

Chapter 4

National Guard Service Member and Family Readiness After Action Review: Lessons Learned and a Way Forward

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4.1 Background

An era of persistent global conflict after 9/11 resulted in the nation's heavy reliance on the National Guard to meet National Security Requirements. Most policies and programs, however, were last updated in the 1980s, which created significant friction points in the effective execution of deploying and integrating units and overall levels of service member and family readiness in the Reserve Components. This necessitated massive changes and attention in how the services and the National Guard resourced and supported readiness programs for military families. In order to improve systems and access to programs, the National Guard, in conjunction with the Army and the Air Force, developed the Family Readiness Program to promote readiness, quality of life, and the resilience of military families. These programs specifically focused on education, wellness, communication, resource allocation, and community collaboration.

The National Guard Family Readiness Program is now central to providing services for service members and their families during mobilizations, deployments, and steady-state operations. The dispersion of National Guard armories across the country provides a national network to support community collaboration efforts and execution of service-based support programs and services.

Between 2001 and 2014, approximately 50,000 nonprofit organizations were established to respond to meet the demand for services stemming from the multiple deployments of service members (Carter & Kidder, 2015). Support came in many forms, including monetary donations, millions of volunteer hours, and physical donations of comfort items. Conversations at the national, state, and local levels focused on concerns about program effectiveness and return on investment. Each

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state worked to develop a process to ensure enduring, quality programs were in place to respond to the need of service members, veterans and their families (SMVF).

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) recognized early on the importance of garnering the support of communities to serve all SMVF, especially the 1.3 million who are geographically dispersed (Brown et al., 2015). The National Guard strengthened existing local, state, and national collaboration efforts and developed these partnerships. They collaborated with other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations to establish new partnerships that respond to the needs of service members and their families. The National Guard brings an element of community involvement unique from other service or branch based on the Adjutant General's role as the head of the state Department of Military Affairs. The Guard is in every state and territory, including those states without an active duty installation (i.e., Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oregon, Vermont). NGB continually developed these platforms as a result of unmet needs as the Reserve Components transitioned from a strategic to an operational force. These platforms provide access points that have connections with other federal/DoD organizations, military services, state/local governments, and non-governmental organizations. Subsequently, a new initiative titled Joining Community Forces (JCF) was established to formalize grassroots collaboration efforts and establish them into cohesive geographically based support networks.

4.2 History and Key Events

4.2.1 Stretching Legacy Programs, 2001–2003

In 2001, the family program in each state consisted of one state family program director and one family readiness resource assistant. Volunteers augmented these offices. Families were expected to be resilient and find needed resources. Limited, unstructured support was provided by unit volunteer-based family support groups. Many of the unit-based family support groups, however, did not have the experience to deal with the challenges of deployments and quickly became overwhelmed with the caseload after 9/11.

Deployments in the National Guard skyrocketed from 13,829 personnel in Fiscal Year 2001 (FY01) to more than 46,400 in FY02, and further to more than 95,400 in FY03. Most units had not deployed overseas since the 90s during Operation Desert Storm. These large deployments created a significant amount of stress on peacetime response systems. Families were directly impacted and drove the need at the state and unit level for assistance to address physical and behavioral health, relationship, legal, financial, and many other support challenges.

The groundswell of support from local businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals also created numerous challenges. Tracking federal, state, and local resources and support services tested the abilities of small staffs to keep information accurate and timely. New requirements evolved, requiring the National Guard to

evaluate numerous offerings to ensure the goods and services were sustainable and meeting the needs of SMVFs. This created a need to develop manageable networks encompassing diverse groups, with different and at times opposing agendas.

The National Guard Bureau reassessed current response systems and, as a result, expanded existing programs and implemented several new initiatives focused more heavily on the Reserve Component and geographically dispersed Active Component Service members and families. These programs included Family assistance centers, airman and family readiness program managers, child and youth coordinators, family readiness program assistants, deployment cycle support coordinators, air wing integrators, expanded chaplains' offices, Strong Bonds (a marriage enrichment program usually implemented by Chaplains), transition assistance advisors, directors of psychological health, survivor outreach support coordinators, state resiliency coordinators, military funeral and honors officials, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Wounded Warrior Care services, and Employer/Employment Support. States also created Inter-Service Family Assistance Committees (ISFACs), which served to improve community collaboration and focus resources. As states identified gaps in resources or support, many created statewide councils, foundations, and programs to identify resources and organize support efforts.

