



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance



NRFC Webinar Series

Supporting Military Families: Services and Resources for Active Duty and Veteran Fathers

Presenter Responses to Additional Questions

December 13, 2017

Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC).

Presenters:

- Jennifer DiNallo, Ph.D., Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA
- Katrina Johnson, Horizon Outreach, Houston, TX
- Daniel Romero, Social Advocates for Youth, Military Family Resource Center, San Diego, CA

This document addresses questions presented, but not addressed, during this NRFC Webinar. For questions addressed during the webinar, please refer to the Webinar Transcript. For more information contact NRFC via email at help@fatherhoodgov.info.

Submitted Questions:

Are there practices that SAY San Diego has found helpful in delivering group services to a mixed crowd (*i.e., civilian and active military/veterans*) in a way that is still responsive to specific military family needs?

RESPONSE FROM DANIEL

At SAY San Diego, we intentionally selected a facilitator with military experience who is able to bridge military and civilian communities. For our military fathers, this provides a layer of credibility and understanding of military culture and for our civilians, he is able to code-switch with language or utilize tangible examples to further explain the topic being discussed. Additionally, we try to encourage a mix or blend of military and civilian participants for our group sessions and at the beginning of each session we encourage them to share how their week is going as a “Dad,” rather than having them identify as military or civilian. This helps to keep the focus on why everyone is there and avoids labels of “military” or “civilian.”

In terms of offering supportive services and referrals, we do this through individualized case management where a client is able to privately share their needs with a case manager. We also utilize a system of “battle buddies” where a program participant can be paired with another participant or a program alumnus to ensure that they feel connected to the group rather than a service branch.

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What are some approaches that you would recommend for working with veterans who did not receive honorable discharges? Do you have any advice for navigating what that does/doesn't mean for eligible services they can be connected to?

RESPONSE FROM DANIEL

SAY San Diego operates as a civilian nonprofit organization with no direct ties to the military. Many individuals who receive other than honorable discharges do not qualify for additional services afforded to active duty and/or Veterans with honorable discharge, but because SAY San Diego is a non- Department of Defense (DoD) entity, we do our best to support these clients in two ways:

1. Refer them to legal support to determine if they may have grounds for an appeal. Having connections to lawyers who are willing to provide some pro-bono work from time to time is incredibly helpful.
2. Treat the individual as a civilian; offer access to civilian resources and make referrals to programs they may qualify for.

What is the best avenue for child welfare professionals to contact a deployed father?

RESPONSE FROM DANIEL

Unfortunately, there are limitations in gaining access to a deployed dad if your agency is a non-DoD entity. Since direct access is often not provided for non-family members, you may want to start by seeing if the spouse/partner or parents of the deployed father can transfer the message. However, this may not work for you as there will be less confidentiality - so review your organization's privacy practices. Another alternative to consider is to contact an Ombudsman assigned to support the deployed father's unit and ask if they can send a message via email or let you know when the father is expected to return. For more information on the role of ombudsmen, see <http://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/lpd22/Pages/Ombudsman.aspx#.WkWJx1WnGJA>.

For a program that's working with dads already, if you discover a dad is a veteran or active military, what's a good first organization to contact to "get smart" on resources that are available for military fathers in a local community?

RESPONSE FROM DANIEL

To learn more about military culture, I recommend <https://psycharmor.org/> and to learn about military and services from a national perspective, I recommend <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos>. But please be aware that resources and services for active duty military are very different from those available for veteran fathers, who are often not able to access the same resources. Therefore, blending in access to civilian resources for veterans is an important way to further the support you can provide for fathers.