

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
PERSONNEL AND READINESS &
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
SUBCOMMITTEES**

**STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEES ON PERSONNEL
AND
READINESS & MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES OF DEPLOYED
SERVICE MEMBERS
18 APRIL 2007**

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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
PERSONNEL AND READINESS & MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
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STATEMENT FOR THE SASC PERSONNEL AND READINESS & MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEES

Chairmen Nelson and Akaka, Senators Graham and Ensign, distinguished members of the Personnel and Readiness & Management Support Subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Support and services for our Navy and Marine Corps families is a fundamental function of the Department of the Navy (DON) and the cornerstone to ensuring quality of life and mission readiness of our Sailors and Marines. Family support is a DON Objective recently reinforced by the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps in a 23 August 2006 tri-signed memo. Its realization is supported not only by the Services but through a network of partnerships with our Veterans Service Organizations, Veterans Benefits Organizations and Community Based Organizations. Successful family support programs require this “web of inclusion.”

The DON has outstanding family support programs to assist our families as they navigate through the military life cycle. Our programs address everyday life issues through services such as life skills education classes, spouse employment assistance, counseling services, information and referral, relocation and transition assistance, as well as the specialized assistance needed before and after deployment and when a Sailor or Marine is wounded. Key to the delivery of this myriad of family support services are the Navy and Marine Corps delivery centers. The Navy has 60 delivery sites serviced by a Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) or a satellite office. The Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) provides Marine and Family Service assistance at all of their 18 installations. I'd like to highlight a few of the programs we offer our families.

Ombudsman/Key Volunteer Network Programs: The Navy's Ombudsman Support and the Marine Corps' Key Volunteer Network (KVN) and Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.) Programs are important resources for our families, especially during deployments. The Navy currently has approximately 2,200 trained Ombudsmen and the Marine Corps has approximately 3,000 KVN's. Ombudsmen and Key Volunteers facilitate the flow of information between Commands and family members. The Navy's recently revised Ombudsman Instruction and Manual expands training for our Ombudsmen to include providing assistance to families of Sailors who have been deployed as Individual Augmentees (IAs) as well as information on how to recognize combat operational stress and resources available to families requesting assistance. To support the enhanced training needs of the Ombudsman Program, the Navy provides priority child care for spouses who attend required Ombudsman training.

For Reserve families, the Marine Corps KVN and L.I.N.K.S., as well as the Navy Ombudsmen, provide training guides to address Reserve families' remote access requirements. These special military spouse/family volunteer initiatives have attracted the support of many Navy and Marine Corps national service organizations (e.g., Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society) who are important service delivery partners.

New Parent Support: Our FFSCs and Marine and Family Service Centers have programs in place for new parent support and training. Parenting for a young couple can be daunting in conjunction with the rigors of military life, so the family centers provide educational programs to assist Sailors, Marines and their spouses in adjusting to parenthood. About 1500 parents are served per year through these programs.

Child and Youth Programs: Taking care of our young family members requires a broad spectrum of programs and dedicated, professional staff. The DON offers child development programs, school-age care and youth programs. To meet the unique needs of our children and youth coping with deployed parents, we have partnered with community based organizations and programs such as “Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood” for children ages zero to 5 years and the “Mission Youth Outreach Program” for children ages 6 through 12. For parents who work extended hours, shift work, or serve as watch standers, Navy and Marine Corps have expanded child care facility hours of operation on base and provide extended child care opportunities through our family child care homes. Options include emergency drop-in child care at no or reduced cost, respite care for parents needing some time away from their children and our Navy 24/7 Child Care Homes located in Norfolk and Hawaii. Both Navy and Marine Corps have also been able to provide spaces through temporary modular child care center facilities funded by your support of DOD’s emergency intervention program. Navy and Marine Corps also have strong programs reaching out to our youth. We are affiliated and very active with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. The Navy is providing teen employment opportunities during summer months with our on base programs such as our child development and youth centers, morale, welfare and recreation programs and the Navy’s Fleet and Family Support Centers.

Family Member Employment Assistance: Due to the mobile lifestyle and expeditionary roles of our Sailors and Marines, our spouses face unique employment challenges. We recognize that spouse employment is a key quality of life issue as well as a retention consideration. Our Navy and Marine Corps family centers provide an employment assistance program that includes workshops on the status of the current labor market, salary and wage trends in particular areas, career counseling, resume writing, job interview techniques and job searches.