4.2.2 Finding and Filling Gaps, 2004–2007

Deployments continued to increase; the National Guard deployed more than 95,800 personnel in FY04, over 111,500 in FY05 and deployments remained above 40,000 through FY07. Multiple deployments began to create additional unit challenges, including employment assistance for returning service members. The turbulence of deployments generated emerging challenges in the areas of employment and children struggling in school.

National Guard leaders and service members' relationships with employers strained due to unpredictable schedules and changes to deployment plans. Curtailments, deletions, and/or re-missioning further impacted training, strained resources (time, money), and increased unit level turbulence for military members, families, and employers. Families and employers planned well in advance to support deployments; however, many had to respond to last minute date changes. These changes left employers either having staffing gaps or personnel overages because of temporary hires.

Unemployment, especially among first term service members, typically 18- to 24-year-olds, was a shortfall that not previously experienced. This created an emerging trend of underemployment for service members and transitioning veterans. A substantial number of service members return from deployment better qualified, but often to jobs with comparatively much lower responsibilities and pay. Many states instituted employment programs such as South Carolina's Palmetto Employment to organize employment seminars and hiring events necessary to address increasing unemployment rates. Their efforts resulted in a reduction of service member unemployment nationally from 12.1% in 2011 to 9.0% in 2013 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

States reported that local schools also struggled with issues raised by deployed service members' children. In response to numerous National Guard Children becoming "Suddenly Military" with the deployment of a parent, the National Guard teamed with the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) to conduct regional training sessions for school administrators, principals, and counselors. The training of local school administrations focused on how to properly deal with the challenges faced by children of deployed service members.

4.2.3 Covering New Challenges, 2008–2011

Surges in both Iraq and Afghanistan increased the number of unit deployments, subsequently reducing dwell time (time between deployments) to 2 years for many high demand units. National Guard mobilized 61,228 service members in FY08, 62,147 in FY09, 57,505 in FY10, and 45,269 in FY11. Abbreviated dwell time between these deployments degraded reintegration periods between deployments, especially for families. The surge period took a toll on service members, families, and employers due to perceived and real lack of predictability and insufficient time for reintegration, planning, and transition back into the community.

States identified a need to provide more in-depth behavioral health support and instituted an overall resiliency that included families. NGB partnered with the US Public Health Service and is assigned a colonel level, career Public Health Service Officer to implement a comprehensive national level program to address the mounting case load level. The officer executes a national contract to resource all the states and territories with a Psychological Health Adviser(s). During this time, National Guard behavioral health professionals served over 94,000 service members through group education and information venues and acted as Subject Matter Experts to State senior leaders and commanders, medical personnel, and Family Program staffs. They also provided more than 24,120 consultations to service members and families in need.

Service members and support networks were faced with new challenges because of the length of the conflict, resources needed for those with multiple deployments, and the necessity to build a resilient force. The National Guard formalized resiliency training both within units and for Family Program staff members.

4.2.4 Maintaining and Honing Outreach, 2012–2015

As overseas deployments and mobilizations decreased to about 21,200 in FY13, 15,032 in FY14 and then to about 8,300 in FY15, DoD identified requirement to sustain and in some instances expand family support programs. The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review states, "America ... will care for our men and women in uniform and their families - both during and after their service" (Office of the Secretary of

Defense, 2014, p. 48). Likewise, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Second Term Strategic Direction to the Joint Force “Keeping Faith with Our Military Families,” stated: “We must keep faith with our military families. They must know that their sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters will be the best led, trained, equipped, and ready force in the world. They will never be sent into harm’s way without the full preparedness and support of this Nation” (Warrior and Family Support Office, 2012, p. 4). Outcome-based metrics solidified those programs that were making positive impacts for geographically dispersed families.

