

THE ARMY FRG LEADER'S HANDBOOK



OPERATION
READY
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You



The Army FRG Leader's Handbook

A Handbook for FRG Leaders in the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve

This handbook is a revision and expansion of the Operation READY (Resources for Educating about Deployment and You) curriculum developed under a contract with Headquarters, Department of the Army, Community and Family Support Center, and the Texas Cooperative Extension of the Texas A&M University System.

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Operation READY: Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

**Texas Cooperative Extension
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and Army Community Service**

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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

The Army FRG Leader's Handbook was designed to assist Active and Reserve Component Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders in their mission of helping Army families toward greater self-sufficiency. Senior Army leadership has recognized that soldier readiness is inextricably linked to family self-sufficiency. An effective FRG contributes immeasurably to the self-sufficiency of families in the unit, and it will contribute to unit readiness.

Each workshop participant should receive a copy of the FRG Handbook, which consists of the first nine chapters of this document (pages 1–152). Additionally, the trainer is provided with a series of lesson plans built around PowerPoint slides, which are pertinent to each of the chapters in the handbook. The lessons are designed to be presented in two four-hour workshop sessions by the FRG leader, ACS staff member, or Guard/Reserve family program staff. However, the lessons may be taught individually, if necessary. Handouts and supplemental materials are provided with each lesson. The Operation READY video, *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*, may be used as an introduction to the workshop; a copy of the video's script is also included. Lastly, a bibliography is included that contains additional references, websites, and supplemental materials.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of people contributed to this handbook, but foremost among those are Mr. James Peters and Mrs. Becky Poppelton. Their work as volunteers in the Mobilization and Deployment section of Army Community Service at Fort Hood, Texas, has been inspiring and invaluable. These individuals shared their FRG publication for training leaders, which has been used to develop this handbook into a comprehensive, reliable, and in-depth reference for FRG leaders.



OPERATION READY MATERIALS

The Operation READY curriculum is a series of training modules, videotapes, and resource books published for the Army as a resource for Army Community Service (ACS), State Family Program Coordinators (SFPC), and Army Reserve Family Readiness Program (FRP) staff in training Army soldiers and families who are faced with deployments.

This revised curriculum includes the following training modules and reference materials:

- The Army Family Readiness Handbook
- The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness (new)
- The Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook (new)
- The Army FRG Leader's Handbook
- Family Assistance Center
- Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness
- Homecoming and Reunion

Videos developed for the Operation READY curriculum by University of California–Riverside Cooperative Extension, to supplement the above materials are:

- *Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Life, Think ACS* (new)
- *Introduction to Operation READY* (new)
- *Family Assistance Center*
- *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*
- *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles*
- *Coping with Stress*
- *Making Your Reunion Work*

Children's Workbooks for use by parents with their children.

These materials have been distributed to all U.S. Army installations throughout the world, as well as to U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard commands. The materials are distributed in hard copy form as well as stored on CD-ROM disks. They are also available through the virtual Army Community Service website, www.goacs.org. For copies of the above materials, check with your local Army Community Service, Mobilization and Deployment office, SFPC and FRP offices.

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The Army Family Readiness Group



Leader's Handbook



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Chapter 1

Family Readiness Group Overview

INTRODUCTION

This *Army FRG Leader's Handbook* provides an overview of the Family Readiness Group (FRG); its purpose, structure, and function; command and member responsibilities; key leader job descriptions; and other aspects of building and leading effective FRGs. Its focus is on the essential ingredients and key tasks of effective FRGs and their importance in helping soldiers and families cope with the stresses of military life and in building cohesive families in the Army. In a very real sense, FRGs can help soldiers and their leaders with the military mission, too. This handbook explains how.

FRG DEFINITION AND MISSION

The Family Readiness Group, formerly known as the Family Support Group (FSG), is a concept that had early roots among Army families, who banded together during war or tours overseas or other isolated locations, to provide information, moral support, and social outlets to their members. The Army focused sharply on family readiness as a result of lessons learned during the 1990–91 Gulf War. On 1 June 2000, Department of the Army renamed it Family Readiness Group to emphasize the need for readiness and self-sufficiency among Army families in the modern Army.

Paraphrasing DA Pamphlet 608-47, the FRG is “an organization of family members, volunteers, soldiers, and civilian employees belonging to a unit/organization who together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance and a network of communication among the members, the chain of command, and community resources.” Unit FRGs consist of all assigned and attached soldiers (married and single), their spouses, and children. This membership is automatic, and participation is voluntary. Extended families, fiancées, boy/girlfriends, retirees, DA civilians, and even interested community members can and should be included, as well.

The FRG mission is “to assist commanders in maintaining readiness of soldiers, families, and communities within the Army by promoting self-sufficiency, resiliency, and stability during peace and war.”



GOALS OF THE FRG

Based on the FRG mission statement, the FRG may fill many important roles, including:

- build soldier and family cohesion and morale;
- prepare soldiers and families for separation during deployments and, later, for the stresses of reunion;
- reduce soldier and family stress;
- reduce the commander’s and other leaders’ workloads;
- help soldiers focus on their mission during deployments;
- help families become more self-sufficient;
- provide an avenue for sharing timely, accurate information; and
- promote better use of post and community resources.

Later, these roles will be translated into the key tasks that effective FRGs plan and implement for their soldiers and families.

The FRG is:

- an information conduit;
- a welcoming organization;
- a self-help, referral organization;
- a source of social support and group activities; and
- a unit family dedicated to achieving social and military goals.

The FRG is not:

- a babysitting service,
- a taxi service,
- a financial institution,
- a professional counseling agency, or
- another military organization.

DO WE REALLY NEED FRGS?

Many experienced soldiers and spouses firmly believe that FRGs are important. Consider the following facts, based on recent research by the Army Community and Family Support Center, about the Army family:

- The ratio of immediate family members to soldiers is about 60 to 40.
- About 60 percent of soldiers are married.
- The ratio of children to soldier-parents is about two to one.
- About 6 percent of soldier-parents are single.
- Single soldiers have families somewhere.
- Families help soldiers make career decisions.
- Finally, the single most important concern of soldiers is that their families will be taken care of, both during peace and deployments.

So, yes, effective FRGs are important for soldiers and families. To create effective FRGs, the five essential ingredients—leadership, organization, training, fun activities, and communication—must be built into the unit FRGs. Of course, this is easier said than done, but it’s a basic fact that must be embraced by every leader—both military and spouse—if soldiers and families are to be successful.

“The Soldier Is an Extension of the Family....”

The old saying about the Army family, “If the Army wants you to have a family, they’ll issue you one!” is no longer operative in today’s Army. And the family is no longer seen as an extension of the soldier; now it’s quite the opposite. Today, clearly, we know soldiers are extensions of their families. So our changing Army and its missions point to the critical need for strong FRGs—effective FRGs—to help enhance soldier and family morale and success at home and at work. Effective FRGs can even help our soldiers accomplish military missions.

—*Mr. David White, Chief, U.S. Army Family Liaison Office
Washington, D.C.*

THE FRG—WHAT’S IN IT FOR US?



For spouses and family members, the FRG gives a sense of belonging to the unit and the Army community—the Army Family. It provides a way to develop friendships, share important information, obtain referrals to needed Army resources, and share moral support during unit deployments. For the long-term, involvement in FRG activities can foster more positive attitudes among Army families and provide a better understanding of military life, the unit, and its mission.



For soldiers, peace of mind—soldiers can be assured that their family members will be more self-sufficient and will have reliable and friendly support while they are deployed. This peace of mind can help soldiers focus on their work, perform better, relate better to other soldiers, and be safer while they’re on a training or real-world mission.

For commanders, the unit FRG helps to lighten their workload, especially in the area of soldier and family readiness goals. The FRG can enhance camaraderie and unit readiness by promoting self-reliance and by helping soldiers and family members to identify closely with the unit.



For the military and civilian communities, a well-established FRG program can help forestall serious family problems (such as family violence, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, child abuse, etc.) that weaken Army families and place heavy demands on community service agencies. FRGs refer family

members to military or civilian community resources and help families develop coping skills and stronger family units. Effective FRGs also provide a positive environment for diverse cultures to thrive together and to truly become one Army family—an Army of One.



For the Army, successful FRG programs, combined with ample and available community resources, help the Army achieve its primary goals—including the all-important goal of attracting and retaining high-quality soldiers and families in the Army.

For the Army Family and society as a whole, peace of mind; togetherness; pride in ourselves as individuals, families, units, and a nation of diverse cultures; and confidence that our Army can promote a better and safer world.

The FRG and the Military Mission



Commanders and other leaders at all levels and spouses in leadership roles should be keenly aware that FRGs can help build better unit families and can help with military missions, as well. How could this be true? Simply put, well-organized and effective FRGs help improve morale among soldiers and their families. In turn, soldiers and their leaders are more focused on their missions, safer, and not as worried about their families when the unit is training or engaged in real-world missions.

FRG STRUCTURE

FRGs can be structured in a number of ways, based on the type of unit, its mission, the needs of the soldiers and family members, and sometimes local policies. The FRG structure outlined in this handbook is based on active Army units co-located with headquarters on a permanent garrison. It can also be adapted for use in commands, both active and reserve, which are split among distant posts, sometimes in different states and even different countries.

FRGs typically are organized at two or more levels to form a support network for unit soldiers and families:

- **The unit-level FRG** (and sometimes in separate detachments) is the “grassroots” organization for soldier and family readiness in the Army and, therefore, will receive major emphasis in this handbook. Its main function is to build a friendly support and information network for the members before, during, and after deployments.

The battalion commander and key staff and families generally are members of the headquarters unit FRG. Occasionally, though, a single central FRG may exist at battalion level.

- **The battalion-level FRG** serves in an advisory and support capacity for unit-level FRGs. The steering committee interfaces regularly with unit-level FRGs, ensuring that the battalion and higher command family readiness goals are met.

By regulation, the unit commander is responsible for establishing and supporting the unit FRG. Ideally, family readiness is managed from the top, and commanders have unit family readiness performance goals they must meet. Clearly, they can’t meet those goals alone; they must identify capable spouse leadership and delegate clear responsibilities and the authority that goes with them to the spouse volunteers. **Military members should not be FRG leaders.** Commanders should encourage participation by all unit soldiers and families in FRG activities, which is best accomplished in a friendly, informal

setting. Face it—soldiers of all grades will want to belong and will want their families to participate if the FRG is relaxed, democratic, meaningful, and fun. Remember, soldiers neither need nor want “another army within the Army.”

Selection of FRG Leaders

The FRG leader may be selected by the commander or elected by the FRG membership. In turn, the FRG leader selects other volunteers or holds elections to fill key positions. The leadership structure of the FRG is discussed in detail later.

The Commander Is Not the FRG Leader

The unit commander—and actually, any soldier—should not fill the role of FRG leader. Though responsible for the FRG by regulation, the commander must delegate the position to a capable spouse volunteer because:

- soldiers often deploy with the unit;
- spouses need to train in FRG leadership positions;
- FRG members are volunteers, and they will relate better to a volunteer leader;
- soldiers do not want other soldiers giving orders to their spouses and children; and
- FRG members will be best served in a friendly, informal environment.

Often, but not always, the FRG leader is the commander’s spouse because the commander believes his/her spouse can best relate to the family readiness goals. However, every commander should consider what is best for the unit, the soldiers, the families, and the mission. The commander must have clear family readiness goals and take the initiative to ensure that they are met or exceeded by helping spouse leaders build and run an effective FRG.

The Unit-Level FRG Structure

As stated, the primary emphasis of the FRG program is on the unit level, with support and guidance from battalion-level leadership and above. There are two major support circles or chains associated with any FRG: the Chain of Command and the Chain of Concern. The Chain of Command consists of military leaders and senior staff members, while the Chain of Concern is comprised of spouse volunteers, who assist the Chain of Command in supporting the unit FRG membership and achieving unit readiness goals. Figure 1 illustrates how these chains are related at the unit level.



Figure 1. Relationship between the Chain of Command and Chain of Concern.

The unit FRG structure is designed to promote communication of important information and to encourage contact and mutual support among soldiers and family members.

It is through this grassroots organization and its activities that family readiness and soldier-family cohesion takes place. The unit FRG is normally the “lowest common denominator,” and FRGs usually are not broken down into smaller units, such as platoons. Cooperation and mutual support between the commander and the FRG leader are critical. Likewise, the willing service of various volunteers, as shown in Figure 2, is indispensable to the FRG leader and the effectiveness of the FRG. An effective FRG invariably has a strong, caring organization of military and volunteer leaders who work well together for the common good. Chapter 2 discusses FRG leadership in depth.

Other Family Readiness Entities

- Rear Detachment Officer (RDO)—a unit officer who acts as unit commander in the rear when the unit is deployed.
- Army Community Service (ACS) and other service organizations, on and off post, which assist soldiers and families.
- Unit Chaplain—provides counseling on personal, family, and spiritual concerns.
- USAR Family Program Director—provides assistance, guidance, and support to soldiers and family members.
- Army National Guard State Family Program Coordinator—provides assistance, guidance, and support to Guard members and their families.
- Family Assistance Center (FAC)—a one-stop-shop set up to provide essential family services during a major deployment.

Figure 2, Family and Soldier Readiness Structure, shows how these entities relate to the FRG.



Figure 2. Family and Soldier Readiness Structure.

Figure 3, Soldier-Family Readiness Flowchart, also shows the organization and structure of a typical garrison-level soldier-family readiness program. Chapter 3 discusses in detail how to build the FRG organization to promote the readiness goals at the unit level.

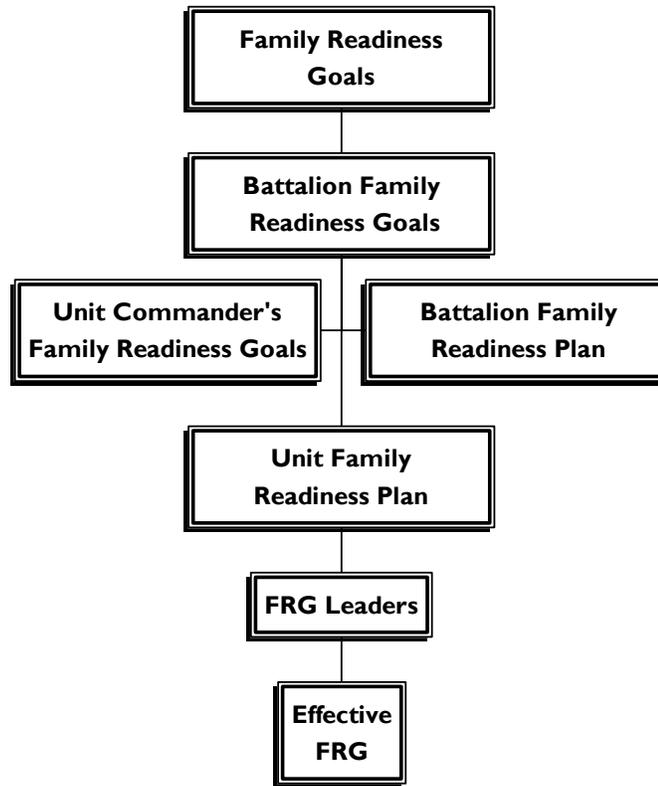


Figure 3. Soldier-Family Readiness Flowchart.

Battalion–Level and Higher-Level Family Readiness Support

The battalion commander, his staff, and spouses provide guidance and support for the unit-level FRGs. The battalion commander, after all, has family readiness performance goals to share with subordinate commanders. Often the commander, staff, and families are members of the headquarters unit FRG, which mirrors the basic structure of other unit FRGs.

The battalion commander appoints a senior spouse to lead a battalion FRG steering committee (sometimes called advisory committee) to ensure that the family readiness goals are met in all battalion units. The FRG steering committee consists of senior spouses and soldiers who:

- plan, activate, and coordinate overall FRG support;
- address family member concerns appropriate to the battalion;
- form organizational linkages with higher command and spouses;

- pass pertinent information to unit FRG representatives; and
- form volunteer committees to assist in the above activities.

FRG Support and Guidance above Battalion Level

Brigade commanders and commanding generals of divisions and higher units have family readiness unit goals for their commands. Post or garrison commanders also have critical roles, particularly during major contingency operations. Often, senior staff and spouses fill advisory roles to assist the commanders and spouse leaders with family readiness issues. These senior advisors are seldom involved in small unit family readiness issues, focusing instead on policy issues and overall readiness of the command. They meet regularly with FRG steering committees and advise the senior leadership of progress toward readiness goals.

FAMILY READINESS RESPONSIBILITIES

Chain of Command Responsibilities		
Battalion Commander	Unit Commander	Rear Detachment Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ prepares Family Readiness Plan (FRP) and sets family readiness goals for the battalion, ■ selects FRG steering committee chair, ■ participates in steering committee meetings, reviews FRG programs in command, and ■ coordinates with higher command on major family readiness issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ prepares FRP and sets family readiness goals for the unit, ■ appoints FRG leader and treasurer, ■ supports FRG leader as practicable, ■ coordinates with FRG leader on fundraisers and other FRG activities, ■ reviews FRG fund status and newsletters, ■ appoints RDO when deployment is planned, ■ encourages all soldiers and families to participate in FRG activities, and ■ ensures that vital family readiness information is conveyed to the FRG leader and soldiers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ serves as unit commander during deployment, ■ performs same duties as commander, ■ helps resolve family readiness problems or refers them to appropriate post agencies, and ■ maintains regular contact with deployed unit.



