

1700
MRQ
17 Apr 07

From: Chairman, Family Readiness Committee
To: Chairman, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), Board
of Directors (BOD)

Subj: FAMILY READINESS COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 22 MARCH 2007

Ref: (a) Proposed FRC Charter

1. Per the reference, the Family Readiness Committee (FRC) convened at 0800 on 22 March 2007 at The Clubs at Quantico, MCB Quantico, VA.

2. Members Present:

LtGen K. Stalder, II MEF, Chair
Ms. T. McLaughlin, MARFORRES
Ms. K. Faison, MARFORCOM
Ms. E. Simms, MCRC
Mr. J. Morris, MARCORBASESPAC
RADM A. Baker, Chaplain of the Marine Corps
RADM R. Jeffries, Medical Officer of the Marine Corps
Ms. A. Conway, Spouse, CMC
Ms. C. Fox, KVN Subcommittee Chair
Ms. M. Regner, L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittee Chair
SgtMaj R. Himsforth, Senior Enlisted Rep, II MEF
Mr. M. P. Downs, Ex Officio, MR
Mr. M. Swords, Ex Officio, MR
Ms. A. Jones, Ex Officio, Recorder

Members Excused:

Spouse, ACMC
Spouse, SGTMAJMARCOR

Others present:

LtCol J. Melton, MR Division
CDR A. Brown, HQMC REL
Maj J. Krause, MR Division
Maj M. Porter, MR Division
SgtMaj K. Wilson, MR Division
Ms. K. Lewis, MR Division
Dr. T. Gaskin, MR Division
Mr. G. Gordon, MR Division
Ms. T. Hayden, MR Division
Mr. R. Winkelhausen, MR Division
Mr. J. Capellini, MR Division
Ms. M. Petrella, MR Division
Mr. B. Barnes, MR Division
Ms. H. McIntosh, MR Division
Mr. J. Clarke, MR Division
Ms. K. Facon, MR Division
Ms. K. Gates, MR Division
Ms. L. Gahagan, MR Division
Ms. M. Rankin, MR Division

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Others present continued:

Ms. V. Wersel, Invited Speaker
Mr. W. Baines, MR Division
Mr. G. Castle, MR Division
Dr. K. Pfister, Henderson Hall
Mr. S. Pauli, Camp Butler
Mr. R. Milano, Camp Butler
Ms. D. Edgington, MARFORRES
Ms. K. Johnson, MR Division
Mr. M. Silas, MR Division
Ms. J. Murphy, Quantico
Ms. M. Baker, Chaplain Spouse
Ms. P. Mills, Marine Corps Spouse
Ms. S. Hejlik, Marine Corps Spouse
Ms. L. Usher, Marine Corps Spouse
Ms. H. Toolan, Marine Corps Spouse

3. Approval of 14 December 2006 Meeting Minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

4. Resource Overview. Mr. Winkelhausen provided an overview of the Marine Corps resource process and provided specific information on MCCS funding issues. MR Division serves as the Program Sponsor for MR and Corps-wide MCCS programs. The Marine Corps prioritizes and funds requirements (programs) through various official programming and budgeting processes. In view of the long war and significant operational requirements of the Marine Corps, hard budget decisions have been made to ensure mission readiness. Resourcing actions associated with MCCS Programs were extensively discussed by the FRC and the following priorities were established: (1) For FY08 and beyond restore the MCCS baseline funding levels decremented during previous programming cycles; (2) seek baseline adjustments for programs or services that have been established for wartime footing requirements and/or identified as documented deficiencies; and (3) obtain appropriate baseline plus up for 202,000 end strength increases. Discussion ensued regarding the sufficiency of MCCS funding to support wartime footing requirements. While MR strongly advances and advocates for funding throughout the process, the Chair indicated that he would seek to add his voice in support of family support requirements. Mr. Downs additionally stated that his staff had prepared an MCCS funding recapitulation that identified issues with MCCS funding and discussed concerns about MCCS's ability to appropriately provide for Marines and families.

Action: The Chair and the Director, Personal and Family Readiness Division (MR) will both address MCCS funding issues with the HQMC Programs and Resources Department to address established resourcing priorities.