Research identified further gaps in the Active Duty installation support network. A 2015 Rand study titled “Access to Behavioral Health for Geographically Remote Service members and Dependents in the U.S.” used geospatial analysis to determine that there are over 1.3 million currently serving service members and families beyond a 30-minute travel time of an Active Duty Military Treatment Facility (Brown et al., 2015). Base Realignment and Closure Programs and reductions in availability of on post housing resulted in more service members and families residing off of Active Component installations. In 2015, OSD reported that 68% of service members resided off of installations (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Installations and Environment, 2017). This created challenges for service members and families accessing programs and services on the installation. Further, Army Command Policy, AR 600–20, states, “The NGB is the Army’s lead agency for the establishment and execution of Family assistance for Total Army Families at all levels of contingency and mobilization” (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 51), further substantiating the need for new methods of community-based service delivery models, such as JCF.

The National Guard identified the need for a more integrated approach to support geographically dispersed families. Former National Guard Bureau Chief General Craig McKinley initiated the NGB Joining Community Forces (JCF) program in 2012 to meet outreach requirements outlined in Department of Defense (DoD) policies (Department of Defense 2012). NGB defines JCF as “a communication initiative focused on grassroots providing direct, tailored support to service members, veterans, and families.” The overarching purpose of JCF is to encourage governmental, non-governmental, businesses and nonprofits to collaborate within each state to support veterans, service members, and their families. The goal is to create a “no wrong door” network of support at the state and community levels.

4.3 Responses and Strategies

4.3.1 *National Guard Programs Supporting Families*

As deployments continued and program gaps were identified, the National Guard implemented a series of support programs and community collaborative efforts to improve and maintain the readiness of geographically dispersed military families. These ranged from information and referral to reintegration support and covered the entire military life-cycle from assessment to funeral honors.

Family Assistance. The keystones of readiness support to families are the Army National Guard Family Assistance Center specialists, and the Air National Guard Airman and Family Readiness Program managers. These family readiness access points are located throughout each state. Their mission is to provide information, referral and follow-up to service members, their dependents, and veterans. Family Assistance Centers are located in armories throughout each state, and Air National Guard Airman and Family Readiness Program Offices are located at each Air National Guard Wing. This concept works well, because these offices were able to coordinate many existing resources in the states to provide assistance in the numerous areas that families needed during the deployment cycles.

The Family Readiness Support Assistant (FRSA) Program for the Army began in 2003 to address family readiness in times of mobilization and deployments. The stress of deployments on existing resources, coupled with fewer volunteers, drove the need for developing a FRSA services program. The FRSA's main role is to provide the Commander or Rear Detachment Commander (RDC), the Family Readiness Liaison (FRL), and Family Readiness Group (FRG) leader with administrative assistance in support of family readiness programs and activities. FRSAs also worked closely with the Family Assistance Centers to provide appropriate referrals for unit leaders and family members. In addition, Army National Guard (ARNG) FRSAs provide critical volunteer management and resilience training to ARNG family members and volunteers, such as Comprehensive Soldier & Family Fitness Resilience Training. In 2007, the FRSA Program was expanded to reach more Army Commands in all three components, Active, Army Reserve, and National Guard.

In 2005, the Army National Guard hired Child and Youth Program Coordinators to promote and sustain the quality of life and resilience of National Guard children by providing secure, timely, flexible, and high-quality support services and enrichment programs. Youth Programs also promote individual leader development, resulting in more resilient youth. By 2015, Child and Youth programs served 66,055 military children and youth. These numbers included children from all components and services, including Active Duty military and the Coast Guard.

Between 2008 and 2012, more than 1.4 million National Guard and Reserve service members and their families benefited from the deployment cycle information, resources, programs, services, and referrals offered by the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The Yellow Ribbon Program was instrumental with ensuring service members and their families were prepared and supported throughout deployments.