Professional Counseling: The Navy FFSCs and the Marine and Family Service Centers provide a range of counseling services for families to assist them in coping with deployment, everyday issues, and the special challenges of a mobile force. Our centers have licensed counselors who provide short-term, individual, couples, family and group counseling to address relationships, crisis intervention, stress management, substance abuse, occupational issues, as well as grief support after the loss of a loved one. We are experiencing an increase in counseling services to families during the post-deployment phase. In support of the increased deployment and longer deployment cycles, these counseling services are an invaluable supplement to the counseling services provided by our uniformed mental health personnel.

Deployment Support: Our centers play a key role in preparing our families for deployment. Pre-, mid- and post-deployment programs are offered to Sailors, Marines and their families. The Navy sends “return and reunion” teams out to meet ships returning from deployment. The teams stay with the ship until it arrives at its home port. These teams provide Sailors and Marines a variety of programs to include: how to reintegrate into their families, the techniques of stress management, how to adjust to a new baby, and money management. The Navy FFSP is working with our Special Warfare and Expeditionary Forces (e.g., SEALs) to place support staff onsite to assist families in these high operational tempo (OPTEMPO) communities. The FFSCs are now providing services to civilian families who have a civilian deployed spouse in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

Individual Augmentees: Many Sailors and Marines are supporting the GWOT when deployed or mobilized as IAs. The Navy has established an Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center within the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command to serve as a primary interface with IAs and their families. We continue to address

key issues of predictability and stability for our Service families, especially those of the IAs. The Navy FFSP has developed IA handbooks for both the commands that are deploying Sailors as well as for their families. These comprehensive handbooks provide information on how to successfully manage these deployments, resources for assistance, and guidance provided to families of all deployed service members on recognizing the signs of Combat Stress and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Again, the Navy provides priority child care for families of IAs when they attend command-sponsored meetings.

Care for families of wounded: Our family support programs are expanding in real time to meet the needs of our wounded Sailors, Marines and their families. Caring for Sailors and Marines who have been injured, sometimes very severely, is requiring knowledge on medical care, administrative processes, and rehabilitative services that has never before been needed by our families and their loved ones. Additional programs and resources for our injured and their families include: the Navy SAFE HARBOR program and the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment (Marine 4 Life). In addition to these two cornerstones of service care and continuity throughout the treatment process, the Marine Liaisons based in our Military Treatment Centers provide personalized support for injured service members and their families, helping them navigate the continuum of care from inpatient to outpatient status and from the DOD Military Treatment Facility to the VA facility. As an example of our ongoing partnerships with non-governmental agencies, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is a key partner providing an important “Visiting Nurse Program.” The visiting nurses go to the homes of our wounded and provide education and arrange for respite care for family members.

Financial Management: Because our Services are comprised of many young members who may not yet have sound financial management skills, financial

readiness is an important part of military readiness. Ensuring families are financially stable prior to deployment enhances mission readiness for our Sailors, Marines and their families. Our family support centers offer robust personal financial management programs that provide education, training and counseling emphasizing long-term financial responsibility. DOD and the Services have developed partnerships with Federal, corporate and private organizations to assist families in managing their finances. Training for financial responsibility begins at recruiting commands and extends throughout the service member's career. Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Navy Mutual Aid, and our Veteran's Service Organizations provide financial assistance to families who may experience financial difficulty.

Additional Resources: Since family needs may arise at anytime of the day or night, DOD and the DON have numerous websites and hotlines to help fill the gap. An excellent resource is a website created by the Deployment Health Clinical Center which provides services and resources online as well as by phone to help close the gap for families who may not be able to access family support centers. Both the Navy and Marine Corps family centers have robust websites easily accessible by families. The links are: Navy - www.ffsp.navy.mil. Marine Corps - www.usmc-mccs.org/family.

Conclusion:

Department of the Navy family programs are a vital part of our overall personnel readiness and are key to recruiting and retention. When a Sailor or Marine knows that his/her family is being cared for he or she can concentrate on their mission. This is the primary objective, thus our Sailors, Marines and their families will continue to have our commitment to the highest levels of the full range of quality support services. The DON will provide Navy and Marine Corps families the

support programs to help them cope successfully with the challenges they may encounter during their spouses' military career.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

DON Objective 1.3: Ensure High Quality and Levels of Support Services to Service Members and Their Families