5. Marketing Personal and Family Support Programs - Awareness Responsibilities of Commanders and Senior Enlisted. Mr. Swords briefed the FRC on issues and actions necessary to increase awareness of family support programs. MCCS currently provides a vast array of Marine and Family support programs. Unfortunately, however, Marines, their families, and even Commanders and Senior Enlisted often do not learn of available programs until

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a point of crisis or specific need. It is also acknowledged that Commanders and Senior Enlisted are very busy and must take the time to push or pull program information to ensure unit or command awareness. The Committee extensively discussed existing marketing or information promulgation tools. The Committee supported use of the website and believes the MCCS website is populated with useful information and links. But, not all Marines and families have access to computers and the Internet. The effectiveness of MARADMINs, ALMARs, and White/Green Letters was questioned and some members expressed concern that Commanders and Senior Enlisted Marines were overlooking these official policy/guidance documents. The FRC agreed that concise and tailored information must be prepared for various audiences and levels. For emphasis, this tailored information must be pushed by the "right people" to ensure appropriate attention of the designated audience or community. An example of targeted information is the "Marine Spouse One Voice" sponsored and pushed by Mrs. Conway to all General Officer and SES Spouses and designated SgtMaj Spouses. The Chairman also indicated that he was pushing information to his Commanders on family support topics since becoming associated with the FRC and becoming aware of specific program information and that SgtMaj Himsforth was pushing information to his peers. The FRC additionally determined that responsibility for information packaging must be shared by MR and Installation Commanders, as each installation operates and executes programs separately. Mrs. Conway noted the importance of providing information to the parents of Marines. While discussion ensued regarding the role and responsibility of Single Marines for interaction and information sharing with parents as well as unit commanders' responsibility for maintaining current and informative websites, it was acknowledged that MR is currently editing an existing Single Marine Guide that will provide information to parents and include Marine spouse or parent perspectives.

Action: MR will initiate the following actions and provide follow-up to the FRC at the next meeting: (1) establish an organizational communication plan for routine development and distribution of audience tailored, concise program information; (2) identify audiences to communicate with and define information level requirements; (3) identify the "right people" to push information and solicit their cooperation; (4) write tailored, concise program information for submission in accordance with communication plan; and (5) notify Installation Commanders of their role and responsibility for establishing similar information development and dissemination processes.

6. Issues Recommended by Marine Corps Spouses for Review/Action of the FRC. As Mrs. Conway travels around the Marine Corps or engages with Marine Corps family members, she receives family readiness ideas, issues, and recommendations. The FRC is well suited to officially act on presented issues/recommendations. The following discussion summary is provided:

a. Relevancy of the KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees. The KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees were established in conjunction with the FRC in 2001. It was recommended that the KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittee Charters be reviewed for relevancy to current FRC and Marine Corps requirements. The FRC endorsed the Charter review requirement and specifically requested the following Charter elements assessed: (1) mission; (2) member composition; (3) role of volunteers and staff; and (4) coordinating instructions and relationship to field KVN and L.I.N.K.S volunteers Marine Corps-wide. It was additionally recommended that volunteer member turnover rate be assessed for impact on the Subcommittees and for potential recommendations.

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b. Commander Support of the Family Readiness Officer (FRO), Key Volunteer Coordinator (KVC), and Key Volunteer Advisor (KVA). A concerned and involved Commander is the hallmark of a successful Family Readiness Program. FROs, KVCs, and KVAs serve the commander in this capacity, but require appropriate and visible support to accomplish assigned Family Readiness support tasks. In this regard, it was recommended that a "Commander Family Readiness Checklist" be established as a part of the formal Inspector General process and that Family Readiness inspections be included in the annual Inspector General of the Marine Corps (IGMC) unit level inspection plan. A Marine Corps Family Team Building Checklist has been compiled, but may need further review and adjustment to ensure documentation of demonstrated commander communication with the command and involvement with FROs, KVCs, and KVAs (i.e., number of meetings attended, knowledge of Key Volunteers, number of newsletters and articles published, etc.) is appropriately captured and inspected as part of the IGMC process. The Chair also noted II MEF has developed a similar checklist that could be used as a model or template. Discussion ensued regarding value and need for a Personal and Family Readiness checklist. It was noted that the intent of this initiative was specifically focused on family support requirements. Most units have developed personal readiness checklists that include a broad spectrum of policy requirements established by multiple agencies including M&RA, JA and G1, etc. It was subsequently agreed that the FRC would pursue development of the family checklist.

c. Role of Senior Enlisted Marines and their Spouses with Family Readiness. Senior Enlisted Marines and their Spouses (as Commanders and their Spouses) are directly connected to the quality and effectiveness of unit Family Readiness. Formal Family Readiness policies, guides, or templates, however, have not consistently established roles and responsibilities for Senior Enlisted Marines or discussed the importance or role of Senior Enlisted Spouses. Examples of guidance that requires inclusion of Senior Enlisted Marines and their Spouses is the Marine Corps Family Team Building Order and the recently drafted Commanders Guide. The FRC directed MR and the L.I.N.K.S. and KVN Subcommittees to identify policy and guidance sources that require edit and to draft proposed Senior Enlisted and Spouses roles and responsibilities policy/guidance. MR will also contact the Training and Education Command and request that personal and family readiness training for Senior Enlisted and their Spouses be incorporated within formal professional military training processes and school houses.