Relationship issues also became a major concern for returning service members. In 2004, the US Code was amended to allow command funding for "chaplain corps-led programs to assist members of the armed forces ... in building and maintaining a strong family structure" (Title 10, ~1789). The Strong Bonds program seeks to strengthen relationships between married service members and their families and provides assistance for single service members. The Active Army completed the third year of a five-year longitudinal study evaluating the outcomes of the Strong Bonds training program. Preliminary outcomes show a 50% lower rate in divorce

and an increase in marital satisfaction for participants. There were 250 Strong Bonds events conducted in FY15 serving 8,832 service and family members.

Veterans' issues began to surface for returning service members as they demobilized and sought to obtain medical assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As a result, Congress authorized additional funding to establish state Transition Assistance Advisors (TAA). These personnel help service members access employment, relocation, health care, behavioral health care, health and life insurance, financial assistance, career change, education and training, VA benefits, and disabled veteran benefits. In FY15 alone, the TAA Program resulted in 3915 Veteran Health Administration (VHA) enrollments, 14,720 VHA referrals, 16,112 Veteran Benefits Administration referrals, 7817 Veteran Center referrals, and over 28,000 referrals to other agencies.

As casualties increased, it became increasingly difficult to provide long-term support to the families of our fallen service members from installation-based locations. Consistency through the Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO) system was not only challenged by the amount of casualties, but also by the dispersion of survivors due to Reserve Component deployments. In 2005, the Army established Survivor Outreach Service (SoS) Coordinators throughout the nation to provide numerous services to families of the fallen. SoS Coordinators provided support to 43,000 surviving family members in FY15.

Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible veteran receive a military funeral honors ceremony upon the family's request. In 2006, the Military Funeral and Honors program began providing the ceremonial paying of respect and the final demonstration of the country's gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our nation. In FY14, the Army National Guard rendered services at 125,000 funerals for fallen comrades. Overall, in FY14 the Army National Guard supported 85% of the Department of the Army and 52% of DoD funeral honor requirements.

4.3.2 Joining Community Forces (JCF)

Joining Community Forces supports a "no wrong door," holistic approach to provide referral, resources, and programs to our SMVFs in their communities, leveraging the impact of community-based resources. JCF provides:

- An integrated outreach system which focuses on geographically dispersed SMVFs
- A nested platform to coordinate and communicate public and private sector initiatives that support readiness, wellness, and resiliency
- A cohesive community centric solution, allowing national, regional, state, and local entities to provide timely and effective support to SMVFs in the communities where they live

Many states found the best success with their JCF efforts when they leveraged the governor's office to establish legislation and state agency leads. Further analysis uncovered the need for a state coordinator. Program leads included but are not limited to the State National Guard Joint Force Headquarters, the state Veterans Affairs office and in some cases nonprofit organizations. Most legislation included service standards and outcome guidance. Many states created JCF Advisory Boards at both the state and community level. Board membership included state agencies, non-governmental, business and nonprofit organizations representing programs aimed at improving employment opportunities, education, and wellness.

Through the JCF initiative, the National Guard integrates a web of support for Reserve and Active Duty service members and their families who live outside the active duty installation catchment areas. JCF links service members, veterans, and their families to federal, state, and community-based resources through a framework of assistance centers in local communities and the National Guard Bureau website. The newly developed Service Provider Network provides a map of nearby assets that support our military families at: <http://www.joiningcommunity-forces.org/spn>.

4.3.3 Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS) and National Guard Bureau Partnership

At the national level, the Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS) established a partnership with the NGB providing Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs) in support of the JCF collaboration efforts. CNCS provided enough VISTA personnel authorizations for each state to request VISTA support. These assets are still available by request and are no cost to the National Guard. The VISTA personnel and other volunteers (not directly assigned in any capacity to the military) can discuss veteran, service member, and family needs with nonprofit and other organizations.

States reported predominantly positive experiences with the VISTA program and were instrumental in the expansion of JCF and Land Grant programs. Some states used a third party such as the American Legion Auxiliary to assist with writing grant proposals needed to request VISTA personnel. The VISTA personnel (all college graduates) provided quality support and build local relationships needed to expand services provided by the State NG Family Program Offices. Some states experienced difficulty in funding the travel and emergency funding (\$500) per VISTA. Many states used their 501(c)3 relationships to cover this refundable cost. As federal and state budgets decrease, the value of VISTA personnel increases, and they significantly benefit the states.

