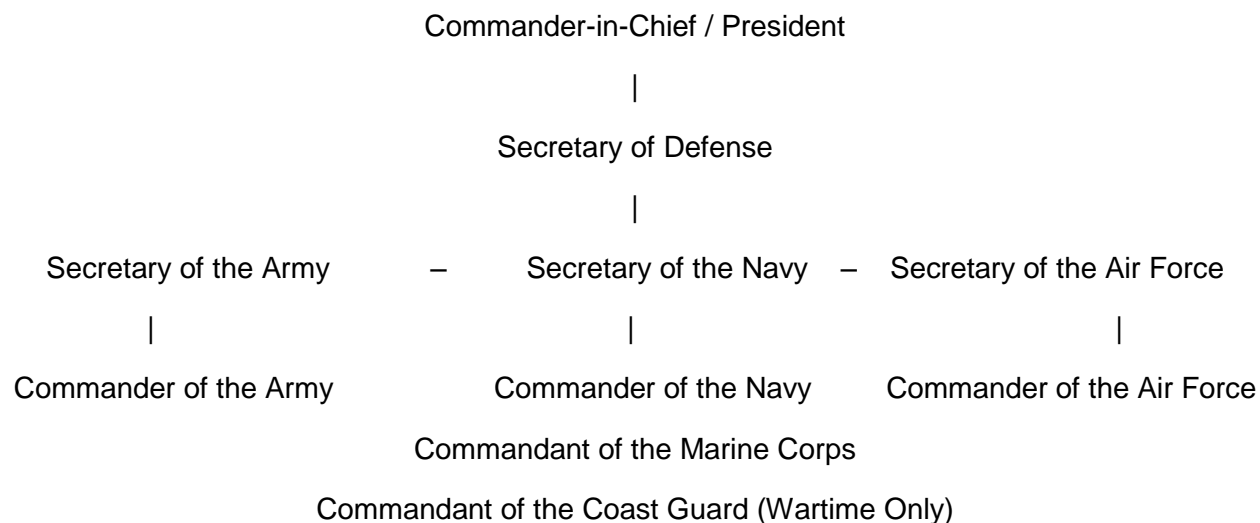
⁵ Department of Defense. (2013). *2013 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*. Retrieved from <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2013-Demographics-Report.pdf>

Modern military structure took shape shortly after World War II. At that time, U.S. Congress merged the Department of War and the Department of the Navy into a single structure that would eventually be named the Department of Defense. A new position of Secretary of Defense was created to lead the Department.

Congress established three subdivisions within the Department of Defense: the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy and the Department of the Air Force, each of which is headed by a civilian Secretary, who in turn reports to the Secretary of Defense, also a civilian. The Marine Corps is part of the Department of the Navy, and thus is under the civilian control of the Secretary of the Navy, but its military operations remain its own. Military commanders and the commandant for these subdivisions report to their respective civilian Secretaries.

The fifth branch of the military, the U.S. Coast Guard, is situated differently from the other branches. The Commandant of the Coast Guard reports to the Secretary of Homeland Security, who in turn reports to the President. In times of war, however, U.S. Congress can choose to subordinate the Coast Guard to the Department of the Navy. Also, the President can assign the Coast Guard to the Department of the Navy at any time the President so chooses, but this is rare.

The diagram below outlines the military command structure:



Military Force Structure

A military force structure describes how military personnel are organized. The force structure for each of the U.S. military branches follows.

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps	Coast Guard
Level 1	Soldier	Sailor	Airman	Marine	Guardian / informal – “Coastie”
Level 2	Squad (4-10 soldiers)	Division	Section (2 or more airmen)	Team (3 team members and 1 team leader)	Unit
Level 3	Platoon (3-4 squads)	Department	Flight (Either 2 or more airmen or 2 or more sections)	Squad (3 teams)	District
Level 4	Company (3-4 platoons)	Command	Squadron (2 or more flights)	Platoon (3 squads)	Pacific/ Atlantic Area
Level 5	Battalion (3-5 companies)	Squadron	Group (2 or more squadrons)	Company / Battery (3 platoons)	Coast Guard
Level 6	Brigade (3 or more battalions)	Group	Wing (2 or more groups)	Battalion (3 companies / batteries)	
Level 7	Division (3 brigades)	Force	Numbered Air Force	Regiment/ Brigade (3 battalions)	
Level 8	Corps (2-5 divisions)	Fleet	Major Command	Division (3 brigades)	
Level 9	Field Army (2-5 corps)	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps (3 or more divisions)	

Servicemember Classifications

Servicemembers are divided into three types. The two major types are enlisted personnel and officers. The third are warrant officers, who – though technically classified as officers – constitute a minor, highly-specialized group between enlisted and officer.