Chain of Concern Responsibilities

FRG Steering or Advisory Committee	FRG Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ oversees and supports FRG activities in the command, ■ provides assistance to FRG leaders, and ■ coordinates with battalion commander on family readiness policies and special issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ supports commander's family readiness goals, ■ provides overall leadership for unit FRG, ■ recruits other volunteers for key FRG positions (or presides over elections), ■ supervises planning and running of all FRG events, ■ presides over FRG events, ■ reviews FRG fund status and newsletters, ■ ensures that all members are involved in group decisions and events, ■ ensures that key information is conveyed to members, ■ ensures that FRG phonetree is functional and up-to-date, and ■ represents the FRG at steering committee meetings.
Family Members	Soldiers (Married and Single)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support their soldiers, ■ support command readiness goals, ■ participate willingly and contribute to FRG activities, ■ keep personal affairs in reasonable order, and ■ inform commander and FRG leader of key changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ participate in FRG and encourage their families to do so, and ■ assist FRG leaders with FRG projects.

THE FIVE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE FRG



With today’s smaller Army, active and reserve units that train for and support warfighting and peacekeeping missions experience unprecedented turbulence and uncertainty. These soldiers, their families (both immediate and extended), and friends endure frequent separations during training and longer overseas missions. Therefore, all units and soldiers must achieve and maintain a high state of readiness, and so must the families. Building and nurturing strong, active FRGs—effective FRGs—is critical.

Experienced commanders and FRG leaders have learned that certain factors make FRGs effective and successful, all of which involve five essential ingredients—a concept that is the cornerstone of this handbook. The goal of an effective FRG can be achieved through active participation in the FRG and by infusing it with the five essential ingredients listed below (shown in boldface type):

- strong, caring **leadership**;
- effective **organization** in a positive, friendly environment;
- work, **train**, and play well together;
- plan and enjoy **fun activities**, and include everyone;
- **communicate** well and share timely, accurate information; and
- make Army units and families stronger.

Each member of the FRG—regardless of rank, gender, marital status, age, race, or religion—is important and can make valuable contributions to soldier and family readiness, morale, and cohesion. Max DePree, author of *Leadership Is an Art*, reminds us that “by ourselves, we suffer serious limitations. Together, we can create something wonderful.” By employing the five essential ingredients in the FRG, together we can “create something wonderful” and accomplish our goals.

The five essential ingredients are discussed in depth in the chapters that follow; however, a brief overview of how each essential ingredient works in an effective FRG is shown below:

- Caring leaders—soldiers and spouses who lead and serve their units and FRGs with great regard and affection for the soldiers and families. Their focus is on the needs of the members, unit family readiness goals, and the military mission. Leadership of the FRG is, by far, the most important single ingredient.



- Well organized—the FRG leader recruits and motivates capable spouse volunteers to help organize and lead the unit FRG. With their help, the leader organizes committees and work groups, who accomplish all the key tasks of an effective FRG.
- Well trained—all members (every soldier and family member) are trained at some level to understand the unit’s mission and family readiness goals, and their roles in helping to meet them.
- Fun FRG events—astute leaders ensure that the unit family regularly plans and enjoys fun events together. In fact, every event of the FRG should be enjoyable or at least pleasant for all members. Like caring leadership, fun FRG events are critical to the strength and longevity of the FRG.
- Great communication—the commander and FRG leadership ensure that pertinent information and knowledge of essential post resources are passed on to all FRG members in a timely manner.

Revolving around the essential ingredients like numerous satellites, the key tasks of effective FRGs are the many services that capable volunteers perform for all the soldiers and families. The commander’s soldier-family readiness goals should mesh well with these tasks and support the unit mission. These goals are expressed in the unit Family Readiness Plan, which is reviewed with the next higher commander and the FRG leader. When the plan is complete, the FRG leader and committee chairpersons focus on the key tasks, organize and train the volunteers to help with the tasks, and lead the work for the benefit of all members. The result, of course, is an effective FRG.



How can we create a win-win outcome for all FRG members? How can we foster a favorable environment for enjoyment and personal growth for all FRG members? The best answer is by the example we set. It starts in our minds and hearts, with how we think and how we treat people as part of our day-by-day, minute-by-minute attitudes. It’s a leadership subject that surfaces regularly in FRGs.



Chapter 2

Leadership for Effective FRGs

WHAT KIND OF LEADER DOES IT TAKE?

Leadership is the most important of the essential ingredients for effective FRGs. People sometimes lament, “Our FRG is nonexistent,” or “We schedule FRG meetings and nobody comes.” Fortunately, however, there are FRGs that are brimming with life, camaraderie, and fun. Why is this? Why do some FRGs work well while others struggle to exist? Every case is different, but the most common reason has to do with leadership. There are other factors, but without sound leadership, FRGs rarely function well.

“Leadership—the ability to influence others to act in a given way.” This definition is given in some form in every course on leadership. But what does it mean? What type of leader can build and run an effective FRG?

Actually, a number of leaders are needed—both soldiers and volunteers—to reach that goal. Among them are the unit commander, other officers, first sergeant, other NCOs, the FRG leader, and various FRG committee chairpersons. All leaders have a role in the FRG

success story. FRG leaders who possess characteristics shown in the graphic to the right will most likely have effective FRGs.



People with these character traits are likely to be very successful in a number of life roles, and FRG leaders who possess many of these traits have a good chance of influencing people to want to make the FRG work well. But every leader has a starting point, and the best training many FRG leaders receive is through the experience of serving the soldiers and families in their unit. There is a wide range of experience among FRG leaders, ranging from PFCs' spouses to general officers' spouses. However, whether the FRG leader is new to the job or has several years of experience, training is available through the local ACS, Guard or Reserve Family Program staff, and Army Family Team Building (AFTB). They often offer scheduled classes and can arrange special classes for the unit, the entire FRG, and desk-side FRG briefings for key leaders, if desired.

Impacts of Poor Leadership on the FRG

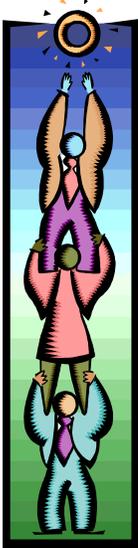
What happens if leaders do not have a substantial share of the positive leader traits that have been described? Some examples of poor leadership and its consequences may include:

- too military—spouses will not attend;
- too formal—a big turnoff that repels membership;
- too pushy—another big turnoff;
- leader dominates meetings—same result;
- leader makes all or most decisions—discourages participation and development of other leaders;
- leader has no clear goals—members have nothing to support;
- leadership does not discourage cliques, rumors, and gossip—some members won't participate in the FRG;
- leadership does not recognize volunteer efforts—members won't volunteer anymore; and
- leadership does not plan fun activities—FRG is doomed.

LEADERSHIP GOALS

FRG leaders must have general goals to accomplish within the FRG, including:

- Understand the unit commander's readiness goals.
- Create or improve the FRG (see Chapter 3).
- Convey the commander's goals to soldiers and families.



- Gain FRG members' support; let members know how they can help meet the goals.
 - Identify and recruit other leaders to chair committees.
 - Organize and plan for successful FRG events with the help of committee chairpersons.
 - Train every member to know what to do (see Chapter 4).
 - Encourage families and soldiers to talk, work, and play together.
 - Actively promote diversity.
 - Work through others to get tasks done.
 - Monitor leadership actions of key leaders.
 - Assess progress toward readiness goals periodically.
 - Change course when needed.
- Praise people publicly and often.
 - Interact effectively with the commander and steering committee.

All Soldiers Need Family Readiness Training!

Many commanders, both new and experienced, do not understand the impacts family readiness can have on soldier and family cohesion and morale. This is true of other key leaders, as well. It is strongly recommended that these leaders receive training in FRG requirements, leadership, missions, roles, etc. And they need to pass on this training to each soldier, both single and married, who need training on the benefits and ground rules of their FRG so they can understand:

- unit readiness goals and mission,
- benefits of their unit FRG,
- how the FRG can help support the military mission,
- ground rules for participation in the FRG, and
- Army benefits and how to access them

They also need to learn how to:

- promote cohesiveness in the unit family,
- gain important information about upcoming deployments,
- become better leaders,
- gain valuable training in operation, and
- get more personal satisfaction from belonging to the Army family.

MILITARY ROLE IN THE FRG

Commanders and other military leaders fill different roles in FRG settings than they do while soldiering. The military role is highly structured and mostly involuntary, while the FRG role is based on democratic and voluntary participation. Military leaders, then, need to know when to “take off their military hats” and assume their roles as members of the FRG. This is a difficult act, and it should be recognized that the two roles overlap somewhat at times. What does this mean?

Consider some leadership norms or ground rules that generally apply to family readiness events, which are informal social events:

- Uniforms generally should not be worn to FRG events.
- Commanders should leave most leadership functions to the FRG leader and the FRG chairpersons.
- Exhibit respect for and courtesy toward all members.
- Normal military courtesy among soldiers is always observed, regardless of environment or dress.
- Commanders and other leaders should explain FRG norms to every soldier.
- Commanders and other leaders should never reprimand subordinates in public, especially in view of their spouses or families.

The FRG is a social organization, and soldiers and families must enjoy being members if it is to be successful. Informality, good manners, and fun are essential at FRG meetings and events.

Is the FRG a Social Organization?

Absolutely, yes! The value of the FRG as a social group in today’s Army is critically important. The fact is, without social mingling and meaningful, fun activities for all, FRGs cannot survive for long. To be effective, FRGs should have characteristics such as:

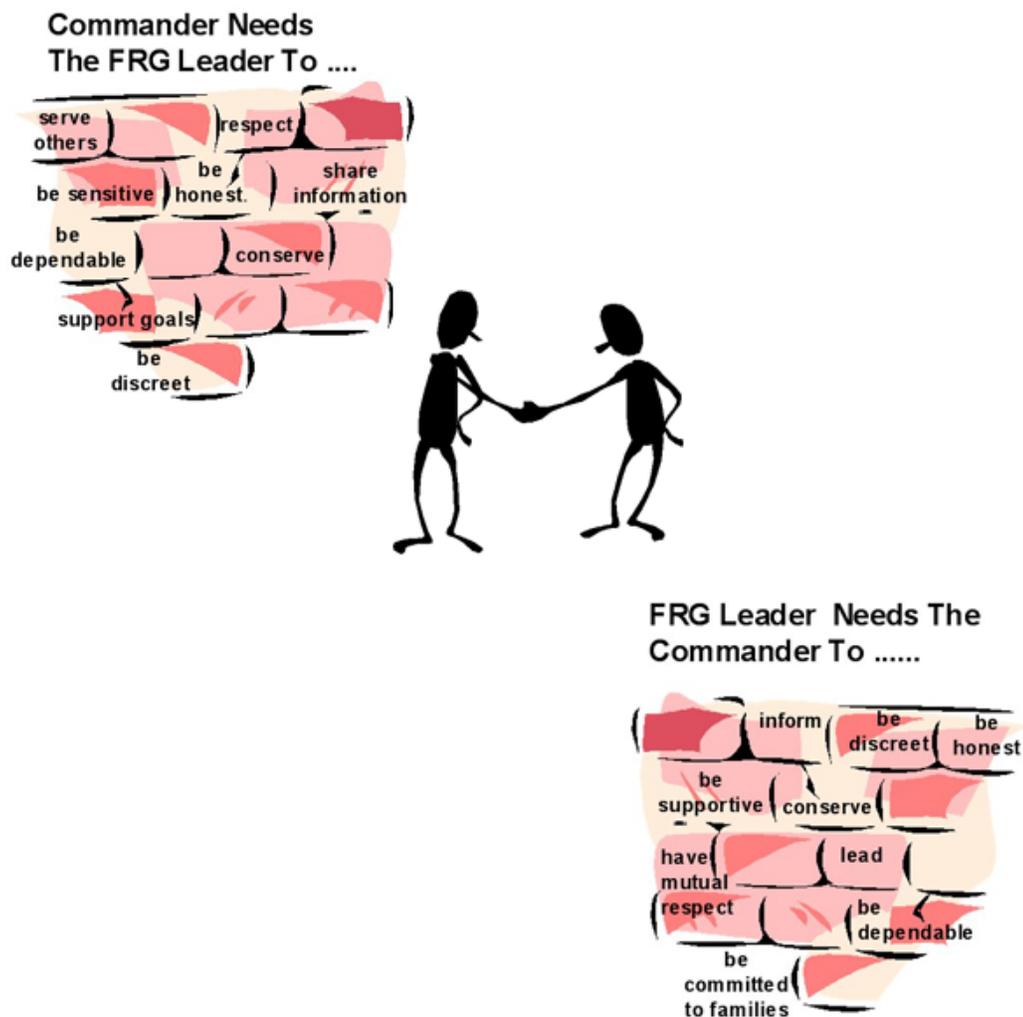
- positive, friendly, informal environment;
- no rank or cliques;
- clear goals;
- meaningful, fun activities to participate in as a unit family;
- decentralized decisions;
- everyone included;
- timely, accurate information flow; and
- no gossip.



Teamwork—Expectations of the FRG Leader and Unit Commander

Another vital aspect of family and soldier readiness concerns the FRG leader and the commander functioning as a team. It is important that both leaders support and communicate with one another regularly; however, if these leaders have widely divergent ideas and ways of doing things, the FRG may be plagued with problems. The same is true for the FRG leader's ability to work with committee chairpersons as a team. It follows that each committee must be an effective team, too. Clearly, leadership is the most critical of the essential ingredients of effective FRGs.

The FRG leader is a member of the commander's special staff. The commander is responsible for the FRG and for supporting the efforts of the FRG leader, which puts in clear perspective the authority and responsibility delegated to the FRG leader. What should the FRG leader and commander expect of each other to be successful as a team?



There are many similarities in the two lists shown above. In fact, they're practically identical. And the Army's Seven Core Values are embodied in them, too.

The Pros and Cons of Having a Co-Leader

FRG leaders should seriously consider having a co-leader to share the leadership and workload duties. If the leader's sponsor is an officer, determine if an NCO's spouse is interested in co-leading the FRG; however, if the leader is the spouse of an NCO or below, it might be helpful to seek out an officer's spouse who is interested in co-leading. At the least, the co-leader can be an advisor or assistant, and the co-leader can help mobilize others to actively participate in FRG activities. This approach ensures that everyone feels welcome, represented, and needed in the FRG.

On the downside, splitting leadership can have some drawbacks. Co-leaders must talk regularly to each other to avoid confusion and missed opportunities. They need to agree on what areas and projects each will supervise and make joint decisions on important issues. Ultimately, the decision to have a co-leader must be based on what is best for the FRG, the soldiers, and the families.



If the leader is lacking in some of these areas, it's okay. No one can be all things to all people. On the other hand, if the leader is new to the Army or the position, knowledge and skills can be acquired and honed in time. This process can be moved along in the following ways:

- Get training—sign up for post FRG training classes or classes offered by the Regional Family Program Academy.

- Get special training—arrange for training tailored to your unit or situation.
- Get material on FRGs—the FRG trainer, normally located at ACS on the post, or from your Guard/Reserve family program staff.
- Sign up for Army Family Team Building classes.
- Get help—find willing and capable people to work with.
- Get started—experience is a great teacher.

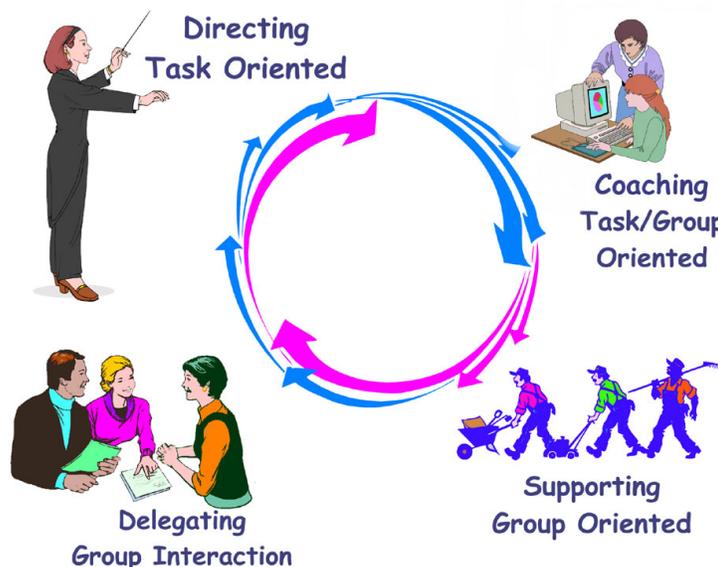
Take a look at the FRG Leadership Checklist at the end of this chapter (page 33). FRG leaders can use this to determine their strong points and areas that are in need of work.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

How does an FRG leader exhibit the traits and skills discussed so far and still get the job done? Can the leader be kind and considerate in the FRG and achieve the readiness goals of the command?

What *is* the “job,” really? Recall that the job is to improve cohesion, morale, and self-reliance among people who have choices (to participate or not). The list below details different leadership styles:

- *Directing*—Leader is task oriented, with little group input, limited group experience or time. Military leaders must direct their units in order to accomplish their mission.
- *Coaching*—Leader is both task and group oriented; directs and encourages the group’s effort, but the group is more experienced and makes inputs to the process. The leader watches progress and coaches the group as needed to keep on track. This style of leadership is prevalent in business (especially big corporations).
- *Supporting*—Leader is group oriented; sets the overall project goals and supports the group’s efforts. The group has considerable experience and



therefore makes major inputs on planning and decisions. The leader reviews progress at intervals and suggests changes.

- *Delegating*—Leader is more interested in group interaction than the outcome of the project. The group is highly experienced, and they define the project goals, plan, make decisions, and control their own work.