4.3.4 State-Established 501(c)3 Nonprofit Organizations

After 9/11, many corporations, businesses, communities, and individual donors reached out to governors' offices and the state National Guard Headquarters to see how they could support deployed service members. Offerings included monetary contributions, products and services and volunteer hours to support those in need. Subsequently, many states established nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations in order to receive direct support on behalf of their service members and families. Some states established new 501(c)3 organizations for the specific purpose of providing direct support to service members and their families while others partnered with existing nonprofit organizations to accomplish the same goal. Creating nonprofit entities (partnerships) within a state allowed interested parties to engage, thus eliminating any need for solicitation.

Many states did not establish a nonprofit 501(c)3 or partner directly with an existing organization. Some states struggled with relinquishing direct ownership and authority determining how their members would receive support. Many states addressed or mitigated this issue by including former service members on the nonprofit advisory board. Others decided their best option was to provide support solely through community engagement, collaboration, and partnerships in-lieu-of the establishment of a new nonprofit organization. Nonprofits can be established toward assisting the military in several areas such as youth and family programs to include scholarships and youth camps, patriotic projects that perpetuate the memory of our deceased veterans, emergency relief funds, and professional training classes.

4.3.5 Family Program Accreditation

There was also a need for family program standardization and delivery consistency regardless of state or location. Subsequently, the Office of Secretary Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, funded the State National Guard Family Program Offices across the 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia to achieve international accreditation standards by the Council on Accreditation. The three primary areas accredited were administration and management, service delivery/administration, and service standards to members. This accreditation process established international standards ensuring the same level of support no matter where a veteran, service member, or family member accessed the "system."

4.3.6 Collaboration

At the national level, "White Oak" meetings began in 2010 with the purpose of bringing together government agencies and national leaders to focus on cross-sector, multi-organizational solutions for military families and recent veterans. Other initiatives include but are not limited to SAMHSA Policy Academies, USDA's

4H programs, USDA's extension offices, Community Blue Print, VA's Veteran Economic Community Initiative (VECI), etc. Reductions in appropriations will place demand on government agencies to increase collaboration and partnerships and to identify efficiencies.

4.4 Evaluation and Results

4.4.1 Yellow Ribbon Reintegration

90-day Window Proved Too Long

Early in the deployment cycle, initial OSD guidance to the states was that service members should be allowed to readjust back to their families and communities without being contacted by their unit for the first 90 days. Lamentably, states found that service members challenged with reintegration problems were involved in some sort of crisis (foreclosures, loss of job, domestic violence, divorce) prior to the 90 day mark. With enough evidence, OSD changed the policy leading to changes in Yellow Ribbon guidance, notably to conduct the first reintegration event at the 45-day window after their return. This change enabled the chain of command to better identify service members who needed resources and get them assistance.

Yellow Ribbon Events for Service Members Who Have Had Multiple Deployments

Service members undergoing multiple deployments initially had to attend the entire Yellow Ribbon briefing cycle, including veteran benefits and other items as they returned from each deployment. Feedback from the service members led to changes in guidance. These service members attended an abbreviated event that provided them specific information which was more relevant to the issues they were facing with deployments.

4.4.2 Continued Need for Assets in the States

The Army National Guard G1 gathers monthly metric data from their Family Assistance Centers across the USA in support of an annual DoD report on the Family Readiness System. The data below highlights the volume by service branch that the Family Assistance Centers provided support of remote military members and their families, regardless of service.

In addition, geographically dispersed service members and families have found they can rely on National Guard Family Assistance Centers for information and