U.S. military personnel are classified by rank. Individuals starting at lower ranks may earn promotion to higher ranks through experience and merit.

Each rank has both a name and a pay grade. Pay grades specify an individual's division – enlisted is denoted by an “E,” warrant officer by a “W,” and officer by an “O” – and a number, which represents the rank within that group. Though the name of each rank may differ across the branches of service, pay grades are uniform and fully equivalent throughout the military. For example, O-4 represents a Major in the Army, but a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy. They are equal in rank.

See the charts below for more clarification on rank titles in each branch of service.

Enlisted

Enlisted personnel form the bulk of the U.S. Armed Forces. The U.S. military is comprised of 1,838,449 enlisted members as of 2013; this is 83.4-percent of the total military force.⁶ Enlistment in the U.S. military typically requires that individuals be 18 years of age (17 with parental permission), pass a medical entrance exam and receive a high school diploma prior to their service. Individuals attend basic training, which lasts between eight and 13 weeks, based on branch of service, area of specialization and other factors.

Enlisted personnel are assigned “occupational specialties” which outline their specialized responsibilities and service assignments. These occupational specialties take the form of an alphanumeric code. In the Army and Marine Corps, this is known as a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). The Air Force uses Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC), while the Navy uses Navy Enlisted Classifications (NEC). The Coast Guard does not use the military occupational code system, but are grouped with ratings.

Mid-level and senior enlisted personnel in the Air Force, Army, and Marines are often referred to as “non-commissioned officers,” or NCOs. In the Navy and Coast Guard, they are called Petty Officers.

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marines	Coast Guard
E-1	Private(PVT)	Seaman Recruit (SR)	Airman Basic (AB)	Private	Seaman Recruit (SR)
E-2	Private E-2 (PV2)	Seaman Apprentice (SA)	Airman (Amn)	Private First Class (PFC)	Seaman Apprentice (SA)

⁶ Department of Defense. (2013). *2013 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*. Retrieved from www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2013-Demographics-Report.pdf

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marines	Coast Guard
E-3	Private First Class (PFC)	Seaman (SN)	Airman First Class (A1C)	Lance Corporal (LCpl)	Seaman (SN)
E-4	Corporal (CPL) Specialist (SPC)	Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)	Senior Airman (SrA)	Corporal (Cpl)	Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)
E-5	Sergeant (SGT)	Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	Sergeant (Sgt)	Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)
E-6	Staff Sergeant (SSG)	Petty Officer First Class (PO1)	Technical Sergeant (TSgt)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	Petty Officer First Class (PO1)
E-7	Sergeant First Class (SFC)	Chief Petty Officer (CPO)	Master Sergeant (MSgt) First Sergeant	Gunnery Sergeant (GySgt)	Chief Petty Officer (CPO)
E-8	Master Sergeant (MSG) First Sergeant (1SG)	Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)	Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) First Sergeant	Master Sergeant (MSgt) First Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)
E-9	Sergeant Major (SGM) Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA)	Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO) Fleet/Command Chief Petty Officer Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)	Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) First Sergeant Command Chief Master Sergeant (CCMSgt) Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF)	Master Gunnery Sergeant (MGySgt) Sergeant Major (SgtMaj) Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (SgtMajMC)	Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO) Fleet/Command Chief Petty Officer Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG)

Warrant Officers

Warrant officers are selected from experienced enlisted personnel and are considered officers. This group is so named because these servicemembers receive their positions by “warrant” of a commanding officer. They perform highly skilled, specialized duties.

In the Army, warrant officers are assigned a Warrant Officer Military Occupational Specialty (WOMOS) to indicate their occupational specialty. In the Marines, warrant officers are given MOSs, just as their enlisted do. The Navy's warrant officers continue to follow the NEC, but with designators instead of ratings. The Coast Guard does not use the military occupational code system.

The Air Force, its Reserve and National Guard components, do not have warrant officers.