So, which leadership style should FRG leaders use? Very simply, for a volunteer group, coaching and supporting styles work best. With more critical concerns, use coaching, but the directing style should rarely (if ever) be used. More routine tasks call for a supporting style, even delegation for simple ones. FRG leaders may find it necessary to use any or all of these styles. The situation, experience of the group, and time needed to accomplish the task are all factors that help determine the style.

SUPERVISING PEOPLE

Among leader skills listed previously in this chapter were the ability to supervise and motivate people, manage multiple projects, and work harmoniously with a variety of personalities. The following is a list of do's and don'ts for supervising people:

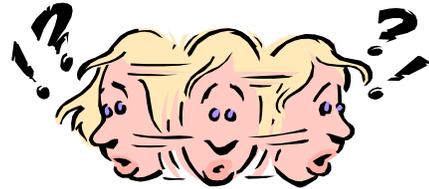


Additional aspects of leading people will be covered later. For more information on the subject, consult Operation READY *The Army Family Readiness Handbook*, which has an excellent chapter on leadership.

Can I Lead the FRG? Should I?

The first answer is, “Most Army spouses can do the job and do it well.” However, in the same breath is the caution that, “Some spouses can’t or shouldn’t take the job,” for a variety of good reasons:

- schedule overload,
- personal problems,
- introverted personality,
- fear of public speaking,
- fear of failure,
- illness or handicap, or
- lack of interest.



Army spouses are busy. Many wear several hats—wife, mother, wage earner, college student, caregiver for aged parents, not to mention housekeeper and many other jobs. Some spouses are very private—not the outgoing kind who can lead large, diverse groups. Some take on the FRG leader job simply because their spouses are the commanders, but some spouses don’t want the job, which is fine.

Sure, you can do the job. But keep in mind that your decision can affect the morale and lives of a lot of people. They need strong and caring leadership from their FRG leader. So, be honest with yourself and make the right decision. If you decide to take the job, do it wholeheartedly. If not, leave the job to someone who will—and give them your full support.

LEADERS ACTIVELY PROMOTE DIVERSITY



Promoting diversity, fairness, and justice is a top priority of military and spouse leaders. This is because equal rights, inclusion, and fair treatment of all people are vitally important in our culture and the Army. FRGs, like their units, have diverse memberships. Soldiers and family members are of all ranks, genders, ages, races, religions, and cultural backgrounds. Each member brings a wide range of skills, experience, interests, and motivations to the group. Leaders can build a strong team by putting those talents and backgrounds to good use and by setting a good, genuine example in how they view and treat people. Keep in mind that:

- Everyone wants to be included.
- Everyone wants to be valued and respected.
- Everyone wants to be treated fairly.
- Everyone wants to contribute.
- Everyone has ideas to share.
- Everyone is a unique individual.
- FRG members are volunteers.

How can leaders create win-win outcomes for everyone? An excellent way to help people of different backgrounds develop friendships is to plan activities that bring people together to talk, work, and play on the same team. This, after all, is what the FRG is about.

MAKING DECISIONS AND LEADING DECISION MAKING

A leader is expected to make decisions—sound ones that keep the FRG, a committee, or a project running well. Keep in mind that there are several levels of decisions that require good judgment and leadership, and the same is true for FRG committee chairpersons. Leaders need to know when and how to use or initiate all of them:



Decision Making

Questions will arise for any leader, and that's certainly true of an FRG leader. But some leaders feel that they are expected to make all decisions—that if they don't make quick and aggressive decisions, people will consider them unable to lead. This is not true.

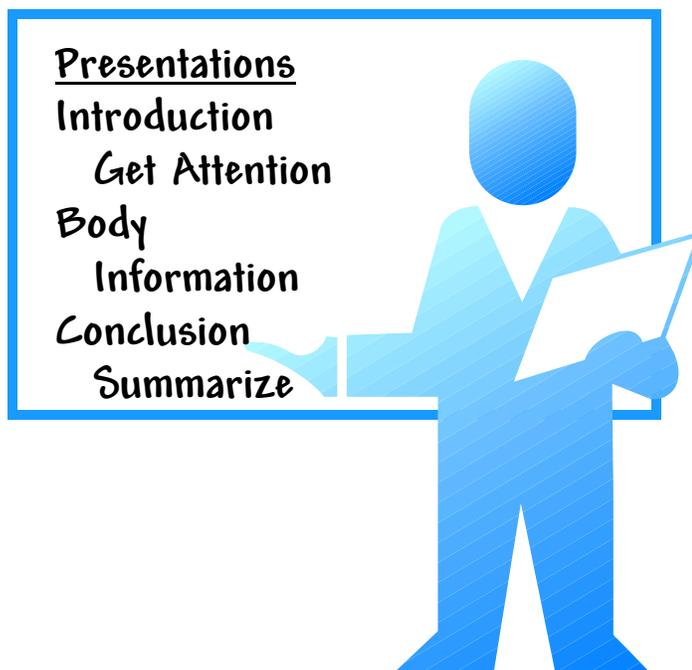
The keys to good decision making are:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Research adequately before making a decision.
- Understand the situation completely.
- Possess good problem-solving skills and good judgment.
- Be flexible.
- Ensure that action is taken once a decision is made.

Share credit.

PREPARING AND GIVING PRESENTATIONS

Another desirable leadership skill is public speaking. The FRG leader and committee chairpersons will have many opportunities to speak before groups of people. Clearly, they must enjoy speaking before and leading a group, and they need to be proficient at it.



More information about public speaking is included in AFTB courses 3.03.1 and 3.03.2. Keep in mind that the course on presentations is aimed primarily at more formal events, such as a briefing for senior spouses or a distinguished visitor.

When speaking before the FRG or leading a meeting of committee members, keep it informal, friendly, brief, focused, relevant, and helpful. Additionally, leaders are often asked to present reports or proposals to the FRG steering committee and other key people; brevity and conciseness are necessary there, too. Remember: substance, relating well to others, and getting the job done well are much more important than form and formality!

Other pointers:

- Relax and smile.
- Speak clearly and simply.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Avoid distracting gestures.
- Invite others' inputs.
- Listen actively to questions or comments by others.
- Repeat questions if needed.
- Keep to the time limit unless it can't be helped.
- Provide equal time for others to speak.
- Never put down anyone, especially in front of others.
- Deal gently with argumentative members. If they persist, invite them to meet later.
- Thank others for their inputs.
- Summarize major points.
- End on a positive note.

FRG Leadership Checklist

1 I know and support the commander's readiness goals.	Yes	No
2 I embrace those goals and convey them to other volunteers.	Yes	No
3 I frequently confer with the commander about FRG plans and activities.	Yes	No
4 I frequently confer with all chairpersons about FRG plans and activities.	Yes	No
5 I set the example by welcoming diversity among our FRG members.	Yes	No
6 I actively seek inclusion of all members in FRG meetings and activities.	Yes	No
7 I readily make some decisions on my own when appropriate.	Yes	No
8 I share important decisions with the committee leaders and the commander.	Yes	No
9 I seek input on group activities and concerns from the membership.	Yes	No
10 I have a positive attitude of friendliness, kindness, and service.	Yes	No
11 I am an assertive but humble and kind leader.	Yes	No
12 I treat everyone with respect and regard; I never criticize but I mentor.	Yes	No
13 I try not to dominate meetings and strive to get others involved.	Yes	No
14 I try to keep meetings focused, fun, and reasonably brief.	Yes	No
15 I frequently and publicly thank people for their help.	Yes	No
16 I attend all steering committee meetings or ensure that an alternate does.	Yes	No
17 I seek to resolve conflict peaceably and promote harmony among the FRG members.	Yes	No
18 I listen actively and seek to understand the other person's viewpoint.	Yes	No
19 I follow up with chairpersons to make sure critical tasks are done on time.	Yes	No
20 I am careful not to micromanage.	Yes	No
21 I am able to recruit capable members to help with committee work.	Yes	No
22 I work well through others to get tasks done.	Yes	No
23 I plan well and get help with planning, preparing meeting agendas, and seeing that activities are organized and done well.	Yes	No
24 I try to balance the importance of task versus relationships.	Yes	No
25 I have completed family readiness training and promote it among the FRG members.	Yes	No
<p>Number of "Yes" answers _____ x 4 points each = Total Score: _____</p> <p>Use this checklist to check yourself and, where applicable, your committee chairpersons. Be as objective as you can. Counting 4 points for each "yes" answer and 0 for each "no," what is your score? What are your strong points? Where do you need to improve? Grade yourself with this scale: 88 or above, effective FRG leader; 74-84, good; 60-70, average; under 60, below average.</p> <p>Are you an effective FRG leader? If not, what will it take to become one?</p>		



Chapter 3

Building Your FRG— Getting Started

ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready to start up a unit FRG—or perhaps energize an existing one? Yes, if and only if you have the first and most important of the essential ingredients—leadership—firmly rooted in your mind and heart. And you are ready to move on to the next step if you have wholeheartedly embraced the primary reasons for having an FRG.



How can you tell if you and other leaders in the FRG are ready? There are several ways. First, review the completed FRG Leadership Checklist from Chapter 2 (page 33), and study the results. Identify problems that can be show stoppers for the FRG, and decide how to resolve or improve them. Discuss the matter with the family readiness consultants at Army Community Service or your Guard/Reserve family program staff. They can help leaders focus on problem areas and find ways to resolve the problems.

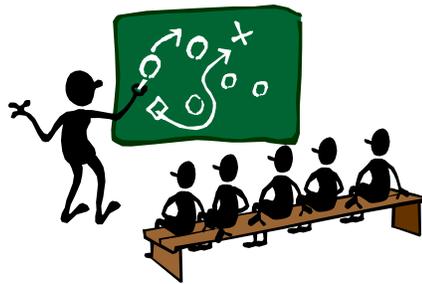
If leaders in the FRG or the unit are not ready, what can be done to get ready? Start over with Chapters 1 and 2. Arrange for some special training. Remember: everything you do from here on—and the success or failure of the FRG—will be determined largely by what you do and how you do it.

How Do You Get Started?

- Obtain and study FRG materials.
- Attend available FRG training.
- Meet with the unit commander.
- Obtain and study copies of the battalion and unit Family Readiness Plans.
- Confer with the Family Readiness Liaison (FRL).
- Talk with the current or past FRG leader(s), if possible.

- Brainstorm family readiness issues with the commander, first sergeant, their spouses, and key FRG chairpersons. Focus on essential ingredients and key tasks of effective FRGs.
- Set up a meeting with the battalion FRG leader and other key spouses. Discuss similar issues.
- Make plans to incorporate the key tasks.

Teamwork—The FRG Leader and the Unit Commander



The FRG leader and the unit commander must work together for the benefit of the soldiers and families. Keep in mind that the commander is responsible for the FRG and must support it. When initially meeting with the commander, discuss family readiness issues, such as:

- What are the commander’s family readiness goals? Does he have a plan?
- What are the commander’s expectations and yours as FRG leader?
- Mutual support and communication aspects.
- FRG startup and operating issues. Focus especially on the five essential ingredients and key tasks of an effective FRG.
- Unit training and FRG meeting and event schedules.
- Resources needed by the FRG (e.g., access to alert roster, copy machine, mail/postage, telephone, computer, e-mail, funds, etc.).

KEY TASKS OF AN EFFECTIVE FRG

When the essential ingredients are translated into actions or tasks that an effective FRG does for its soldiers and families, the result is a list of key tasks. The following list includes most of the key tasks for which leaders organize the FRG, plan its activities, and run it:



To Do	
✓	Invite everyone in unit
✓	Establish goals
✓	Training classes
✓	Recruit volunteers
✓	Welcome newcomers
✓	Establish phonetree
✓	Conduct meetings
✓	Plan events
✓	Conduct fundraisers
✓	Manage finances
✓	Publish newsletter
✓	Keep records
✓	Recognize volunteers
✓	Maintain contact



PLAN THE FIRST FRG MEETING

After initial coordination with the leadership, set a date for the first FRG meeting. Use the three R's to plan: reach, research, and recruit. The three R's provide a solid foundation for success. Briefly, the FRG leader needs to call (reach) as many unit spouses as possible. Use the sample phone "script" in the Communication section (page 45) of this chapter, or devise one to use. This initial contact accomplishes three things. First, it's an opportunity for the FRG leader to connect with the members. Second, the FRG leader can ask for (research) a short list of concerns each member has about the unit, the FRG, and related matters. Finally, the FRG leader may find (recruit) some willing and able volunteers to help with FRG tasks.

What Should the First Meeting Accomplish?

Clearly, the first meeting must be brief and coupled with a fun event—like a potluck dinner. Keep the essential ingredients and the key tasks in mind when planning the meeting. Also, remember the commander's soldier and family readiness goals. The FRG leader's presentation should include only the information the FRG members need to know. Don't have a long discourse on every aspect of operating the FRG. Concentrate on

a short but effective meeting, and be sure to address the top concerns gathered from the phone calls. If any of those concerns are controversial, discuss them with the commander first, or use good judgment as to whether to bring them up at all at this first meeting.

Will there be any special guests at this meeting, like the battalion commander and his spouse? A speaker from the installation or the local community? Be sure to discuss visitors and the agenda with the commander. **The main purpose of the first meeting is to reach out to the soldiers and their families and get them interested in the FRG.**



To get people interested, explain the benefits of being an active member. Show the Operation READY video, *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*. Keep in mind that their participation is purely voluntary.

Consequently, the first meeting is a sales presentation of sorts, and the first impression the FRG leader and other leaders convey to everyone is likely to be the primary reason why many participate—or opt not to. In practical terms, leaders have 15 to 20 minutes to “close the sale” to most people. So it is important that leaders plan and execute well. And don’t forget the food and childcare!

Benefits of the FRG

The FRG leader, the commander, and other leaders need to know and pass on to others the benefits of having a strong FRG. Soldiers and families need to understand what’s in it for them. This is especially true for new members, new FRGs, or newly revived FRGs. Not only must leaders tell about the benefits—soldier and families must be shown! Benefits include:

- helps families learn to be more self-reliant,
- promotes better use of post resources,
- conduit for friendships,
- builds cohesion and morale,
- provides peace of mind for families and soldiers,
- conduit for information,
- improves families’ ability to cope with separation,
- integrates new soldiers and families into the unit and Army family,
- reduces social isolation,
- enables soldiers to focus on mission,
- opportunities to do fun things together,
- opportunities to help others,
- opportunities to build new skills, and
- takes some workload off the chain of command.



Suggested Outline for Planning the First FRG Meeting

Assess potential FRG membership:

1. Review the alert roster and existing FRG records, if any.
2. Review the completed Family Readiness Group Information Survey forms (sample form shown in Figure 4, pages 41–42).

Advertise the FRG meeting:

1. Personal contacts via telephone
2. Personal invitations (mailed to family members)
3. E-mail, if available
4. Commander/first sergeant announces to unit
5. Flyers (attach to Leave and Earnings Statements [LESs])

Complete the telephone campaign:

1. Use the sample call script in the Communication section (page 45) of this chapter.
2. Be friendly, informal, and brief.

Identify resources required:

1. Childcare issues
2. Meeting location with seating to accommodate the group (i.e., dining facility, family readiness center or unit day room, especially because food will be served, etc.)
3. Equipment needed (audiovisual, flip charts, markers)
4. Food, drinks, napkins, paper plates, utensils, etc.
5. Support staff for first meeting
6. Transportation and parking

Develop the meeting agenda, which may include:

1. Welcome and sign-in table with name tags, agenda, and FRG Information Survey forms (Figure 4); get children settled in childcare room
2. Social time—friendly conversation
3. Start meeting—introductions and purpose of the meeting
4. Brief discussion of role and importance of FRG
5. Brief discussion of unit mission and deployment issues (if any guest speakers, put them here, but keep them brief)
6. Unit information (training schedule, upcoming events)
7. Overview of group norms
 - a. No rank at family meetings and events
 - b. Respect others' ideas
 - c. Avoid excessive war stories
8. Complete or update the Family Readiness Group Information Survey form (Figure 4)
9. Ways to disseminate information (phonetrees/newsletters)
10. FRG plans and actions:
 - a. Member concerns from initial phone canvass
 - b. Leader elections and appointments
 - c. Volunteer recruitment
 - d. FRG activities (outings, holiday parties, etc.)
 - e. Fundraisers (car washes, bake sales, cookbooks, etc.)
 - f. Family member training (FRG, AFTB)
 - g. Future meeting dates, times, locations, etc.
11. Wrap-up, questions and answers
12. Drawing for door prizes
13. Adjourn (on time!)
14. Note: Serve food after or during the meeting.

Family Readiness Group Information Survey

(Please fill in the applicable areas)

1. Sponsor's name _____ Unit _____ Rank _____
2. Home address _____
3. Home phone _____ Work phone _____
4. E-Mail address: _____
5. Your name _____ Birthday _____ Anniversary _____
6. Place of employment _____ Work phone _____
7. Children:
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
8. Location of children's schools: _____

9. Are you and your spouse expecting a baby? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, when is the due date? _____
10. Please list any family members with special needs _____
11. Do you have a driver's license? Yes ___ No ___ Access to a car? Yes ___ No ___
12. What foreign languages do you speak? _____
13. Does your spouse speak English? Yes _____ No _____
What other languages does your spouse speak? _____
14. Other than your spouse, who would you notify in an emergency? (Friend/neighbor)
Name _____ Relationship _____
Phone _____ Address _____

Figure 4. Sample FRG Information Survey.