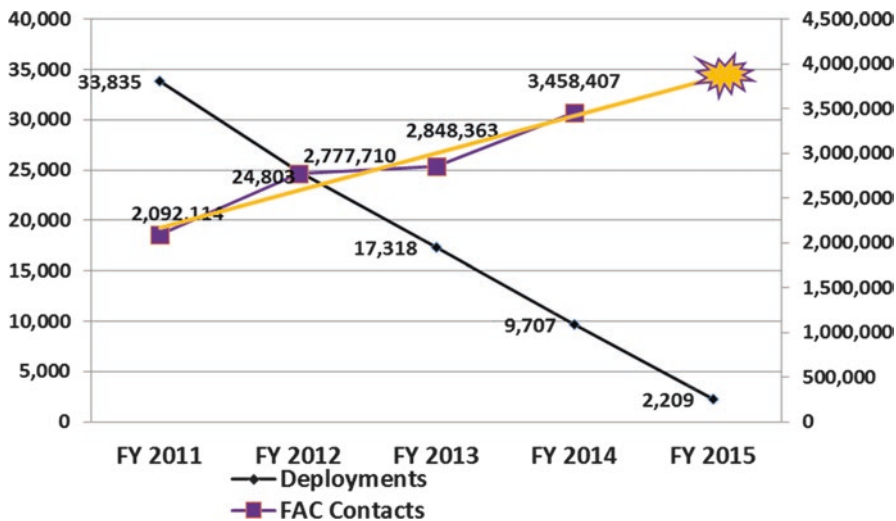


Fig. 4.1 National Guard Deployments and Family Assistance Center Contacts

Table 4.1 Army National Guard Family Assistance Center Quick Tracker Contacts

	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
Air Force	17,398	26,866	29,645	30,750
Army	2,056,864	2,720,348	2,768,119	3,372,680
Coast Guard	690	3209	3597	4983
Marine Corps	5841	15,217	23,656	20,776
Navy	11,035	12,017	20,450	29,162
Veterans	64,665	85,583	103,751	122,290
Total:	2,156,493	2,863,240	2,949,218	3,580,641

referral. Even as deployments continue to reduce, Family Assistance Center contacts continue to increase (see Fig. 4.1 and Table 4.1). These differences are attributed to families identifying Family Assistance Centers as effective entry points to local networks of support for a variety of needs.

4.5 Lessons Learned

4.5.1 Maintaining Support Systems

The challenges experienced by military families caused the National Guard to develop networks at the federal, state, and local community level. Integrated networks provide a baseline of support allowing families to prepare for future deployments and the nation to continue to rely on an all-volunteer force. Budgetary pressure from sequestration and a general reduction in funding threatens this

network. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program has shown the National Guard that systems can be modified, but should not be eliminated.

4.5.2 Physical Sites Support the Geographically Dispersed

While Military One Source and Army One Source provide valuable services to service members and families, neither service provides the high touch skills required to develop long-term local therapeutic relationships with the vast number of local communities throughout the nation. In many instances, Military One Source and Army One Source refer SMVFs to the network of local FACs for support. An organization called Veterans Community Connections concluded, based on a 2015 San Diego Chamber of Commerce study of returning veterans, “Respondents overwhelmingly reported that current online or web-based resources do not provide them and their family enough personal information to meet their needs in transitioning from military to civilian life” (Veterans Community Connections, 2015, p. 3). FACs are also the primary resource for identifying community-based resources that support the Military One Source Community Directory.

4.5.3 SAMHSA Policy Academies Were High-Return Events

SAMHSA hosted policy academies for almost all states. These academies often were the launching points for states to form statewide coalitions addressing veteran and military family issues. State National Guards sent senior decision makers, often the Adjutants General themselves, to these events. SAMHSA has since hosted implementation academies to assist states in following up on their initiatives. We firmly believe this is a definitive best practice that should be used in the future.

4.5.4 Partnership Integration Was an Ongoing Process

With the multitude of nonprofits and other organizations operating in the family program lane, the National Guard at the national and state level continue to identify new partners to improve and expand resources or address gaps for military families. These relationships continue to develop over time as organizations learn each other’s capabilities. Personnel turnover and changing needs of the population emphasize the need to maintain network relationships over the long term and to routinely communicate program information necessary to provide the right services at the right time.

No single agency, non-governmental organization (NGO), or private organization has the full manpower, resources, and authority to provide support service to all veterans, service members, and their families. As Sloan Gibson, the Deputy

Secretary of the VA said in May, 2015 at the Warrior Community Integration Symposium in Augusta: "...if I'm partnering with the right people and the right organization, and I focus on what my partner needs while we're working to serve those who have served us, the world is our oyster. We can accomplish anything" (Gibson, 2015).