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marines	Coast Guard
W-1	Warrant Officer 1 (WO1)	Discontinued	N/A	Warrant Officer 1 (WO)	Discontinued
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CW2)	Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CWO2)	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CWO2)	Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CWO2)
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CW3)	Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CWO3)	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CWO3)	Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CWO3)
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CW4)	Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CWO4)	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CWO4)	Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CWO4)
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer 5 (CW5)	Chief Warrant Officer 5 (CWO5)	N/A	Chief Warrant Officer 5 (CWO5)	Chief Warrant Officer 5 (CWO5)

Officers

The U.S. military is comprised of 366,390 officers as of 2013; this is 16.6 percent of the total military force.⁷ Officers are college educated. Each officer receives a commission from the President; as such, they are often called “commissioned officers.” Officers can receive a commission in four distinct ways:

- a) **Service Academies** – Students attending these federally operated colleges (often referred to as military academies) receive a four-year education and a diverse array of physical, cultural and tactical training designed to prepare them for life as a commissioned officer. Upon graduation, students receive the rank of O-1. Each military branch has its own service academy, with the exception of the Marine Corps, which shares the Naval Academy. The four academies are U.S Military Academy (USMA) in West Point, New York; U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) in Annapolis, Maryland; U.S. Coast

⁷ Department of Defense. (2013). *2013 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*. Retrieved from www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2013-Demographics-Report.pdf

Guard Academy (USCGA) in New London, Connecticut; and the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

- b) **Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) / College Student Pre-commissioning Initiative (CSPI)** – Many colleges and universities throughout the United States offer an ROTC or CSPI program along with their regular education courses. ROTC/CSPI provides students with physical, cultural, tactical and leadership training. Each branch of service operates its own ROTC/CSPI program (with the exception of the Marine Corps, which shares a program with the Navy), and not all programs are available at all schools. ROTC/CSPI programs can be two or four years in length, depending on the school. ROTC/CSPI programs often offer scholarships to exceptional candidates. Upon graduation, ROTC/CSPI graduates are obligated to serve a fixed number of years (usually eight, divided into some combination of active and reserve duty), though the exact requirement differs based on scholarship amount, branch of service and other factors. Upon commission, students receive the rank of O-1.
- c) **Officer Candidate School (OCS) / Officer Training School (OTS)** – Each branch of service has the capacity to train current military personnel and recent college graduates to become commissioned officers through OCS or OTS. The length, substance and location of OCS/OTS differ depending on the branch. Typically, however, the program lasts between ten and seventeen weeks, and includes both classroom and field instruction in military subjects, physical training and leadership. Upon graduation, the candidate receives a commission and becomes an O-1.
- d) **Direct Commission** – Direct commission applies to civilians who have special skills needed within the military. These officers usually have positions in law, science, medicine and health, intelligence, engineering and various others. Instead of attending a service academy, a college ROTC/CSPI program or one of the OCSs or OTSs, direct commissioned officers attend either Officer Indoctrination School (OIS), Officer Development School (ODS) or Direct Commission Officer School (DCO School). These schools may last two to five weeks. This route is not so common in other fields, but they can happen in all areas. The rank one is assigned depends on specialty.

Officers hold positions in a specialized skill or field. Officers in the Army have something similar to an enlisted personnel's MOS; they have an occupational code system called an Area of Concentration (AOC). However, in the Marines, officers have an MOS. The Navy's officers continue to follow the NEC, but with designators instead of ratings. The Air Force uses the AFSC for both enlisted personnel and officers. The Coast Guard's officers are grouped, but do not use the occupational code system. The higher the officer's rank, the more duties they are responsible for. All officers have some focus on strategy, command and leadership.

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marines	Coast Guard
O-1	Second Lieutenant (2LT)	Ensign (ENS)	Second Lieutenant (2d Lt)	Second Lieutenant (2ndLt)	Ensign (ENS)
O-2	First Lieutenant (1LT)	Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)	First Lieutenant (1st Lt)	First Lieutenant (1stLt)	Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)
O-3	Captain (CPT)	Lieutenant (LT)	Captain (Capt)	Captain (Capt)	Lieutenant (LT)
O-4	Major (MAJ)	Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	Major (Maj)	Major (Maj)	Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel (LTC)	Commander (CDR)	Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col)	Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol)	Commander (CDR)
O-6	Colonel (COL)	Captain (CAPT)	Colonel (Col)	Colonel (Col)	Captain (CAPT)
O-7	Brigadier General (BG)	Read Admiral (Lower Half) (RDML)	Brigadier General (Brig Gen)	Brigadier General (BGen)	Read Admiral (Lower Half) (RDML)
O-8	Major General (MG)	Read Admiral (Upper Half) (RAML)	Major General (Maj Gen)	Major General (MajGen)	Read Admiral (Upper Half) (RAML)
O-9	Lieutenant General (LTG)	Vice Admiral (VADM)	Lieutenant General (Lt Gen)	Lieutenant General (LtGen)	Vice Admiral (VADM)
O-10	General (GEN)	Admiral (ADM)	General (Gen)	General (Gen)	Admiral (ADM)
Special	General of the Army (Wartime Only) (GA)	Fleet Admiral (Wartime Only) (FADM)	General of the Air Force (Wartime Only) (GAF)	N/A	N/A