15. What are your hobbies and special interests? _____

16. When is the best time to call you? _____

17. What topics would you like to discuss or hear about at a Family Readiness Group meeting? _____

18. Could you help with any of the following? (Check any that apply.)

FRG Activities _____ Telephoning _____ Fundraising _____

Newsletter _____ Baking _____ Planning _____

Other (Specify) _____

19. I give my permission for my phone number to be published in the Family Readiness Group Contact Roster. _____ Yes _____ No

Your signature _____ Date _____

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority: 10 U.S.C. Section 3010, 5 U.S.C. 522a

Principle Purpose Information will be used to provide support, outreach and information to family members.

Routine Uses: Primary Use of this information is to facilitate volunteers in providing command information to family members concerning unit events and in emergencies.

Mandatory or Voluntary Disclosure: Voluntary

Figure 4. Sample FRG Information Survey (continued).

FRG VOLUNTEERS



The first FRG meeting is planned, and there is already a small nucleus of volunteers who are willing to help. FRG leaders need help to be successful—there’s far too much to do for one person, and besides, we need to work and play together as a team. Now the FRG leader and key volunteers need to brainstorm about the FRG’s needs. What key FRG tasks need leadership to ensure that they get done? (Chapter 4 provides a discussion of volunteer training, management, and a list of volunteer positions that are needed, with job descriptions.)

Some volunteer positions require a lot of work, and the chairpersons need additional help to get things done. With help from the commander, first sergeant, and the phonetree committee, the chairpersons can recruit additional volunteers. Be patient when recruiting volunteers. In most cases, spouses want to meet the FRG leader before agreeing to help. Keep in mind that most spouses are very busy and will do well to attend FRG meetings and events at all. It will take time and effort, but spouses who aren’t quite so busy will be recruited to help. Use the Family Readiness Group Information Survey (sample in Figure 4) to identify some additional candidates.

Figure 5 is a “wiring diagram”—as soldiers call organizational charts—which provides a graphical representation of the FRG organization. The key positions address the essential ingredients and key tasks of the FRG. In general, this is what the FRG should look like when everything is in place. Of course, each committee will have volunteer members, who are not shown in the diagram. In time, the FRG leader will get a better feel for the needs of the FRG and perhaps will make changes in the structure, as needed. Each FRG should be organized based on the essential ingredients and the key tasks the FRG needs to accomplish in order to operate well, grow, and become a truly effective FRG.

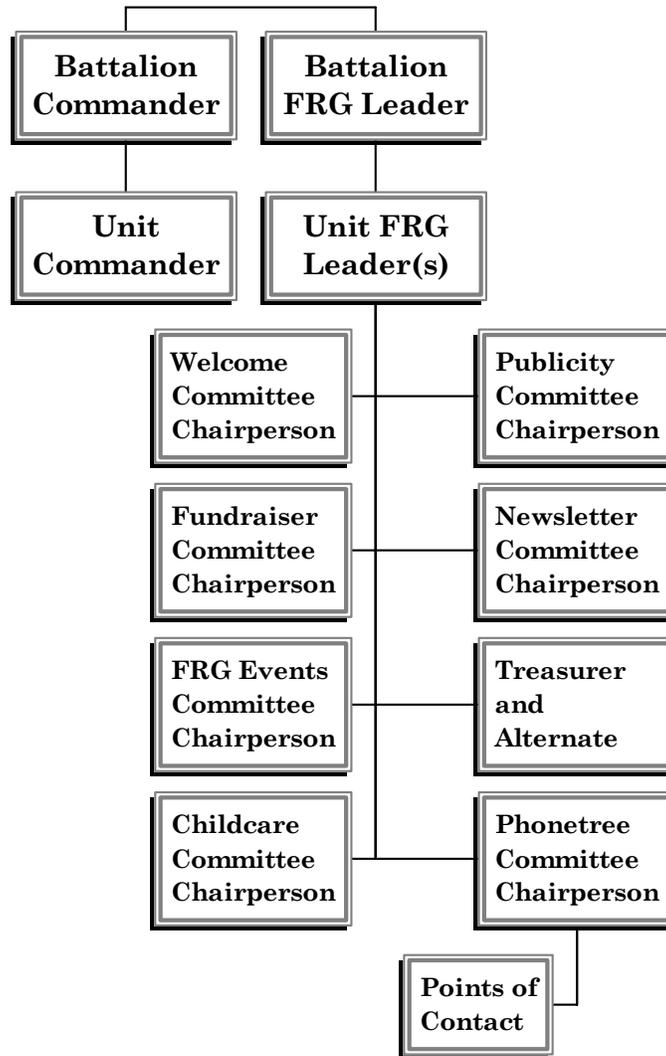


Figure 5. Typical FRG Organizational Structure.

COMMUNICATION



Communication is one of the five essential ingredients of effective FRGs. At this point, the FRG leader is working on the start-up phase, contacting all unit families, making introductions, and inviting families to the first FRG meeting.

Telephone calls to members are vitally important, but they take a lot of time. This is one good reason to have a co-leader—an NCO spouse (if the leader’s husband is an officer)—or have the FRG phonetree to help with calls. Keep in mind that some young spouses and junior soldiers may feel intimidated by calls from

the spouse of the commander or other senior leader. This is another excellent reason to have help from an NCO spouse; enlisted families will likely relate well to them.

In fact, all leaders in the FRG need to relate well to all members. Remember, when calling FRG members, you are doing a selling job. You are selling opportunities for Army families to participate actively in the FRG. Be sure to remind other leaders of this central fact.

Suggested Calling Script for FRG Leaders:

“Hello, Mary, this is _____. I’m the new FRG leader (or will be co-leader of the FRG with _____). Is this a good time to call? Good. *[If not, get a time to call back, thank her, and hang up.]* I’m calling to say ‘hello’ and invite you to our upcoming FRG meeting at (time, date, and location). *[Pause for Mary’s response, if any.]* We will be discussing our plans for _____ for the year. Also, I’m looking for a few more volunteers to help with our FRG events. By the way, do you have any concerns about the FRG that you want to discuss at the meeting? *[Listen for her answer.]* Okay, I’ll write that down and make sure it’s on the agenda. Well, thanks for talking with me, Mary. If you need to contact me about anything, my number is _____. Please feel free to call. I look forward to meeting you at the meeting. Bye, now.”

The entire conversation should last only a few minutes, depending on how receptive Mary is. Don’t apologize for calling. If it’s not a convenient time to talk, Mary will let you know. Make a note, and call her back at the appointed time. If she says she is not interested in participating, tell her calmly that you understand. She may tell you why. If not, you can try asking if there is any problem you can help with—there’s no need to press it beyond that point if Mary is not willing to discuss it. Let her know she is welcome at FRG events any time, and thank her for her time before hanging up.

Other phone tips include:



- Don’t call too late; generally, 8:30 p.m. is a good limit.
- Don’t talk too long; you have other calls to make.
- If the other person takes up too much time, remove yourself graciously after finishing your business. “Well, I’ve got to go now. Thanks so much for your time. See you soon. Bye now.”
- Use the other person’s name, but don’t overdo it.
- Be pleasant and positive—smile while you’re talking.
- Be sincere; the other person can tell if you’re not.
- Speak distinctly so the other party can understand you; don’t chew gum, eat, or do chores while talking.

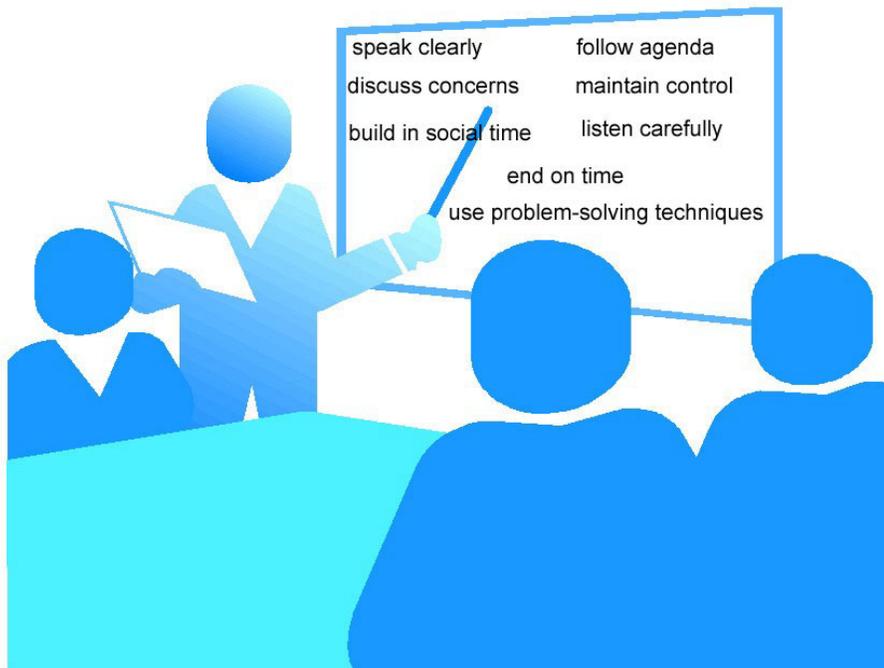
- Listen carefully to make sure you understand what the person says.
- Don't take rudeness personally; not everyone will welcome your call.
- Don't gossip; if the other party brings up gossip, either don't respond or let the person know you can't discuss it.
- Honor confidentiality. Don't make the mistake of revealing to other parties information given to you in confidence.

CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Okay, everything is in place—chairs, projector, snacks, drinks, handouts, signup sheets, and childcare. It's five minutes until "showtime." People are beginning to show up, and guess what? You're getting nervous!

Not to worry. Just relax, smile, and greet people as they come in. Make sure they get signed in, name tags for their shirts or blouses, copies of the handouts, and places to sit. Just talking with the FRG members will help you relax. Let your warm personality show.

When meeting time arrives, get everyone's attention and start right in. Here are some more pointers:



What Are Group Norms for Your FRG?

Norms are ground rules for group interaction that apply to the FRG. For example:

- Participation is voluntary.
- Every soldier and family member is automatically an FRG member.
- Show mutual respect and courtesy.
- Create a positive, friendly environment.
- There is no rank in the FRG.
- No uniforms are worn at FRG events.
- No cliques allowed in the FRG.
- Everyone's ideas are worthy.
- Every adult member has a vote.
- Decision making is shared, when feasible.
- Everyone helps with FRG projects.
- Everyone benefits from membership.
- Everyone conducts him/herself well.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

The FRG can provide support and friendship to its members; however, some members may feel more comfortable seeking this support from neighbors, their church, friends outside the unit, or family members. It's important that members develop lines of support, learn to be self-reliant, and use post resources when needed. They should also give the FRG a chance because it can offer unlimited opportunities to build good friendships with other FRG members.

Encourage participation in the following ways:

- Use phonetrees, help from the commander, and other communication to get the word out to all soldiers and spouses.
- Survey soldiers and family members to determine needs, interests, and desired frequency of meetings.
- Plan practical and fun activities. Keep meetings brief and enjoyable.
- Communicate with newcomers on their arrival. Tell them about FRG activities, and help them feel welcome.

- Ensure that the FRG provides timely and accurate information and doesn't become a rumor mill; although rumors can't be completely eliminated, they can be curtailed with accurate information.
- Present a positive image. FRG meetings are not a forum for political or personal agendas, Army bashing, etc.
- Keep meetings informal and friendly.
- Be careful not to allow the FRG to polarize into separate groups—officer spouses vs NCO vs EM, or different races or other categories. Remember that everyone has skills and experiences to share for the good of the FRG.

GROUP DYNAMICS



Within every group, a set of dynamics or relevant background factors exists. S. L. Tubbs, author of *A Systems Approach to Small Group Interaction*, states that there are six background factors that every group must understand. The six factors are: personality, gender, age, health, attitude, and individual values. Each member brings these factors to the FRG, and combined, they affect the group as a whole. There are other factors that must be recognized in the Army, too, including: rank, race, religion, and economic factors.

How well soldiers and families relate to each other impacts on the success of the FRG and its mission: to build a support network. By socializing, members have opportunities to bond. However, some personalities may clash, and cliques may form. Some members may tend to gossip, and some may actively discourage others from participation in the FRG. The demands of the Army lifestyle and unit mission can cause stress and feelings of isolation. Social status and income levels may affect attitudes, and individual values will determine one's behavior. Realize that all of these factors affect the FRG, and as a result, the group reacts in a unique behavioral style of its own.

The challenge for leaders and commanders is to find creative ways to help all these different personalities feel welcome and blend into a comfortable, well-knit family who work and play well together while they successfully accomplish tasks. For the most part, this challenge can be met by the FRG leader's example of showing others goodwill and regard.

Personal Decisions about FRG Involvement

Army spouses support their soldiers in a number of ways. Some choose to actively serve in the FRG or other community activities. Others may choose to quietly support their soldiers at home without being active in the FRG or other outside activities. This is their choice and may hinge on the soldiers' wishes, too.

Beyond a friendly invitation, FRG leaders should not feel compelled to do a continual "selling job" on spouses for their participation in FRG events. Nor should unwilling or less active family members be judged by FRG leaders. Every family has to deal with its own stresses and problems, and supporting the soldier has different definitions for different people. Soldiers and their families generally do the best they can. In truth, everything spouses do—cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, ironing uniforms, working, and many other tasks—directly and indirectly supports their soldiers.

Remember that participation in the FRG is voluntary. The FRG leader's challenge is to find ways to help people want to participate.



RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

All FRG leaders will encounter some resistance to change. In fact, Robinson and Robinson, authors of *Training for Impact*, report that "resistance is a predictable, natural, emotional reaction against...having to face up to difficult organizational problems.... Remember that resistance is a good thing. [It] is not a personal attack, but a reaction to the process...."

A new FRG leader must be prepared for some resistance to his/her presence in the group. This is especially true if the FRG already has a leader or the past leader was very well liked (or disliked). When proposing changes, it's good to step back to ensure the changes are needed, are thorough in thought, and are implemented with care. Get some advice from others first.

RESOLVING CONFLICT



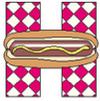
Conflict is a natural part of living; it will happen in the FRG now and then, too. J. Stewart, author of *Bridges, Not Walls*, reminds us that “for a conflict to arise, the behavior of one or both parties must have consequences for the other.” It’s a fact of life that people are going to have different ideas and opinions, but the key to conflict resolution lies in how the people involved handle it. S. L. Tubbs, author of *A Systems Approach To Small Group Interaction*, gives five guidelines to remember in resolving conflicts:

- Make sure you agree on the use of your terms/definitions.
- Build on areas of mutual agreement.
- Determine the specific changes necessary for a satisfactory resolution of the issues.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Stick to the issues.

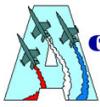
There will be times when the FRG leader has to help resolve conflicts between FRG members, but this should be done only when necessary. It’s best to solve conflict at the lowest level. This means allowing the members involved to work out their own disagreements if they can.

If a conflict cannot be solved at that level, perhaps the FRG leader can help, but this must be done impartially and tactfully. Stephen Covey’s famous *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People* advises us to find win-win solutions to problems when we can. That is, enable both parties to win something in the resolution of the issue. If the group as a whole has a stake in the issue, perhaps brainstorming or a vote would resolve it.

When all else fails, however, it may be necessary to resort to some other avenue for resolution. The least comfortable route, perhaps, is the Chain of Command; but the outcome may not be win-win. Cases that involve the Chain of Command may have to be referred to the next higher level. Or, perhaps a third party, such as the ACS Mobilization and Deployment Readiness Program or the Volunteer Services Branch, can help. A last resort might be the Judge Advocate General or command Inspector General. Hopefully, this type of assistance won’t be needed, but it’s usually available.

 ear and understand me.

 ven if you disagree with me.

 cknowledge
the greatness within me.

 ember my good intentions.

 ell me the truth
with understanding.

CHILDCARE ISSUES



Providing for childcare is another major factor in the success of FRG meetings, as some events may be inappropriate for children. Examples may include planning meetings and meetings discussing sensitive topics. Realize that younger children can disrupt work and discourage volunteer participation. FRGs can arrange for childcare and training through post Child and Youth Services (CYS), which offers two childcare options:

- **Volunteer Child Care in Unit Setting (VCCUS).** VCCUS involves the use of volunteers furnished by your unit or another nearby unit at no charge in exchange for a similar service for their FRG events. Volunteer training (overview of child development, health, and safety topics) is required prior to the FRG event. The time and place for the training are set by mutual agreement between CYC and the FRG leader.
- **Short-Term Alternative Child Care (STACC).** Generally, the STACC option uses paid caregivers at a flat hourly rate, often with a minimum of one caregiver for two hours. Most installations require parents to preregister their child(ren) ahead of time, but check with your local CYC for their policy. Parents should not send food, except for infant formula. They should be sure to bring needed medication for their child(ren). STACC is provided by CYC with paid staff. The total paid staff required will depend on the number and ages of the children.

Requirements for both programs include:

- CYS must provide training for unit volunteers. CYS can also provide information for Guard and Reserve FRGs on local area childcare resources if near an installation.
- Someone on site must be certified in CPR.
- Childcare must be provided on site with the parents, or at least in an immediately adjacent building.
- The selected childcare location must be evaluated prior to use for safety and sanitation.
- Any deficiencies noted must be corrected before use.
- Ensure that activities such as VCR tapes, coloring books, toys, and organized games are developmentally appropriate for the children attending.

Obviously, childcare for FRG events requires careful planning. The FRG leader should ask the childcare chairperson to develop the FRG childcare program and get it in place early.



