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Understanding the Deployment Experiences of Guard and Reserve Families

Based on a Study published by:

RAND
NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Reserve Component families differ in key ways from Active Component families

- Demographically different
  - Older
  - Higher percentage of females
  - Longer in the assigned units

- Geographically dispersed
  - Live farther from installations
  - Dispersed from other military families

- Dual mission
  - Guard has both state and Federal missions
The Need to Help Guard and Reserve Families Stems from their Changing Role

• Nation’s reliance on Reserve Component (RC) has grown steadily
  – As of May 10, 2011 more than 808,000 Guard and Reserve members have deployed to OEF and OIF
  – The Guard and Reserve has shifted from strategic to an operational reserve
  – State and Federal Missions

Such reliance puts immense strain on RC families
Activation and Deployment Personnel Practices: Some Current Initiatives

• Timely notice of deployment encourages preparation
  – Early Identification TRICARE (for up to 6 months before deployment)
  – TRICARE Reserve Select available with subsidized premiums

• Establish predictable, limited, average-length mobilizations
  – Army Guard/Reserve-Dwell Time goal is 1:5 ratio (currently 1:3.8)
  – AF, Navy, Marines have deployment rotation plans
  – Note that families focus on “boots away from home,” not “boots on ground”

• Services are re-aligning units/forces to reduce the need for cross-leveling
  – Focus is on adjusting “High-Demand, Low-Density” Units
Guard and Reserve Families
Some Current Initiatives

- **Yellow Ribbon Program provides:**
  - Support and info before, during & after deployment
    - Info is “phased” to deployment and available “on-demand”
  - Outreach & resources to Service members / families
  - Support networks (community-based)
  - Connection between military families

- **Community Capacity Building seeks to:**
  - Build Community-Based Collaboration
    - Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (i.e.; AZ Family Coalition, KY-TN ISFAC and many other States)
    - Defense State Liaison Office
    - Policy Academies
  - Mapping of support resources
Guard and Reserve Families
Some Current Initiatives (Continued)

• Community Capacity Building (Continued):
  – Improve awareness of, and use of, local community resources
  – Local & volunteer support programs have some limitations on capability & capacity (i.e.; compassion fatigue, reach, resources)

• Increase the readiness of those families that are not-yet-activated
  – Family Assistance Programs (the Services)
  – Family Readiness Groups (Units)
  – Readiness briefings using:
    • Using Joint Family Support Assistance Program
    • Military family Life Consultants
    • Personal Financial Counselors
    • Chaplains, Unit Legal & Medical Offices,
Back Up Data Slides
Reserve Component Members on Active Duty
(Mobilized in support of ONE/OEF/OIF-OND – through Nov, 2010)

Source: DMDC-CTS
Prepared By: OSD-RA M&P, 703-693-7479
RAND Study interviewed
357 spouses & 296 service members
(Army Reserve, Army National Guard,
Air Force Reserve, Marine Forces Reserve)

Questions
• What were the deployment experiences of RC families?
• What is the impact of these deployment experiences on retention?
• What should the military do to support RC families?

Answers
• Most ready for deployment and able to cope with it, most experienced problems as well as positives that were deployment-related; variations by groups
• Families’ deployment experiences relate to their retention plans
• Focus on activation/deployment personnel practices, perceptions/expectations, and providing support/information
Most Mentioned Deployment-Related Problems
Note Differences between Member & Spouse

- 4 out of 5 cited problems
- Families mentioned various problems
- Problems range in their severity
- The Service member is more likely to cite no problems

*Difference between Member and Spouse is Statistically significant at $p < 0.10$
Most Also Mentioned Positives from Deployment

• 3 out of 4 reported positive aspects

• Again, there are differences across groups

• Service members more likely to cite no positives

*Difference between Member and Spouse is Statistically significant at p < 0.10
Both Military and Informal Resources Are Used

- 9 out of 10 indicated their family did turn to a resource.
- Family was the only support resource cited by a majority.
- TRICARE and family support organizations were the most commonly reported military resources.
- Some differences between spouses and service members.

*Difference between Member and Spouse is Statistically significant at p < 0.10
What Are Families’ Retention Intentions?

Intentions to Stay

- Leave before retirement eligible
- Stay until retirement eligible
- Increased desire to leave
- No influence
- Increased desire to stay

Impact of Most Recent Activation

Spouse’s Opinion*

- Favor leaving
- Neutral
- Favor staying

Percent

Service Members (n = 296)  Spouses (n = 357)

*Difference between Member and Spouse is Statistically significant at p < 0.10