Separation from Service

The nature of a servicemember's separation from the military has important ramifications for their civilian life. Discharge status can impact their educational benefits, VA benefits and even future employment prospects. Discharge should not be confused with retirement, which typically

involves at least 20 years of military service. Discharge status is noted on the DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD 214) sheet. There are several discharge types:

- a) **Honorable** – Servicemembers receive an honorable discharge provided they have received good or excellent ratings from their superiors over the course of their service term. Generally speaking, those who meet the basic standards of conduct and complete their service will receive an honorable discharge. Also, the military branches give honorable discharges to those who are forced to exit service due to physical or mental disability, regardless of whether said disability was acquired as a direct result of their service. Servicemembers discharged honorably are entitled to the full array of benefits available to veterans.
- b) **General** – Servicemembers receive a general discharge if their service term is satisfactory but is marked by one or more significant departures from expected conduct. Non-judicial punishment to correct the unacceptable behavior is a requirement for a general discharge. A number of other conditions must also be fulfilled: the servicemember’s commanding officer must also explain the discharge reasoning in written format; the servicemember must sign a statement acknowledging their receipt and understanding of this written documentation; and the servicemember must sign a written document acknowledging that “substantial prejudice in civilian life” may result from their discharge status. General discharge may preclude a servicemember from some benefits, such as the GI Bill, but **not** from VA disability care.
- c) **Other than Honorable (OTH)** – Servicemembers receive an OTH discharge when their conduct deviates from that expected of a member of the Armed Forces. OTH discharges are typically applied to those who have been convicted in a civilian court of a crime requiring prison time, but may also apply to those who commit security violations or act in a violent manner. Certain civil infractions, such as adultery, may also result in an OTH discharge. This is the most severe form of administrative discharge. Individuals receiving an OTH discharge are not eligible for most veteran benefits.
- d) **Dishonorable** – Enlisted servicemembers found guilty of serious crimes through a court-martial receive a dishonorable discharge as a component of their sentences. Crimes usually resulting in dishonorable discharge include desertion and sexual assault. Many states consider a dishonorable discharge as the equivalent of a felony conviction. Dishonorable discharges are punitive rather than administrative; as a result, those receiving them forfeit all veteran benefits without exception.

Discharge statuses can be upgraded; however, it is an extensive appeals process with many requests being denied by the board. It is advised that an experienced attorney represent the individual seeking a status upgrade. It may take several months for the board to make their decision regarding the individual’s appeals application.

Appendix B: Additional Military Terms

Base – Air Force and Navy installations, whether domestic or abroad, are referred to as bases. Examples: Ramstein Air Base, Germany (Air Force); Naval Base San Diego, California (Navy).

Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) – Given to active-duty servicemembers who are not provided government housing and is intended to provide equitable housing compensation based on the cost of the local civilian market. The BAH allotted to each servicemember varies based on several factors, including geographic location, pay grade and dependency status (i.e., number of dependents, such as a spouse and/or children).

Camp – Originally used to refer to temporary or semi-permanent military outposts. Army installations in foreign countries such as South Korea, for example, are ostensibly temporary, and are therefore typically prefixed with “Camp” rather than “Fort.” Many domestic Marine Corps installations are also referred to as “camps.” Examples: Camp Pendleton, California (Marine Corps); Camp Casey, South Korea (Army).

Commissary – On-base grocery store used by military personnel and their families. Goods are untaxed and prices are typically cheaper than at civilian stores.

Court-martial – A military court that determines the guilt or innocence of a member of the Armed Forces, in accordance with military law. Courts-martial are convened in the event of a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which governs the behavior of military members.