4.5.5 Centralized Support Structure with Decentralized Execution of Services Provides a More Efficient and Economic Delivery of Services

States are in a position to allocate resources where they determine they have the most impact. In addition, state Family Program Directors provided oversight and provided state-level organization for the overall Family Support Program. Each state organized the assets differently to meet the unique needs to their particular physical, political, and demographic situation. These best practices were then shared among the states through the National Guard Joining Community Forces platform.

4.6 Recommendations

4.6.1 Maintain Budgetary Funding Levels for National Guard Family Support Programs

Continued reductions in forces will place high demand on the readiness of the Reserve Component. The National Guard continues to recruit service members to meet these demands but also realizes the need to retain families. Currently funded programs are needed to provide a baseline of support. However, repeated Congressional continuing resolutions impact reliable funding sources and timely letting of contracts. This affects program delivery and impacts the level of trust that geographically dispersed families place in the reliability and sustainability of these programs.

4.6.2 Federal Statutory Authority for National Guard to Conduct Outreach to Maintain Networks of Support for the Geographically Dispersed

No DoD organization is designated as the lead agency to develop support networks to reach geographically dispersed service members and families. The National Guard is uniquely positioned to lead best practice efforts such as JCF. Best practices should be used to create a nationwide concept for developing these networks.

4.6.3 Continued Funding of Accreditation

Accreditation provides a method to validate that National Guard programs are effective in meeting their goals. It also provides a methodology to maintain the professionalism of National Guard family program personnel. This is a low cost, high payoff methodology for ensuring that funds expended are being used to support our military families.

4.6.4 Simplify Methodology for Public/Private Partnerships

The National Security Strategy validates the importance of public/private partnerships. DoD, however, lacks specific regulations and guidance focused on developing said partnerships. This approach is not conducive to encouraging an organization to develop a public-private partnership. The VA recently developed an agencywide policy for public-private partnerships that passed the General Council's muster and appears to encourage personnel to further develop both national and local partnerships. This methodology should be analyzed and vetted for possible adoption by the DoD.

4.6.5 Continue to Expand upon Community-Based Programs

The success with which service members and their families are integrated into their civilian communities directly contributes to a sustainable, viable, all-volunteer force. Volunteerism is the American way of sustaining its military. Out of over 240 years, the United States has only relied on conscription for 35 of those to fill the ranks. Volunteering, raising a hand and taking an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, is an American tradition, and a defining moment for everyone in the all-volunteer force. The willingness of the nation's daughters and sons to sustain this tradition is a direct reflection of how they see the free society—civilian communities and government-embracing veterans and their families upon their return from service.

The National Guard is the natural link between the military and our communities. Almost every state has a process to address military and veteran issues. These vary from state chartered nonprofits to collaborative counsels. DoD, however, lacks a formal policy to provide national/state oversight, strategic outreach, and identify performance measures and gauge relevant outcomes. A program such as JCF would provide policy, structure, branding, and consistency of services.

Possible goals for integrating these efforts might include:

- Provide policy, structure, branding, and consistency of services across the 54 states, territories, and DC.

- Analyze trends, eliminate gaps in programs, and improve local community awareness.
- Implement a “no wrong door approach” to improve access for geographically dispersed.

Leverage the “brick and mortar” system of armories to strengthen and add depth to programs and services.

Broaden reach of current White House, DoD, and Service Programs

- Foster a community network that is sustainable and relevant.

Facilitate governmental/non-governmental, nonprofit, corporate partners and local citizen collaboration.

Government at all levels must proactively participate in this construct by increasing access, sharing data and information, and finding ways to effectively partner with private sector. Several states have taken the lead as part of our Joining Community Forces outreach plan. Changing the transition outcomes for the returning veteran will come from better cross-sector coordination and not from the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Substantial progress can be made if nonprofits, state governments, businesses, and the public are brought together around this common core agenda. Cross-function collaboration will provide the horizontal integration necessary for a national, state, and local (level) no-wrong-door capacity... That remains our vision.

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