d. Review of Pre and Post Deployment Support Brief Requirements. As a decentralized organization, the conduct of pre and post deployment support brief requirements is a delegated commander responsibility. High quality templates and guides have been developed, are posted on the MCCS web site and may serve as the basis of command briefs. There appears, however, to be adaptations and inconsistencies among commands that may negatively impact Marines and families as important briefing information or requirements are omitted by Commanders. The FRC requested MR to conduct a review of Pre and Post Deployment Support Brief practices across the Marine Corps and to identify standardized/minimum briefing requirements and methodologies that must be employed by Commanders and to additionally identify optional brief items that may be left to the discretion of the Commander.

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e. Family Readiness "Plug and Play" Tools and Sources for Commanders. It is recognized that Commanders have limited time and many responsibilities. The sharing of best practices and examples (i.e., newsletters, articles, etc.) can help Commanders maximize their time allotment to Family Readiness awareness/communication responsibilities. To capture these best practice ideas and encourage active commander "clipping and pasting" or "plugging and playing", the FRC will request HQMC Public Affairs' help in establishing a node on the Marine Corps Home Page for the purpose of collecting and displaying examples and templates that can be easily accessed by Commanders.

f. Policy/Guidance Disconnects. As discussed above, the role of Senior Enlisted Marines has been inadvertently omitted from some of the existing policies and templates related to Family Readiness. Other disconnects have been identified (i.e., Commander's requirement to establish a crisis management plan). The FRC directed the KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees to conduct a joint session for the purpose of identifying guidance disconnects for future revisions or edits, as appropriate.

Action: The following actions were assigned with the expectation of follow-up at the next meeting: (1)The KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees will convene to conduct charter reviews and discuss specific issues identified above; (2) MR will prepare a draft "Commander Family Readiness Checklist" and contact the IGMC to request inclusion of family readiness in the annual inspection plan; (3) MR, with assistance of KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees, will draft family readiness proposed policy/guidance for Senior Enlisted Marines and their spouses. MR will additionally contact TECOM to initiate action to formally request personal and family readiness training inclusion in formal schools and professional military training; (4) MR conduct review of pre and post deployment support brief requirements and practices and identify standard/minimum briefing requirements and methodologies and optional brief requirements; (5) MR contact HQMC PA to establish a commander information resource site on the Marine Corps Homepage. MR to work with Mrs. Conway to identify "examples and templates" to be linked to the site; and (6) MR sponsor joint session of KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees to identify policy disconnects, revisions and plans for issuance of corrections.

7. Program Updates. Program updates on topics including Counseling Options, Child Development and Youth Activities, Combat/Operational Stress Control, Long-term Support for Surviving Spouses and Deployment Support were provided to the FRC. With each topic, discussion ensued regarding various general information areas. The following specific discussion requiring potential future action of the FRC is captured below for the record:

a. Counseling Options. The Chairman noted that it was his view that counseling should be viewed as a continuum and includes assessment, referral and utilization of services. He further stated that the continuum front-end had broken elements needing attention such as an insufficient number of doctors, administration of the PDHRA, and connectivity issues between units and mental health professionals.

b. Deployment Support Materials. Mrs. Conway stated that families do well with their first deployments and generally attend deployment briefings. She expressed serious concern about follow-on deployments as spouses were

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demonstrating signals of shutting down or closing in with subsequent deployments. Discussion ensued regarding benefits of developing a separate guide or including a special multi-deployment section within the existing spouse deployment guide. The FRC agreed to inclusion of a multi-deployment section within the existing guide. Additionally, Mrs. Conway asked that all of the guides be reviewed by the KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees.

c. Combat/Operational Stress Control: Discussion ensued regarding tracking of the mandated 90 and 180 day post-deployment briefs. It was specifically noted that Commanders are required to enter training completion data into MCTFS.

Action: MR to multi-deployment section for inclusion in the spouse deployment guide. All existing and drafted guides will be forwarded to the KVN and L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittees for review and comment.