Dependents – A servicemember’s spouse, children who are unmarried and under the age of 21 and unmarried children who are physically or mentally incapable of self-support.

Duty Station – The location and/or installation at which a servicemember has been assigned.

Fort – A term used by the Army to refer to a permanent military installation with fortifications. Examples: Fort Drum, New York (Army).

Installation – A generic term used to refer to a military facility. There are many types of installations, including bases, camps, forts and stations.

Joint Chiefs of Staff – A group of senior officers that advise the Secretary of Defense, the President and other relevant parties on military matters. The group is headed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and composed of a Vice Chairman, the National Guard Bureau Chief and the Military Service Chiefs from each branch of service. Each of these positions is appointed by the President and must be confirmed by the Senate; they report directly to the Secretary of their respective service branches. The Coast Guard is not represented on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Military Exchange – Department store managed by subsidiary organizations of the Department of Defense that provides merchandise and services to military personnel, typically at low prices. Much of their profits are returned to the customer base through Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs. AAFES (Army and Air Force Exchange Service) operates Post and Base Exchanges (called the PX or BX) on Army and Air Force installations throughout the world. The Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) is the Navy equivalent, while the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) and Coast Guard Exchange (CGX) handle equivalent duties for their respective service branches.

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) – This can be thought of as a job description for servicemembers, and each branch uses a slightly different name for this. Additionally, the name may vary among enlisted personnel, warrant officers and commissioned officers. To the civilian population, this is most commonly referred to as a MOS, but reference Appendix A, Servicemember Classification, for the specific name by branch and servicemember type.

On-base – Many servicemembers refer to housing and other facilities on a military installation as being “on-base,” regardless of the installation’s actual designation. For example, housing on Fort Benning is still referred to as “on-base housing,” despite the use of “fort” in its name.

Permanent Change of Station (PCS) – The official relocation of an active duty servicemember to a different duty station. PCS’ are often informally referred to as “relocations,” particularly in reference to the civilian members of a military family.

Stateside – Located within the United States as opposed to being located in a foreign country.

Station – A term used to refer to Coast Guard installations. Examples: Coast Guard Station Boston; Coast Guard Station New Haven.

Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) – The body of laws governing the behavior U.S. military members, colloquially known as military law. Violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice are tried in a court-martial.

Appendix C: Additional Resources

Military and Veteran Resources – Members seeking to learn more about the military and veteran population generally or issues of importance to veterans, servicemembers and their families will find publications and webinars on these subjects at the following sites:

The **Community Blueprint** is a Call to Action for grassroots organizations to collaborate and share tools to better serve the military and veteran communities at the local level. The Community Blueprint offers a suite of “Community Solutions” – step-by-step project instructions for volunteer projects that address one of the eight impact areas – to help communities work smarter together and create lasting change. The eight impact areas are employment, volunteerism, family strength, behavioral health, financial and legal, education, housing and reintegration. www.pointsoflight.org/programs/military-initiatives/community-blueprint

The **Army One Source Resource Center** hosts web events as well as posts recordings and materials from these web events, which feature top experts in planning and delivering programs and services that provide support for servicemembers, veterans and their families. www.aosresourcecenter.com

The **Center for Deployment Psychology** has a focus on training behavioral health professionals about the military and veteran population. The Center has a course on military cultural competence. This course covers organizational structure, rank, branches of service, core values and demographics. This course is available at www.deploymentpsych.org/online-courses/military-culture.

The Department of Defense Military Community & Family Policy Office published a **Primer for Civilian Nonprofit Organizations: Providing Support to Our Military Families**. This Primer provides military family demographic information, general information about the types of ongoing and occasional support military families may need, how to connect with existing resources for military families, what support is available through the military community and how to best deliver your services. www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/ResourceGuides/Primer_for_Civilian_Nonprofit_Organizations.pdf

The Department of Defense lists all the **acronyms and terms** used in the military at www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary. Please note, this PDF is 479 pages.

The National Governors Association (NGA) surveyed each state and territory to see what resources they provide. To view the **State and Territorial Support for Members of the Military, Veterans and Their Families** (February 2015) report, visit: www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/15GUARDSURVEY.PDF. Each state and territory has a couple pages that list the number of National Guard members, Reservists and their families, as well as resources available to support state employees that serve

in the National Guard and Reserves; educational benefits; family support; tax and financial benefits; licensing and registration benefits; protections, recognition and employment support; and reintegration programs/initiatives.



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