Chapter 4

Building Your FRG— Working with Volunteers

VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



This chapter discusses volunteer management and volunteer service in the FRG. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a volunteer as “a person who performs...a service of his or her own free will; to do charitable or helpful work without pay.” FRG leaders and other volunteers are the heart and soul of the FRG program. Where would it be without volunteers? There would be no FRG without them; it would exist only on paper. In turn, unit and family morale, family readiness, and a whole spectrum of benefits would suffer. The unit’s mission would be adversely impacted without volunteers.

Brief History of Army Volunteers

Have you ever heard someone utter the phrase, “I’m just a volunteer”? The fact is, no one is just a volunteer. Volunteers are an indispensable component of the Army. Volunteerism has been a part of the Army lifestyle from the very start, with “camp followers” over 200 years ago. Official recognition of volunteers began with commissioning Army Community Service (ACS) on 19 November 1965. ACS is governed by Army Regulation (AR) 608-1, which addresses the use and management of volunteers. See also AR 600-20 for an understanding of the importance of volunteers to the success of family readiness programs. The concept of volunteerism is very central to ACS programs at installations and posts worldwide. Volunteers accomplish a great deal. For example:

- Volunteers provide military communities with valuable services that cannot only be measured in time and money but by personal satisfaction and increased quality of life for themselves and for the soldiers and families they serve.
- Volunteers save the Department of the Army over \$250 million a year.
- Volunteers gain valuable on-the-job training, a sense of purpose, and commitment to the soldiers and families, as well as a unique love of Army life.

- Volunteers have a deep love of country, which they apply to their work and share with others.

Volunteer Service

The lifestyle of the Army spouse has always been inherently difficult. Among the major issues facing the military spouse are frequent relocations, limited employment opportunities, financial difficulties, childcare concerns, and the soldier's routine absence due to field exercises or deployments. One way to combat these challenges is through involvement in the unit FRG and other community service work.

Retired General Colin Powell's call for volunteers nationwide early in 2000 brought to light the fact that volunteers are a necessary part of today's society. During Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, former President George Bush referred to the many volunteers who came forward to help their communities as "a thousand points of light." Volunteerism strengthens communities by bringing people together to work on civic projects and build trust, optimism, and pride in their communities. Jeanne Bradner, well known volunteer advocate and author of *Passionate Volunteerism*, states: "Volunteerism is too important to be taken for granted, trivialized or patronized. Government can't do it all; the private sector can't do it all. For democracy to work, all must take part in finding solutions...otherwise, we will be part of the problem."

FRG volunteers are:

- a necessary component of the Army Family,
- intensely interested in improving the well being of all unit members,
- professionals who add real value to the organization, and
- those who see the possibilities!

FRG volunteers are not:

- to be given only unsavory work,
- to be taken for granted,
- to be micromanaged, or
- to be criticized but encouraged!

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

FRGs work better when members and leaders receive proper training and support. Commanders, experienced volunteers, and community agencies must work together to define the scope of volunteer duties and the training needed to produce quality performance by volunteers. Remember, training is one of the essential ingredients.

Volunteer training can be obtained at:

<p>Army Community Service (ACS)</p> <p>ACS offers the volunteer on-the-job training within its own programs, such as the Family Advocacy Program and Exceptional Family Member Program. Skills and knowledge gained there can be valuable on a resume and for the FRG, as well.</p>	<p>Reserve Family Program Academies and National Guard State Training Conferences</p> <p>Volunteers and unit family readiness personnel are trained on family readiness programs, FRGs, and other resources for preparing families for military separations.</p>
<p>Army Family Team Building (AFTB) Program</p> <p>This three-level training program comprises 43 classes. Level I is designed for new soldiers and spouses. Level II is a basic leadership skills program for intermediate level NCOs and officers. Level III has advanced leadership courses for soldiers and spouses.</p>	<p>Installation Volunteer Program</p> <p>The Volunteer Services Branch coordinates volunteer issues and closely works with post agencies to help recruit, refer, train, and recognize volunteers.</p>



VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be punctual and dependable.** Volunteers need to be on time and dependable, especially if someone is counting on them to do something critical, like conduct a meeting or bring food to an FRG event. When a volunteer cannot carry out a commitment, their supervisor or leader should be called as soon as possible to let them know. Volunteers should keep in mind that they shouldn't make commitments that will put their own family's needs at risk.
- Be resourceful.** Volunteers are encouraged to be creative and resourceful in finding innovative ways to implement FRG goals. Think outside the box! Do the research, and find the possibilities.
- Be friendly and courteous.** A courteous attitude should be maintained when dealing with the Chain of Command, soldiers, spouses, and other volunteers. Volunteers should be helpful to others, use good manners, and be a good example, especially if they're in a key FRG position. Volunteers should address and refer to others in a respectful way—exactly the same way they like to be treated.
- Be flexible.** Volunteers should keep in mind that their supervisor, commander, or FRG leader doesn't have total control over events. Sometimes unexpected events occur, and everyone has to be able to adapt to change with understanding and calmness.
- Resolve problems.** Conflict is inevitable, but it is also an opportunity to learn from one another. FRG volunteers should solve problems at the lowest level. Focus on the problem, not the symptoms. As individuals, everyone does things differently, and that difference may result in misunderstandings. Always show appreciation for the effort and service performed, even if it isn't the way you would have done it.

Attire.

Volunteers should dress in a manner appropriate to the work being performed and the situation involved. For example, if meeting with a representative of a post agency, professional attire may be best. Of course, if it is an outdoor FRG event, cutoffs, tee-shirts, and tennis shoes are fine.

Confidentiality.

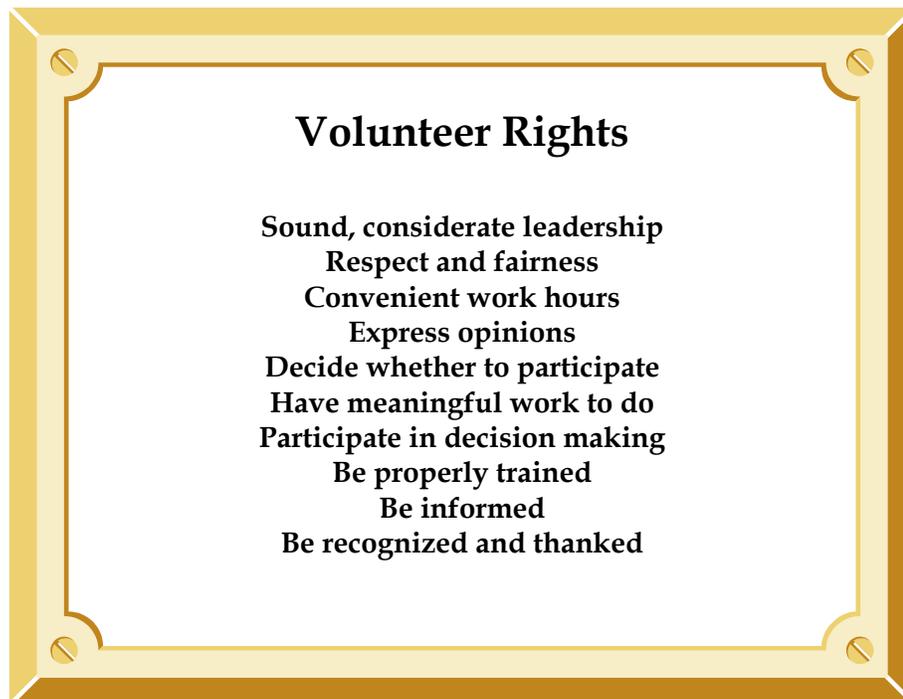
Problems of a highly personal nature sometimes occur among members of the FRG. FRG leaders and other volunteers should always act with understanding, compassion, and concern. Realize that some situations will require referral to service agencies with personnel trained to handle those specific kinds of situations. Seek guidance and assistance, and foster an attitude of “self-help.” Volunteers should not try to solve issues outside their area of knowledge. Remember, too, that gossiping is taboo. Never violate the privacy of FRG members or talk about sensitive problems with people who have no need to know about them. At the same time, volunteers should be sure to keep their supervisors informed of important events so there are no surprises!

Volunteers tend to:

- believe service is an exceptional opportunity to make a difference;
- believe service is a growth process, providing vision and perspective;
- value the price of freedom while adapting to their environments;
- understand the lessons of history, both in war and peace;
- be compassionate, patient, tolerant, flexible, and team-oriented; and
- be good listeners.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

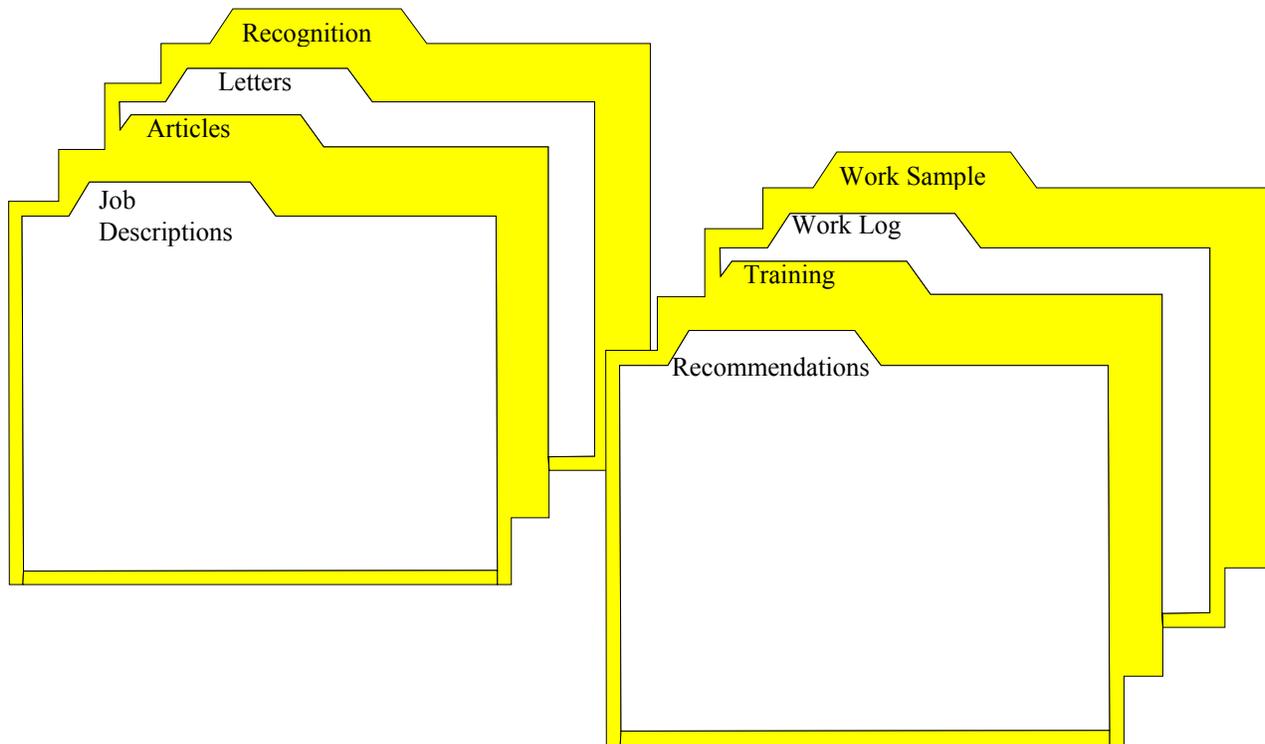
FRG volunteers have rights similar to paid civilian workers on post, except they are more flexible. They have a right to:



VOLUNTEER RECORDS

Volunteer work can provide valuable experience. If it is performed regularly, it can be included on professional resumes and on applications for paying jobs. Volunteers should retain work samples and descriptions of tasks performed. They should also record the hours worked each day using the Volunteer Service Record and the Daily Time Record (DA Forms 4162R and 4713R), which can be obtained from the installation volunteer coordinator or from the U.S. Army Publishing page at: www.usapa.army.mil. At the end of the month, volunteers should report their FRG hours to their supervisor and retain a copy of these forms for themselves. Volunteer hours are used in determining awards and recognition.

Supervisors should keep records of volunteer performance, both good and bad, for recognition, letters of recommendation, and if absolutely needed, disciplinary purposes.



Volunteer Portfolios

A volunteer portfolio is a file of a volunteer’s work and accomplishments. Aside from providing information about their volunteer service, the portfolio documents what the volunteer has learned and accomplished, and their experience, levels of responsibility, and performance. A neat, well-designed portfolio could be valuable in qualifying for more responsible positions—even paid ones, some day.

Also see the pamphlet entitled “Marketing Your Volunteer Experience” by Barbara Hall, published by the Fort Hood Volunteer Program. Call (254) 287-VOLS for a complimentary copy.



VOLUNTEER DISCIPLINE

Occasionally, it may be necessary for a commander or FRG leader to discipline a volunteer, usually as a last resort. Possible reasons for disciplinary action might include:

- violation of Army regulations, post policies, or FRG rules;
- failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties;
- blatant mistreatment of soldiers, spouses, or family members; or
- failure to respect others' issues of privacy or confidentiality.

To warrant discipline, the volunteer's action should be a clear violation, with serious impacts on soldier and family welfare or morale. Leaders must keep records of instructions they give, situations, and volunteer performance. Without such records, there may be no justification for disciplinary action—even though harm was done.

VOLUNTEER CODE OF ETHICS

Practically every career field today has a written code of ethics. Ferrell and Fraedrich, authors of *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases*, define a code of ethics as “formal statements of what an organization expects in the way of ethical behavior... what behaviors are acceptable or improper.”

A code of ethics defines an organization's expectations and rules of behavior. A code of ethics applies to all volunteers working in the unit FRG, too. Whether or not the code of ethics is formalized and signed, FRG leaders and other volunteers need to know what is expected of them for the welfare of all the members. The very purpose of the FRG—to build unit family cohesion and improve soldier and family morale—tells us that FRG duties impose special responsibilities on FRG leaders and members. This is especially true when handling personal and other sensitive information.

The sample FRG Volunteer Code of Ethics, shown in Figure 6, was adapted from a version developed by Army Community Service and can be used in some form by FRG leaders and volunteers.

FRG Volunteer Code of Ethics

As an FRG volunteer, I am a professional. I realize that I am subject to the same Code of Ethics that binds all professionals in the positions of trust we hold. I accept these responsibilities and respect matters of confidentiality.

I understand as an FRG volunteer, I have agreed to work without monetary compensation. Having accepted this position, I will do my work according to the same standard operating procedures as paid staff are expected to do their work.

I believe that all work should be carefully planned and carried out in a professional manner. I will work with my leader to ensure that I am assigned to a job I can enjoy and want to perform. I will investigate how I can best serve the FRG during my volunteer hours in order to give as much as I can. I have an obligation to my work and will carry out my share of the work that I volunteered to do.

I promise to maintain an open mind and train diligently for my job. I will share my skills with other volunteers, and together we will strive to enrich all our work for the benefit of our soldiers and families.

Being eager to contribute all that I can do to help enhance the quality of life within the FRG, I accept this Volunteer Code of Ethics and will follow it carefully and cheerfully.

Volunteer's Signature and Date

Supervisor's Signature and Date

Figure 6. Sample FRG Volunteer Code of Ethics.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Volunteer recognition is an integral part of FRG leadership. Recognition is a valuable tool because it acknowledges hard work within the FRG. A little praise goes a long way among people who work hard for no pay.

The most successful FRGs generally are those with the highest volunteer participation, reflecting sound leadership practices at all levels. Recognition of volunteer efforts is a major duty of leaders in the FRG.

Some ways to recognize volunteers in your FRG are:

- public praise;
- newsletter articles;
- thank you notes;
- special luncheon, party, or FRG meetings;
- announcements on bulletin boards (including e-mail);
- media coverage—local and post newspapers; and
- certificates of appreciation.

Levels of awards that should be considered are:

LEVELS OF AWARDS	
	
Local FRG organization	
Installation level	
Volunteer of the month	
Volunteer of the quarter	
MACOM (Major Army Command) level	
Department of the Army (see AR 672-20, Chapter 9, “Public Service Awards”)	
Presidential	

There are various agencies to ask about volunteer awards:

- Volunteer Services Branch of your local ACS, and
- Points of Light Foundation: (202) 729-8000.

Important times to recognize FRG volunteers include:



- completion of a special project or event;
- on their birthdays;
- during National Volunteer Week, held every April;
- when the military mission is complete and troops return; and
- before a volunteer transfers or resigns.

To keep track of awards issued, use the Awards and Special Recognition form (DA 4162-R, page 2). In addition, record each volunteer's annual hours on this form. Upon the volunteer's transfer or resignation, provide the volunteer with the DA 4162-R to keep in their personal file.

Appreciation

Volunteers like to be appreciated for what they do for the FRG. Some are interested in doing things that are beneficial for people they care about. But even those who profess not to be driven by recognition need to be praised for their efforts. In addition to the FRG leader's positive attitude, kindness, and helpful leadership, there isn't much else to motivate volunteers. Recognition is so easy to give, too. So, give it often. It's good leadership, and it's the right thing to do.



TYPICAL FRG VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Occasionally you'll find an Army spouse running all over the post, trying desperately to run the FRG alone or with little help. In all likelihood, the FRG is an FRG in name only, and this FRG leader will burn out soon. Not only that—the soldiers and families will not enjoy the benefits of a well-organized FRG. This leader must get help! But how? To be successful, the FRG needs a solid organization of dedicated volunteers. Organization—it's another of the essential ingredients.