8. Wounded Marine and Family Support Forum. Mr. Swords provided an overview of the Forum. The Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs hosted the CMC directed Wounded Marine and Family Support Forum 29-30 January. The purpose of the Forum was to bring together subject matter experts from the Marine Corps operating forces and supporting establishment to streamline processes and identify best practices to support our fallen and wounded Marines and improve family readiness. Seven breakout groups were sponsored covering: (1) Wounded Warrior Support; (2) Combat/Operational Stress Injury; (3) Casualty Notification and Support; (4) Marine and Family Pre-Deployment Training; (5) Marine and Family Services; (6) Key Volunteer Program; and (7) Special Needs Families. The FRC was provided an overview of the Forum findings and provided status information and follow on actions or plans. A brief status report follows:

a. Wounded Warrior Support. Programs supporting Wounded Marines and their families are spread throughout Headquarters Marine Corps and the Operating Forces. The establishment of a Injured Marine Support Regiment will consolidate into one organization the responsibility for tracking Wounded Marines and requirement for providing or coordinating support. As the organization has been formally established, Forum issues associated with Traumatic Brain Injury, tracking system standardization, entitlements, medical staffing and case management, Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board support for Marines and families, and inconsistent local support for Marines and families have been referred to the Injured Marine Support Regiment for follow on action. An additional recommendation to pursue a change in regulation/law to permit surviving spouses to draw the authorized one year of Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) at the rate of the intended relocation area vice last duty station was subsequently reviewed by the MP Division of M&RA (subject matter expert). MP nonconcurred stating concerns for potential inequities with members who separate/retire and their families, who, while on terminal leave, receive BAH based upon the location of the member's Permanent Duty Station vice the member's Home of Selection, Home of Record, or other location to which the member and family relocate. The FRC requested the DC M&RA to re-evaluate MP's nonconcurrency.

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b. Combat/Operational Stress Control (COSC) Injury. There are many local initiatives to address the challenges of COSC and Marines with stress injuries. But there are inconsistencies among installations and support is dependent on location and status of the Marine. It was also identified that a COSC program has been established at HQMC but has not yet provided for the integration of efforts. In the ensuing time, MR has issued MARADMIN 112/07 that mandates the integration of pre, during, and post deployment training and support for Marines and family members and requires that all training be tracked in the manpower information system. Funding has also been requested to support intended COSC training and MEF-level training coordinators who will work under the auspices of HQMC. The FRC concurred with reported actions and progress.

c. Casualty Notification and Support. Two recommendations were identified: (1) Re-establish the casualty notification timeframe to between 0500-2400 vice the current any time policy and (2) Consider establishing a Care Team Member Program. A MARADMIN is currently being drafted for Commandant of the Marine Corps release for the re-establishment of notification timeframes. A Position Paper has been prepared detailing the roles, responsibilities and training requirements of Care Team Members and has been staffed for comment and coordination with major commands. Upon receipt of comments, the Care Team Member Program Position Paper will be forwarded to the Commandant for decision. The FRC concurred with reported actions and progress.

d. Marine and Family Pre-Deployment Training. Since 2001, units and installations have surged and adapted their existing programs to meet wartime needs. Given the realities of the long war, current pre-deployment training assumptions and practices need to be re-examined. Family support must become more than an adjunct if family readiness is to be a true aspect of unit readiness. These Forum identified issues will be addressed during the Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) Functionality Assessment (FA) being conducted 14-18 May. For issues associated with deployment training provided to Individual Augmentees (IA), a separate IA working group will be hosted in the near future. The FRC concurred with reported actions and progress.

e. Marine and Family Services. Specific issues developed during the Forum included (1) need for obtaining sustained funding support for certain child care enhancements that are currently being resourced with supplemental funding; and (2) the requirement for refreshment and standardization of Welcome Home Events and Return and Reunion Templates will be reviewed during the MCFTB FA discussed above. The FRC concurred with reported actions and progress.

f. Key Volunteer Program. Issues discussed at the Forum included ownership and oversight of the program, role of the commander, role of the commander's spouse, who constitutes the Remain Behind Element, support for IAs, and command support for the KVN. Issues and recommendations will be discussed at the scheduled MCFTB FA. Issues associated with IAs will be discussed at the separate IA Working Group. The FRC concurred with reported actions and progress.

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g. Special Needs Families. Issues discussed at the Forum included revision of MCO 1754.4A, Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) under enrollment, update of program management software, and EFMP education and awareness. All Forum EFMP issues and recommendations will be reviewed and solutions developed as part of the EFMP Functionality Assessment planned for August 07. The FRC concurred with reported actions and programs.

Action: MR Request DC, M&RA review of BAH rate decrease.

9. Surviving Spouse Brief. Ms. Wersel briefed the Surviving Spouse Support Group that she founded at Camp Lejeune, NC after the death of her husband. The Surviving Spouse Support Group provides extended care for surviving spouses with the goal of connecting spouses with peers, maintaining the relationship with the Marine Corps and empowering the spouse to move on without the Marine.

10. The following topics were deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints: (1) KVN Subcommittee Update; (2) L.I.N.K.S. Subcommittee Update; and (3) Family Programs Update - Spouses Learning Series (SLS).

11. With no further business, the FRC meeting adjourned at 1515.

/s/
K. J. STALDER
Chairman
Family Readiness Committee

A. D. JONES
Recorder