The following volunteer positions are needed to get the FRG organized and working well; however, each unit should design their FRG to meet their specific needs:

- *Battalion FRG Advisor*—is a member of the FRG steering committee (may chair it); provides overall guidance and support for unit-level FRGs.
- *Unit FRG Leader*—provides overall leadership of the FRG; interacts with the unit commander and battalion FRG steering committee.
- *FRG Secretary*—maintains accurate minutes of meetings and distributes information and correspondence to the FRG leader and newsletter editor.
- *FRG Treasurer*—along with an alternate, serves as custodian for the FRG informal fund.
- *Phonetree Committee Chairperson*—organizes the unit phonetree; identifies and supervises phonetree points of contact.
- *Phonetree Point of Contact (POC)*—maintains regular contact with assigned families; passes along official information, and provides information to families.
- *Battalion (or Unit) FRG Newsletter Editor*—coordinates newsletter preparation, publishing, and distribution.
- *Special Events Committee Chairperson*—plans, organizes, and executes FRG activities and special events.
- *Hospitality/Welcome Committee Chairperson*—contacts and welcomes all new soldiers and families to the unit; helps them find needed resources.
- *Publicity Committee Chairperson*—informs all soldiers and family members in the FRG of all activities (ongoing and upcoming).
- *Fundraiser Committee Chairperson*—manages all FRG fundraising activities, including coordination, permission, and recruiting.
- *Childcare Committee Chairperson*—ensures acceptable childcare for FRG meetings and special events.

There are other positions that FRGs may want to create, based on the needs of the FRG and the number of volunteers willing to help (such as a food committee chairperson or a youth committee chairperson). The FRG leader should find creative ways to get everyone involved and excited about the FRG.

The ability of the FRG leader to recruit and fill all these key positions is a function of the leader's leadership traits—primarily the leader's attitude and manner of dealing with people. By exhibiting positive leadership traits, the leader should be able to earn the cooperation of many volunteers. Leadership and organization—they're two of the five essential ingredients.

Meaningful Assignments—A Sense of Purpose and Contribution

Volunteers want to do meaningful work for their FRGs. Army Regulation 608-1 (Chapter 4, Section III, 4-8C) states that “all volunteer assignments should provide opportunities for a meaningful experience and a sense of accomplishment. A good volunteer program requires a careful matching of interests to opportunities and structuring of daily duties of each volunteer to ensure a sense of purpose and contribution.”

Of course, not all positions require the same kinds of skills or levels of effort, and some tasks are more enjoyable than others. The FRG leader should be sensitive to the volunteers' interests and feelings and be careful not to tread on their sense of self-worth. Less savory tasks should be shared fairly. Likewise, more attractive positions should be rotated at intervals. This way, everyone gets a chance to develop and feel appreciated.

FRG JOB DESCRIPTIONS

When accepting a paid position, new employees should receive an official job description. Likewise, every key volunteer position in the FRG should have a written job description. It describes not only the duties but also the qualifications (education, training, and skills needed) for the position.

It is important to provide the volunteer with a job description early on so he or she will immediately know what to do to help support the FRG. Volunteers want to help, and a good job description will help them be as effective as possible.

A typical job description should contain:

- position title,
- to whom the volunteer is responsible (who provides guidance to the person in this position?),
- purpose of the position,
- description of duties (describe briefly in list form; if needed for more demanding positions, include more detail in an attachment),
- time required (approximate hours per month and duration of the assignment),
- qualifications and skills needed (may include administrative, technical, or people skills that will enhance this position), and

- recommended training (Operation READY courses, Army Family Team Building, Family Program Academy [Guard and Reserve], etc.).

A thoughtful FRG leader will sit down with the volunteer and go over all of these items. Also, volunteers should be given opportunities to improve on their job descriptions since they may have some good ideas or previous experience that is valuable to the position. This is a good practice; it helps volunteers to focus on what is expected in the job and to learn how their performance will be measured.

The job descriptions at the end of this chapter are examples of what good job descriptions should include. These descriptions can be tailored to the unit's particular needs.

Two Critical FRG Positions

The FRG has two volunteer positions that are critical to its effectiveness: the unit FRG leader and the phonetree POC. Without good leadership and effective communication, the FRG is at risk for survival.

The Unit FRG Leader

The FRG leader should be a person in a non-deployable status—preferably a spouse. Often, the FRG leader is the commander's spouse, though not always. Any spouse in the unit who is willing and able to lead the efforts of the FRG can serve as FRG leader. The commander may select the leader, or the leader may be elected by the FRG membership. Either way, the commander prepares and signs appointment orders for the leader.

However the FRG leader is selected, he or she needs to obtain the proper training. This is not a one-person job, so the leader needs to recruit volunteers for key positions and build a team that works together for the good of the families in the unit. The leader conducts FRG meetings, oversees fundraising and fun activities, gathers information and sees that it is distributed to all families in a timely manner, works with the commander, and manages the volunteers.

The FRG Phonetree Point of Contact

The phonetree and the volunteers who run it are vitally important to the FRG. Without a well-run, up-to-date phonetree, the FRG is unable to perform its most important roles—keeping families informed, fielding calls from families, and assisting with emergencies.

The POC's primary tasks are distributing official information, regularly testing each branch of the phonetree, fielding calls from his/her assigned families, and welcoming new families into the phonetree. Again, this position is held by a military spouse. The families should be divided into groups of five to eight families. Generally, no POC should have more than 10 families in a branch. Families may be assigned to a branch by platoon or section, geographically based upon where they live, or even divided among the POCs alphabetically.

Also, the assignment of a POC to a platoon or family group should not be based on the rank of the spouse. Like the FRG leader, the phonetree chairperson and POCs must relate well to each member of the phonetree. This will work best if the POC is thoughtful, helpful, and informal in conversations with the families.



Leaders have two important characteristics:

First, they are going somewhere.

Second, they are able to persuade others to go along.

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** Battalion FRG Advisor
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Battalion Commander and Brigade FRG Advisor
- PURPOSE:** Organize battalion-level FRG structure
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Supports the commander's family readiness goals
 - Serves on battalion FRG steering committee; may chair the committee, as well
 - Provides guidance and support to all unit FRG leaders
 - Fields specific family readiness problems and discusses them with steering committee
 - Gathers and disseminates information on activities at the battalion level and above
 - Delegates FRG projects to senior spouses for resolution
 - Acts as liaison between battalion and unit-level FRGs
 - Acts as battalion FRG spokesperson for communicating family members' concerns and ideas to the battalion commander
- TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to 20 hours a week, depending on unit deployment status and other scheduled activities; commitment usually for duration of the battalion commander's tour of duty
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Knowledge of family readiness programs, unit structure and procedures, and post agencies and services
 - Ability to work well with steering committee and unit FRG leaders
 - Ability to persuade people to get things done
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- Operation READY classes
 - AFTB Levels I-III
 - Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
 - Volunteer training and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** Company FRG Leader
(or battery/troop/detachment, etc.)
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Company Commander
- PURPOSE:** Organize and lead unit-level FRG
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Supports the commander's family readiness goals
 - Provides overall leadership of the FRG
 - Recruits other volunteers to serve on FRG committees
 - Delegates FRG responsibilities to selected volunteers as committee chairpersons, or presides over their elections
 - Serves as a member of the battalion-level steering committee
 - Identifies needs or unique problems of unit families
 - Acts as unit FRG spokesperson for communicating family members' concerns and ideas to the unit commander and, if needed, the battalion-level FRG leader
- TIME REQUIRED:** Six to eight hours a week, depending on deployment status and other scheduled activities; commitment usually duration of command
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Knowledge of family readiness programs, unit structure and procedures, and post agencies and services
 - Ability to work well with soldiers and families and persuade people to get things done
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- Operation READY classes
 - AFTB Levels I-III
 - Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
 - Volunteer training and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Secretary

RESPONSIBLE TO: FRG Leader

PURPOSE: Maintain accurate minutes of meetings and distribute information and correspondence to FRG leader and newsletter editor

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Maintains a FRG binder with a calendar, to do list, current Chain of Concern roster, sign-in sheets, agendas and minutes, and after-action reports
- Ensures confidentiality and acts in a sensitive manner
- Updates the contact roster with telephone numbers of new arrivals and reports changes to the FRG leader

TIME REQUIRED: Approximately 10 hours per month; one-year commitment

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Ability to take accurate notes and keep records
- Well organized

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- Operation READY courses
- AFTB Levels I-III
- Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** FRG Treasurer and Alternate
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Unit/Battalion FRG Leader and Commander
- PURPOSE:** Serve as custodian for the FRG informal fund
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Obtains appointment letter from the commander
 - Prepares form SS4 and applies to the IRS for an employee ID number for the bank account
 - Sets up fund account at local bank
 - Maintains FRG fund records and ledger; keeps it up to date at all times
 - Receives and counts all funds submitted from fundraisers; prepares deposit slips, and deposits funds to FRG fund account
 - Disburses checks in accordance with FRG leader and commander's guidance
 - Reviews monthly bank statements and reconciles with ledger; calls bank bookkeeper about any unexplained discrepancies
 - Prepares monthly reports and presents them to FRG leader and commander; also reads summary aloud at FRG meetings
- TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to twenty hours per month (depending on activity frequency); one-year commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Knowledge of banking procedures
 - Good math skills
 - Well organized
 - Ability to work well with others
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- Operation READY courses
 - Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
 - Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: **Phonetree Committee Chairperson**

RESPONSIBLE TO: FRG Leader or Commander

PURPOSE: Provide personal contact to keep FRG spouses informed

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Prepares the unit telephone tree from the unit alert roster and information from first sergeant and FRG questionnaires
- Recruits and trains telephone points of contact (POC), at least one per platoon or, alternately, enough to assign 5–8 families each
- Assigns POCs to platoons or 5–8 family groups each
- Coordinates regularly with FRG leader and welcome committee chairperson, and updates phonetree with new families
- Supervises testing of the FRG phonetree at least monthly while troops are home and twice monthly while deployed
- Passes important information to POCs for families
- Fields calls from POCs with questions or reports of incidents
- Reports any significant incidents to FRG leader or commander
- Reviews POC phone logs, reports, and volunteer time logs
- Prepares monthly reports and submits to FRG leader
- Maintains confidentiality, and discourages rumors and gossip
- Keeps a careful log of calls received, made, and their results

TIME REQUIRED: Two to four hours per week; six-month commitment

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Good telephone/communication skills
- Knowledge of community resources and crisis intervention
- Concern and empathy for others; calm under stress

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- Operation READY courses
- AFTB Levels I-III
- Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** **Phonetree Point of Contact (POC)**
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Phonetree Chairperson or FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Gather and disseminate information
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Calls each of the assigned families on their POC phonetree branch; reports any discrepancies in the information on the list
 - Passes important information to assigned families
 - Telephones spouses occasionally when troops are in garrison and twice monthly during deployments
 - Annotates the phonetree with any changes, and informs the phonetree chairperson or FRG leader
 - Fields calls from assigned families, and answers questions or directs callers to appropriate resources; provides accurate, timely information
 - Fields emergency calls and assists the families involved
 - Welcomes new families assigned to the POC's phonetree branch
 - Maintains confidentiality, discourages gossip, and dispels rumors
 - Reports serious matters to phonetree chairperson or FRG leader
 - Keeps a careful log of calls received, made, and their results
- TIME REQUIRED:** Two to six hours per week; six-month commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Good telephone/communication skills
 - Knowledge of community resources and crisis intervention
 - Concern and empathy for others; calm under stress
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- Operation READY courses
 - AFTB Levels I-III
 - Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
 - Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE:	Battalion (or Unit) FRG Newsletter Editor
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Battalion (or Unit) Commander and FRG Leader
PURPOSE:	Publishes the battalion (unit) FRG newsletter
JOB DESCRIPTION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Determines ground rules for official newsletters■ Determines level of interest of FRG members in having a newsletter; discusses with FRG leader and commander■ Organizes a volunteer newsletter staff (reporters, writers, editors, typists, illustrators, collators, mailers)■ Designs newsletter and logo—gets input from members■ Oversees gathering of information from all sources; organizes, writes, and edits material■ Provides copies of draft newsletters to FRG leader and commander for editing■ After final editing, does layout and pasteup; submits camera-ready copy for reproduction
TIME REQUIRED:	Ten to twenty hours per month (depending on newsletter frequency); one-year commitment
QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Editorial, spelling, grammar skills; ability to write articles■ Managerial skills; knowledge of organization■ Creativity, energy, artistic talent
RECOMMENDED TRAINING:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Orientation at Information System Branch■ Operation READY courses■ Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)■ Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: FRG Special Events Committee Chairperson

RESPONSIBLE TO: Unit FRG Leader

PURPOSE: Plan, organize, and execute FRG activities and special events

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Solicits FRG members' ideas and interests about fun events they would like the FRG to plan
- Discusses proposed events with FRG and unit leadership
- Recruits other volunteers to help with event details; checks the unit training schedule; agrees on date, location, etc.
- Establishes committees for the event and brainstorms needs
- Coordinates financial needs with FRG leadership, treasurer, and fundraiser chairperson
- Ensures that desired location is available the day of the event
- Coordinates with publicity and newsletter chairpersons to advertise the event
- Supervises the planning sessions and completes event planning
- Coordinates with commander or first sergeant to arrange for single soldiers to help with decorations and other tasks
- Meets at intervals with committee chairpersons to ensure that all necessary preparations are in place

TIME REQUIRED: Ten to 20 hours per month (depending on event frequency); six-month commitment

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Enthusiasm and energy
- Positive leadership traits
- Good knowledge of recreational opportunities on post and elsewhere
- Organizational ability

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- Operation READY courses
- AFTB Levels I-III

- Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Hospitality/Welcome Committee Chairperson

RESPONSIBLE TO: Unit FRG Leader

PURPOSE: Welcome all new members and families

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Keeps up with news of incoming families, newly married couples, new babies, single soldiers, illnesses, injuries, hospitalizations in the unit
- Calls new spouses and welcomes them to the unit; invites them to upcoming FRG events; provides an ACS welcome packet
- Gathers information on the number and ages of children in each family and their special interests
- Informs the FRG leader and phonetree committee chairperson of incoming families
- Ensures that new families have been assigned sponsors and phonetree POCs
- Sends flowers and cards to home or hospital as appropriate
- Attends unit/battalion planning meetings and FRG events

TIME REQUIRED: Three to five hours a week; six-month commitment

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Enthusiastic people person
- Helpful and compassionate attitude
- Well organized

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- Operation READY Courses
- Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** FRG Publicity Committee Chairperson
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Unit/Battalion FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Inform all soldiers and family members in the FRG of all activities (ongoing and upcoming)
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Coordinates with hospitality/welcome committee chairperson to learn of new families' addresses and phone numbers
 - Informs new members of the purpose and structure of the FRG
 - Coordinates with FRG leader and special events chairperson to determine advertising needs for upcoming FRG events
 - Coordinates with phonetree chairperson about the need for POC assistance with notifying families, with first sergeant to make sure soldiers are informed, and with newsletter chairperson
 - Disseminates information about FRG events through phonetree POCs, newsletters, flyers, mailings, public announcements at meetings, unit bulletin boards
- TIME REQUIRED:** Ten to 20 hours per month (depending on activity frequency); one-year commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Outgoing personality
 - Ability to work well with others
 - Good command of language
 - Well organized
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- Operation READY courses
 - Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
 - Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Fundraiser Committee Chairperson

RESPONSIBLE TO: Unit/Battalion FRG Leader and the Commander

PURPOSE: Manage FRG fundraising activities

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Coordinates with FRG leader and special events coordinator on upcoming events and financial needs
- Coordinates with commander or first sergeant on training schedule and open times for fundraisers
- Canvasses membership about types of fundraisers desired
- Coordinates with commander about proposed fundraiser(s)
- Prepares fundraiser permission letter and delivers to FRG leader
- Works with publicity and phonetree chairpersons to get the word out about upcoming fundraiser
- Complies with Army regulations and post rules
- Works with fundraiser committee to plan the fundraiser
- Recruits volunteers and delegates to work
- Supervises the fundraiser on the appointed day
- Safeguards funds and turns them over to the treasurer or alternate as soon as practicable
- Reports fundraiser results to FRG leader and membership

TIME REQUIRED: Ten hours per month; one-year commitment

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Knowledge of fundraising regulations
- Excellent leadership traits—works well with people

RECOMMENDED TRAINING:

- Contact the Financial Management Branch
- Operation READY Courses
- Environmental Health & Preventive Medicine
- Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
- Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** FRG Childcare Committee Chairperson
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Ensure acceptable childcare for FRG meetings and special events
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Makes acceptable arrangements for childcare during FRG meetings and special events
 - Ensures that caregivers have received the required training prior to their employment
 - Ensures that an adequate number of caregivers are on hand for the numbers and ages of children present
 - Ensures on-site adult supervision at all times during the parents' absence
 - Provides actual spot checks on the childcare providers used for meetings and special events
 - Ensures that the childcare facility meets post safety and sanitation standards before use
 - Ensures activities (VCR tapes, coloring books, and organized games) appropriate for the children are provided
 - Pays caregivers when applicable
- TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately one day per month for meetings, preparation, and actual events; one-year commitment
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Willingness to develop a working knowledge of the unit's Family Readiness Plan
 - Interest or experience in the FRG program
 - Well organized
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- Operation READY courses
 - Attend Family Program Academy (Guard and Reserve)
 - Similar courses and/or past experience

FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE:	Chairperson
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Unit Commander
GENERAL STATEMENT:	The chairperson of a Family Readiness Group within the Army National Guard is the leader of the group and its spokesperson. The chairperson presides at FRG meetings and maintains regular communication with the affiliated organization's commander or authorized unit Point of Contact to keep participating families informed of unit activities and policies. She or he also communicates regularly with the State Family Program Coordinator and the State Volunteer Representative on plans for FRG activities, family-member concerns, and requests for assistance.
JOB DESCRIPTION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Plans and conducts FRG activities that support family well being and preparedness of the unit, consistent with the goals of the State Family Program■ Keeps the affiliated unit informed of FRG activities■ Keeps information flowing between family members, the unit, and the State Family Program Office■ Presides over FRG meetings, which are held as needed■ Meets annually with other chairpersons throughout the state to share ideas■ Helps identify volunteer spouses for local projects■ Encourages family members to become active FRG participants
TIME REQUIRED:	Approximately 6 to 8 hours per month, depending on level of FRG activity; one-year duration (renewable)
IN-SERVICE TRAINING:	One annual training workshop at government expense
COMPENSATION:	No pay; reimbursement available for use of private vehicle while on FRG business

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Must believe in and support the National Guard Family Program
- Must have a family member in the National Guard
- Must have good listening skills
- Must like to help people
- Must enjoy being with other National Guard family members
- Must be able to organize others
- Must be able to communicate with and on behalf of the families and the unit

FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE:	State Volunteer Representative
RESPONSIBLE TO:	State Family Program Coordinator
GENERAL STATEMENT:	The State Volunteer Representative (SVR) assists the State Family Program Coordinator in the management and oversight of the Army National Guard Family Program, provides training and assistance in program development to unit Family Readiness Groups, and acts as liaison with appropriate state and National Guard Associations.
JOB DESCRIPTION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Assists State Family Program Coordinator■ Coordinates family member volunteer efforts■ Serves as point of contact for FRG and family members for information, referral, and follow-up■ Serves as “Team Leader,” State Family Program Council (“The State Team”)■ Assists in management and coordination of special projects■ Participates as the Volunteer Representative of the Family Program at conferences and workshops at local, regional, and national levels■ Assists in planning, preparation, and presentation of family-member briefings■ Acts as liaison with the National Guard Association and the National Guard Association of the United States■ Exchanges ideas with volunteers from other states■ Maintains familiarity with both civilian and military family readiness services available throughout the state
TIME REQUIRED:	Approximately 16 to 24 hours per month; some travel required at government expense; normally a one-year commitment that may be extended by the State Adjutant General
IN-SERVICE TRAINING:	State Family Program Coordinator provides training in use of State Family Program Office management systems; outside training sessions, conferences, and workshops may also be available at government expense.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Must believe in and support the National Guard Family Program
- Must have a family member in the National Guard
- Must have good listening skills
- Must like to help people in need
- Must have strong verbal and written communication skills
- Must have good organizational skills

FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE:	Member, State Family Program Council
RESPONSIBLE TO:	State Family Program Coordinator and “State Team” Leader
GENERAL STATEMENT:	The State Family Program Council (“The State Team”) is formed by direction of the State Adjutant General in order to increase family member involvement in the National Guard Family Program. Membership is voluntary and limited to those appointed by the Adjutant General. All geographic locations and the parent and retiree populations are represented.
JOB DESCRIPTION:	<p>Advisory roles (on behalf of constituency)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Brings family-member concerns to the state level for appropriate action■ Reviews and comments on the effectiveness of the Family Program; makes recommendations for improvement■ Takes an active role in the Family Program’s strategic planning process covering the next two to five years <p>Action roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Organizes and provides leadership for the accomplishment of approved Family Program objectives and approved special projects and events■ Facilitates the regular flow of information among Family Program participants in leadership roles
TIME REQUIRED:	Approximately 8 to 12 hours per month, with some voluntary travel offered; State Team meets quarterly (in January, April, July, and October), with additional Adjutant General-approved special meetings called as needed. Normal term is two years, and appointments are generally made in September of each year; extension or release from service is at the discretion of the Adjutant General
IN-SERVICE TRAINING:	Training sessions, conferences, and workshops (both in and out state) may be available at government expense.

QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:

- Must believe in and support the National Guard Family Program
- Must have good listening skills
- Must like to help people in need
- Must have strong communication skills
- Must have good organizational skills

FAMILY READINESS GROUP (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD) VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

- POSITION TITLE:** Family Sponsorship Coordinator
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** FRG Leader
- PURPOSE:** Organize and maintain a communication link between the FRG and new family members of the unit
- JOB DESCRIPTION:**
- Prepares welcome packets to alleviate the stresses associated with relocation and joining a “new” family
 - Coordinates with the family readiness liaison and unit administrator to obtain the names and phone numbers of newly assigned personnel and makes contact
 - Matches each incoming family with an existing family for mutual support and assistance
 - Notifies the FRG leader of any particular family problems or needs that are identified through conversation or during a visit that the FRG can offer assistance with
 - Adds new family members (including newly married spouses) to the phonetree and newsletter mailing list
- TIME REQUIRED:** Approximately two days per month
- IN-SERVICE TRAINING:** Unit orientation and attendance at a Family Program Academy. Other training will be offered as the budget allows
- QUALIFICATIONS & SPECIAL SKILLS:**
- Willingness to develop a working knowledge of the unit’s Family Readiness Plan
 - Interest or experience in the FRG program

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

- *Passionate Volunteerism: The Importance of Volunteerism Today and How Government, Nonprofits, and Volunteers Can Make a More Powerful Force*
By Jeanne H. Bradner; ISBN: 0963439529
Publisher: Conversation Press, Inc.
- *The (Help!) I-Don't-Have-Enough-Time Guide to Volunteer Management*
By Katherine Noyes Campbell and Susan J. Ellis; ISBN: 0940576163
Publisher: Energize Books
- *Leadership Skills: Developing Volunteers for Organizational Success*
By Emily Kittle Morrison; ISBN: 1555610668
Publisher: Fisher Books
- *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*
P.O. Box 4584,
Boulder, CO 80306
(303) 541-0238
- Association for Volunteer Administration
10565 Lee Hwy, Suite 104
Fairfax, VA 22030-3135
(703) 352-6222
- Points of Light Foundation
1400 1st Street, N.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20005
800-VOLUNTEER (800-865-868337)
www.pointsoflight.org
- Points of Light Catalog Service
P.O. Box 79110
Baltimore, MD 21279-0110
800-272-8306
- Your state organization for volunteerism
- The Installation Volunteer Program may have resources that may be borrowed for brief period of time.



Chapter 5

Building an Effective FRG—Preparing to Contact Soldiers and Families

WELCOMING NEW SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES

Making contact—communication—is another of the essential ingredients, and it takes on many forms—some of which will be discussed in this chapter. The first people to be informed of the arrival of new soldiers and their families are the battalion S1 (personnel officer) and the first sergeant of the assigned unit. The hospitality/welcome committee chairperson must make regular contact with these key soldiers and get updates on new arrivals. New arrivals' names, phone numbers, addresses, and other information should be reported to the FRG leader and the phonetree chairperson. Normally, the FRG leader or, in the leader's absence, the hospitality/welcome committee chairperson makes the first welcome call to the new spouse. In a very large unit, this function may be routinely delegated to the hospitality/welcome committee. In any event, the initial call should:



- welcome the new family to the unit and FRG;
- inform the spouse about upcoming FRG events;
- provide the spouse with the name and phone number of their family's phonetree POC; and
- inform the spouse that someone from the hospitality/welcome committee will soon contact them to set an appointment to visit. The person visiting the spouse will bring a community welcome packet, an invitation to an FRG event, a copy of the FRG Information Survey (sample shown in Figure 4, pages 41–42) to complete, and a small gift (such as a loaf of friendship bread or a plant).

At the next FRG meeting, the FRG leader should introduce the new family to the group and invite them to participate in the FRG.

FRG MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

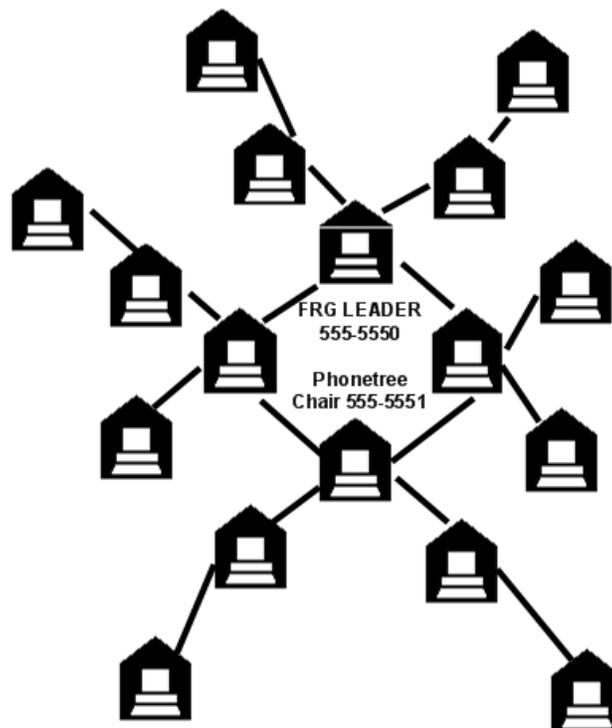
The FRG membership roster—compiled from the unit alert roster and completed FRG Information Surveys—consists of names, addresses, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information on unit soldiers and families. Participation must be on a voluntary basis. To achieve maximum participation, the FRG leader needs to explain to the members—preferably at an FRG meeting—the purposes of collecting this information, how it will be used, and how it will be protected from unauthorized use. A Privacy Act Statement should be included at the end of the FRG Information Survey.

Privacy Act Statement: For further guidance, call the Freedom of Information Act Office on your installation. Also, consult AR 340-21, *The Army Privacy Program*.

As a rule, to protect the families' personal data from unauthorized use, only a few key leaders should have a complete copy of the FRG membership roster or the phonetree. To avoid identity theft, Social Security numbers and other sensitive information must be omitted, too; careful control of all copies of the rosters must be exercised at all times. All leaders must ensure that FRG rosters and phonetrees are not given to any third party. Obsolete copies must be collected and destroyed. When a key leader leaves the job or moves, that leader's copies should be turned in to the supervisor. Remember, people entrust FRG leadership with personal information. Help them protect their privacy and enjoy being in the FRG, too.

THE FRG PHONETREE

The phonetree chairperson uses the current membership roster (if any), completed FRG Information Surveys, and information on new families from the hospitality/welcome committee chairperson or first sergeant to prepare or update the FRG phonetree. The chairperson also recruits POCs and provides training for them. After training, POCs call all families assigned to them on their branch of the phonetree and let the families know that they are the family's POC and how to contact them.



How Does the Phonetree Work?

The FRG leader calls the phonetree chairperson (or each of the POCs) to relay FRG information. The phonetree chairperson, in turn, calls each POC and passes on the message. If the phonetree chairperson is unable to reach any POC, he or she calls the next person on the branch, who fills in as POC until the POC returns. When all calls are completed, each POC calls the phonetree chairperson or FRG leader and reports the outcomes of the calls. (See Figure 7.)

When family members call their POCs, the process is reversed. If a POC can't answer a question or concern, the POC calls the chairperson or FRG leader. In any event, the POC logs every call on the phonetree log form (see sample in Figure 8). Of course, the POC logs and reports any significant event or information up the chain, as well.

Phonetrees can be built according to platoons, arranged geographically by the location of the families, or divided up alphabetically. Each POC should be responsible for contacting between 5 and 10 families. POCs need to be reliable and must understand how to maintain confidentiality. They must be able to provide accurate information and to keep accurate records of calls.

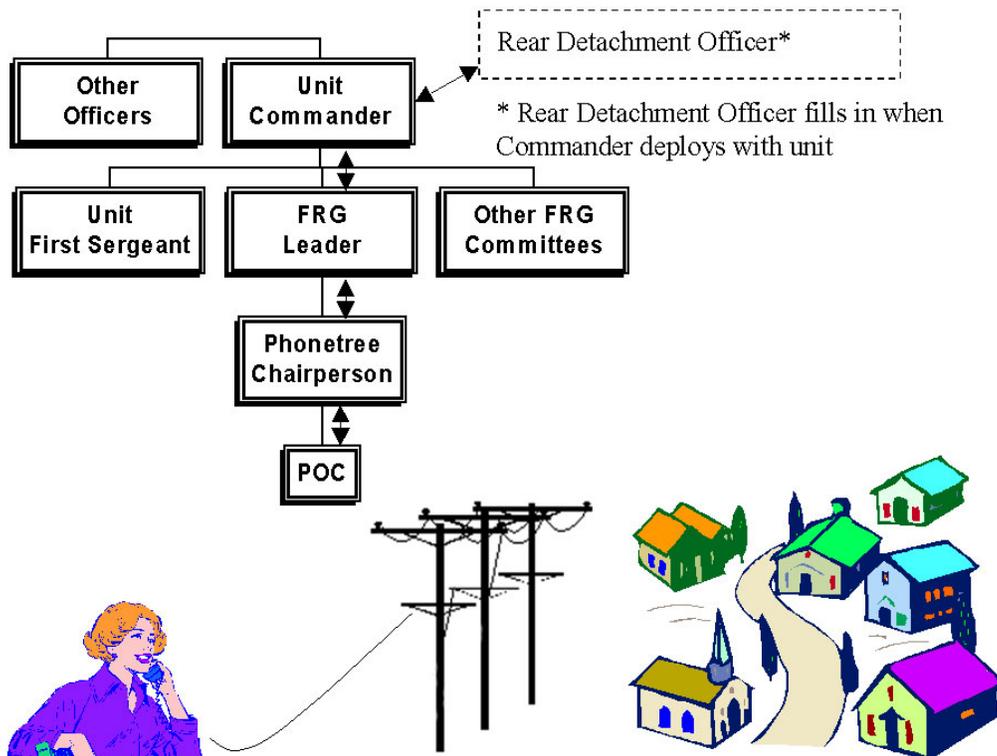


Figure 7. Sample FRG Phonetree.

BENEFITS OF AN EFFECTIVE FRG PHONETREE

- Monthly or more frequent contact reduces social isolation and helps new spouses build friendships. It reassures family members that there is a functioning communication system in place for them when they need it. Regular contact enhances their sense of belonging and provides information they need, including news about upcoming FRG events.
- It also gives families a secure feeling that there is someone to talk to during family emergencies.
- Spouses can express concerns to their POCs, who can provide them self-help information or pass those concerns to a higher level for resolution. POCs should be careful that they don't only contact the families to ask spouses to help with FRG projects. POCs need to express genuine concern for the families' well-being.
- Run well, the phonetree will be used exclusively for official purposes, not for someone's personal agenda (especially not for commercial purposes). When this rule is followed faithfully, spouses learn to welcome calls from their POCs and to call them readily when they need information or help.
- A good working relationship between the POC and assigned families can help improve quality of life and morale. Leaders—both military and volunteer—who know their soldiers and spouses develop a greater understanding of their needs, which makes them better leaders and makes military life more enjoyable for the soldier and his family. This is a win-win situation for all.
- Moreover, the soldier witnesses a consistent level of support and enjoys peace of mind when he or she is deployed. In turn, the soldier can focus on the mission and be safer during his or her tour of duty.



HOW THE PHONETREE POC GETS STARTED

You are a newly appointed phonetree POC and have completed POC training. The phonetree chairperson gives you the list of names and telephone numbers for your assigned families. Now what? You're a little nervous, wondering how the spouses in your phonetree branch will react to you. You don't know everyone, and you're not sure of how the ones you do know will respond. Some of the spouses' soldiers outrank your spouse, but you realize that doesn't matter; you want to help every family in the FRG—no matter who they are. And you need to call everyone in your branch of the phonetree regularly.

Here is a sample first-call script :

“Hello, this is _____ from _____ Family Readiness Group. Is this _____? *(Pause)* Good. Do you have a couple of minutes to talk? *(Pause)* Okay. I’m calling to introduce myself and say hello. I need to let you know that I’m your point of contact in the FRG phonetree. I’m the person you can contact if you have any questions or concerns while your soldier is in the field or deployed. Also, I’ll be calling you occasionally to pass on messages from the FRG leader or commander and also to test the phonetree. If you need to call me, my number at home is _____. The FRG leader’s name and number are _____. I will give you a copy of our branch of the phonetree so you can contact someone else when you can’t reach me. Is there anything I can help you with while we’re on the phone?”

Read through the script several times before calling anyone, and try to sound natural—not like you’re reading a script! Next, think of some likely scenarios that could happen when you start the calls:

- If the responder says he/she cannot talk now, ask when would be a good time to call back. Then follow up.
- If the responder is willing to talk now, complete the script smoothly, and follow with information about upcoming FRG events.
- Don’t spend more than five minutes on each call, unless the responder has questions.
- If you don’t have the answer, say so and either tell the responder that you will get an answer and call back, or tell the responder whom to call. Be sure to follow up, and make sure he/she gets what is needed.
- On the other hand, if the responder tells you he/she does not want to participate in the FRG phonetree, don’t take it personally. Politely say that you understand and you hope to see him/her at the next FRG event. Remember, everyone is a member.
- Use your phonetree log forms to record the results of each call.
- When you’ve completed the phone calls, let your chairperson or FRG leader know the results.
- Report any significant events or problems.

The POC's Smart Book

What do you need in the way of information and materials as a phonetree POC in your FRG? Here's a list:

- a list of assigned families and phone numbers for your branch of the phonetree,
- an ample supply of phone message log forms,
- a supply of emergency forms,
- a current directory of key post agencies,
- a copy of the unit training schedule,
- a copy of the FRG event schedule,
- a map of the post and surrounding areas, and
- post and commercial phone books.

Keep your POC Smart Book near the phone so you can find it readily.

And what else do you need? A quiet room, a comfortable place to sit and take notes, a remote phone with a recorder, a computer with internet access, and a watch or clock.

SIX TYPES OF PHONE CALLS

Phonetree POCs, chairpersons, and FRG leaders regularly make and receive calls to and from assigned family members. This is mostly good—it is necessary for FRG members to stay connected during garrison and deployment missions. Consider the six types of calls that are discussed below.



Information calls. These calls may be made to pass information from the commander, the rear detachment officer, or the FRG leader to all FRG members. Each person in the calling chain should write down the message when it is received and repeat it exactly when relaying the message to ensure accuracy. Or a spouse may call a POC seeking information. The POC needs to make sure information provided is accurate and current, as well, since outdated information can create problems for the caller. If the POC doesn't have the information the caller needs, tell the caller how to find it, or the POC should find out and return the call. All POCs and the phonetree chairperson should maintain a notebook containing a list of key resources on post, important memorandums, and other information on agencies and services for Army families—the POC Smart Book.



Problem calls. Calls involving problems or concerns of spouses are much like information calls. They should be handled with tact, politeness, and good listening skills. To help the callers, the POC should be sure to understand and record all necessary information. By asking pertinent questions, the POC may help callers to think of their own solutions. If the POC is not sure of what to do, tell the caller so; then investigate and return the call. The POC should not tell the caller that he/she can't help. Often, the POC can help by simply providing a phone number for a post agency. Finally, the POC should follow up on all calls, even if it is just to check that everything is all right.



Social calls. Everyone—especially a new Army spouse—needs someone friendly and sympathetic to talk to occasionally. All Army spouses face loneliness at times; however, phonetree POCs and other leaders need to limit calls received so they don't take too much time away from important things—like having a little time for themselves and their own families! If the phonetree POC or leader is busy when someone calls, tactfully let the caller know that it isn't a good time to talk and a time that would be better. By the same token, leaders need to keep calls *they* make to FRG members short but friendly. Remember that some spouses feel awkward when the commander's spouse or another key soldier's spouse calls.



Gossip and rumor calls. If callers are talking just to gossip, the POC should indicate disinterest in the gossip. Gossip can hurt others whether or not it is true, and it must be discouraged tactfully and firmly. In the case of rumors, tell the caller the facts, if known. Otherwise, the POC should check on the subject and call back. Tactfully ask the caller not to pass the rumor on; then investigate and return the call.



Chronic calls. These types of calls can be very disruptive, and the POC may get resentful or angry when a member calls too often. Try to be tactful but assertive, though. POCs can control chronic callers by screening calls. POCs don't want to miss important calls, but they shouldn't allow chronic callers to dominate their time.

Crisis calls. Handling crisis calls can be difficult and unnerving. Keep in mind that the caller is likely to be upset, and the POC needs to be calm and methodical. POCs need to be careful of how they respond to distraught callers. Don't say "settle down" or "get a hold of yourself." Do assure the caller that help is available, and don't make promises that can't be fulfilled. Keep the caller talking; listen carefully, and ask questions to clarify what is being said, what the situation is, and what actions have already been taken. An excellent way to ensure the right questions are asked is to use a POC Problem Resolution Form (sample shown in Figure 9, page 102) and the decision diagram for helping a distressed person



(Figure 10, page 103). In dealing with crisis calls, be sure of the information and advice provided. If the POC doesn't know what to do, the POC should tell the caller that they will contact another source and will then call back with possible courses of action. If practical, encourage the caller to help themselves. If the caller does not know what to do, suggest some ideas to choose from. In real emergencies, the caller may be hysterical, and the POC may have to make the emergency contacts for the caller.

Causes of crisis calls may include separation, divorce, miscarriage, serious injury or illness, or even the death of a family member. Aside from trauma to the family concerned, such events may have serious impacts on other members of the unit and their spouses. The morale of the unit and families may be adversely affected, as well. Here are some ground rules for such calls.

- *Separation and Divorce.* This is a delicate situation. POCs should avoid taking sides, or they might find themselves confronted by the other party. The key to handling calls involving domestic disputes is to be neutral but sympathetic, and refer the caller to a professional (a chaplain, Family Advocacy Program, or other appropriate agency). Never counsel the caller. Instead, the POC should say something like, "Mary, I'm really sorry to hear about this, but I'm not qualified to offer you advice on what to do. I'll get you the phone number to the chaplain's office." Marital problems affect the entire family, and there is little the POC can do. Smiles, hugs, and kind gestures may be the only other support POCs can give. Remember, too, to maintain confidentiality and avoid engaging in gossip.
- *Miscarriage.* The loss of an expected child is heartbreaking for the family and their friends. People respond to loss in different ways. Often, the family may want to be alone for a while to deal with their sorrow, so it is best to check with the family before visiting them, and phone calls should be brief. A call and a sympathy card may be all they want, but if acceptable to the family, the POC may consider organizing a meal for them. Respect the privacy of the family. They will let the POC know what needs, if any, they may have.
- *Loss of a Spouse or Other Family Member.* Likewise, the loss of a spouse or other family member can impact friends, neighbors, and the unit. Communication with the grieving family is essential, but first contact normally is made by the commander. The commander may determine what the grieving family needs or wants and will advise the FRG leader of what to do next.

Use of the phonetree to inform the unit and its spouses is appropriate as long as the desires of the family are respected and the commander has approved the notice. A memorial service gives unit members an opportunity to express their grief and demonstrate support to the family. Other kind gestures may include babysitting, organizing meals, transportation to and from the airport, caring for pets, and sending a card and flowers. Ask the family what they want. Do they want visitors other than family, or do they prefer to be alone?

- *Loss of a Service Member.* The loss of a fellow soldier is tragic and devastating for all. The FRG leader will never make casualty notifications. Only the experts—Casualty Branch personnel—are authorized to release such information to the

family, using procedures detailed in Army regulations. The post Casualty Assistance Office (CAO) and a military chaplain will notify the family in person. The CAO will assign a representative to assist the family with funeral arrangements, benefits, insurance, and other matters. The commander will let the FRG leader know what to do next.

The FRG leader should focus on family support issues. Consider what the needs of the family may be, and assist the Chain of Command. The commander may ask the leader to call each FRG family to coordinate a meeting to inform spouses. Again, the gestures and assistance to the grieving family listed above may be fine, but first check with the spouse. Calm and unobtrusive organization at such times provides comfort and helps control confusion and stress.

- *Family Problems (Abuse/Juvenile Offenses)*. Families at every social level experience serious family problems. Other than referral, there is little the POC or FRG leader can do when family problems involve spouse or child abuse, serious behavior issues, or juvenile crime. If the POC is confronted with an immediate emergency, call 911 and then the FRG leader, who in turn, should inform the commander. Even if it is not an emergency, don't take sides (vocally, anyway), counsel, or offer advice to family members. The POC should not try to intervene personally in the family's problem because this could subject the POC to harm. While POCs need to be sympathetic and helpful, only trained professionals should deal with dysfunctional families.
- *Missing Children*. Family and friends of a missing child can experience gut-wrenching grief and fear. As soon as parents determine that their child is missing, they should contact the local police department and the commander. If a frantic spouse calls the POC, make sure the authorities have been notified. If the incident occurred on post, contact the Military Police, as well. Sometimes children can be found quickly. Be sympathetic and supportive to the parents and siblings, if any. Be a good listener. (Other sources of help for missing or abused children include: the National Runaway Hotline [1-800-621-4000], Family Advocacy Program, Families in Crisis, Victim Advocacy, and the Abuse Hotline.)

Handling Calls Effectively

While listening, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the caller really saying? Keep in mind that the call is important to the caller.
- What basic needs does the caller have?
- What expectations does the caller have? Are they realistic?
- Who can help? As much as possible, refer the caller to resources that can be used by the caller to solve the problem.

Remember, FRG members need to learn to be self-sufficient. POCs don't have to tell callers that, but they can teach by example. Be friendly and tactful in guiding callers to successful resolution of their own problems.

Basic Rules of Crisis Intervention



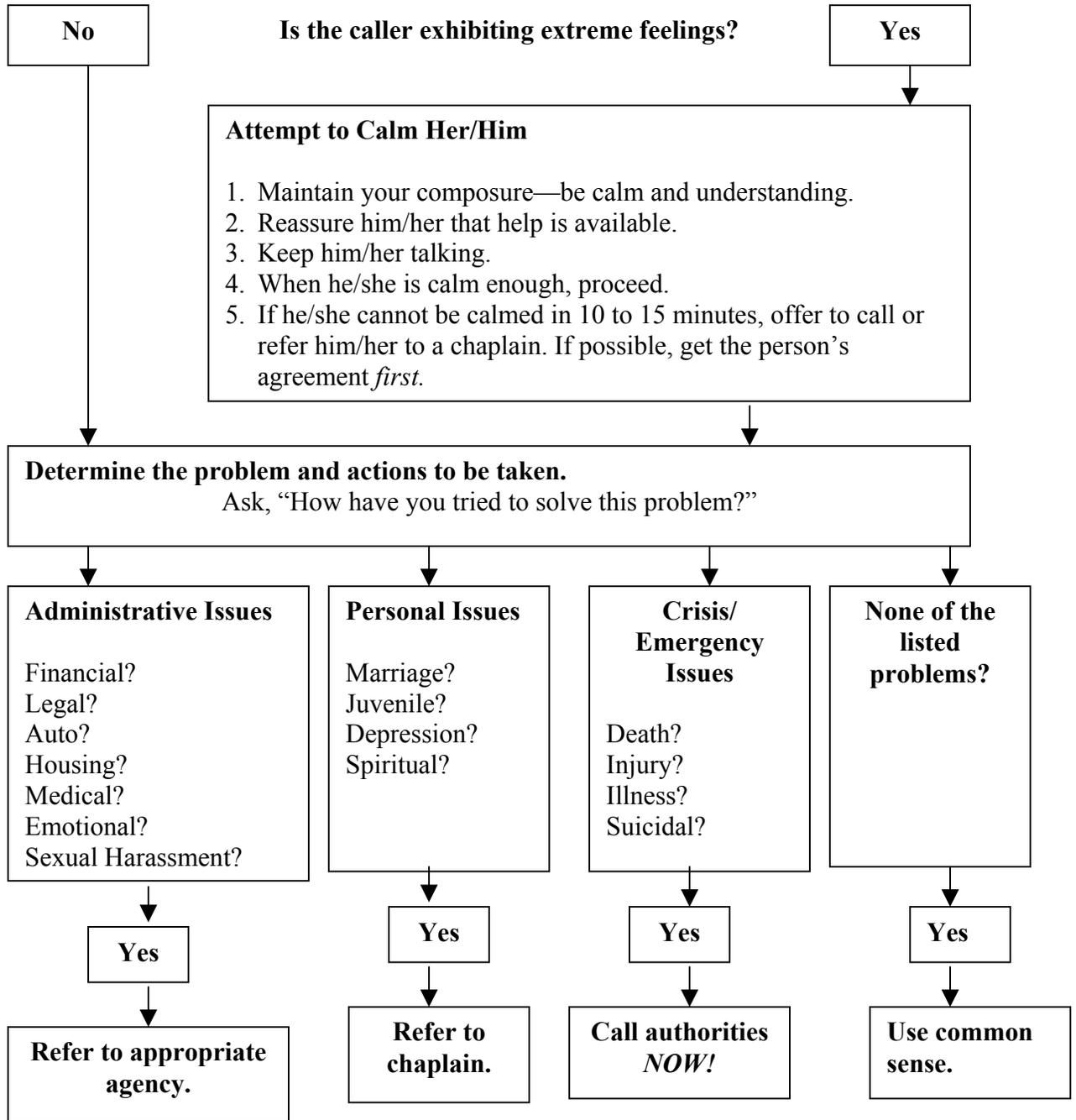
1. **Listen.** Let the people involved speak. Be sure you hear how they see the problem and what they expect from you. Descriptively verbalize what you hear and what you see happening; do not be critical.
2. Remember that the person who has sought your help is important, even if they are talking on behalf of someone else. Work with the person who asked for your help.
3. You are a *listener*, a *referral agent*, and perhaps a *friend*. You can help by listening carefully and making suggestions only when the person cannot think of alternatives. **Do not** give advice or assume responsibility for the person's problems or life. The goal of crisis intervention is to allow the individual involved to become responsible for themselves and the consequences of their actions. Work toward clarification of the situation.
4. Don't be over-active. The tendency is to talk a lot and offer a great deal of help in the form of possible solutions. Let the person with the problem take the lead. Often the person needs and wants to talk the problem out.
5. Be *empathetic* and *identify feelings*. Is the person depressed, frustrated, angry? Encourage the person to talk on a feeling level.
6. Try not to become absorbed with historical excuses and reasons for present problems. Focus on what is happening now, and permit the person to explore what could be done to change it.
7. When dealing with family crises, give equal attention to each family member, whether they are adults or children.
8. When referring someone for additional assistance, **be specific**. Tell them where to go, when to be there, and who to see. If possible, give them the name and number of a specific person to see. Follow-up to be sure that the necessary service was provided.
9. Do not call others (police, rescue squad, military police, parents) without the permission of the person you are helping unless there is imminent danger—suicide or homicide. It is permissible to ask them if they are in danger or to ask them if they are thinking about suicide and have the means to carry it out. If you *must* notify the unit or rear detachment, tell them you are going to do so.
10. Provide reassurance that **the person** will be able to solve the problem.
11. People's trust in you must be developed and maintained. This trust is earned by acting *responsibly* and *confidentially*.

POC Problem Resolution Form				
Name				
Address				
Date of Contact	Time	Contact Phone	(Hm)	(Wk)
Sponsor Information				
Name		Unit		
Rank		Location		
Nature of Emergency (include who, what, when, where, etc.):				
What help do you need?				
ACTION:	Who Called?		When?	
Police called?				
Ambulance?				
Fire Department called?				
Red Cross called?				
Transportation?				
Food?				
Lodging?				
Money?				
AER called?				
Emergency Child Care?				
Referred To:				
Follow-up Required?				
POC Signature :			Date:	

Figure 9. Sample POC Problem Resolution Form.

Helping a Distressed Person

Log call or visit on the POC Problem Resolution Form



Be sure to log all key details on the POC Problem Resolution Form, and report any crises or emergencies to the FRG leader or commander. Follow up as needed, and control gossip.

Figure 10. Decision Diagram for Helping a Distressed Person.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF POST COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Army Emergency Relief (AER) is a non-profit organization that offers relief to financially distressed soldiers and their families in emergency situations, such as paying utility bills to prevent disconnections, buying food to avoid deprivation, etc.

Chaplain Services include family ministry, religious education, and worship services. Army chaplains provide personal, marital, and family counseling, within the context of religious values. The crisis hotline is a 24-hour service to assist those in extreme emergencies (abuse, death, and/or serious illness).

Financial Readiness Program offers training and confidential help with budget counseling, consumer credit, debt liquidation, checkbook maintenance, consumer advocacy, and complaints.

Department of Social Work provides counseling and referral services to those experiencing personal problems, marital problems, family violence, and child abuse or neglect.

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) assists families whose members require medical treatment, therapy, education, training, or counseling. EFMP has a listing of agencies within the area suited to the needs of exceptional family members.

Family Advocacy Program (FAP) offers classes on parenting, conflict and stress management, marital stress, safety education, family violence prevention, unit briefings, and more. FAP works with agencies inside and outside the Army.

Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) offers information and referral services for employment, education, training, transition, and volunteer opportunities.

Relocation Readiness Program (RRP) offers services, including loaner housewares and welcome packets to aid families in the moving process. They also operate a terminal of the Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service (SITES), which provides information on Army installations worldwide.

American Red Cross assists military families with sudden emergencies that require the soldier's presence (like serious illness or death of a family member). When the family contacts the Red Cross, they provide confirmation to the Chain of Command so the soldier can be released. Other help includes emergency loans (when AER is closed), disaster relief, instruction in first aid, CPR, babysitting courses, water safety, and more.

Respite Childcare provides the parent an opportunity for relief from high stress childcare situations. This may include childcare for parents who are participating in counseling. (Temporary lodging is also available for battered spouses when it is necessary to sequester the victim for safety's sake.)



Chapter 6

Running an Effective FRG—Communications

The dissemination of timely, accurate information is one of the essential tasks of the FRG. The use of the Chain of Concern, or phonetree, was discussed in the previous chapter. It is one way of getting information to the soldiers and family members of the unit. This chapter outlines other means of getting reaching FRG members.

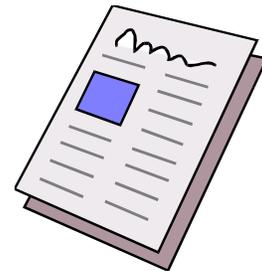
NEWSLETTERS

Does the FRG Need a Newsletter?

The most important advantage of a unit newsletter is how it can affect the morale of soldiers and families. A well designed and written newsletter, especially during long deployments, can bring welcome news about the FRG and give families and soldiers a good feeling about themselves and the unit. It's another way of communicating as a unit family—one of the essential ingredients.

The purposes of an FRG newsletter include:

- improving morale among soldiers and families,
- relaying information from the commander and FRG leadership,
- advertising upcoming FRG events,
- conveying concerns for soldiers and families,
- building camaraderie among FRG members,
- reducing social isolation,
- highlighting installation and community resources,
- reducing the stresses of military life, and
- improving family readiness.



What Kind of Newsletter Should an FRG Have?

Often a single newsletter is published for the entire battalion, while some unit FRGs may prefer their own. A battalion newsletter is less costly, distributes news, and builds pride battalion-wide.

The FRG can publish newsletters through various means.

An official newsletter (using government printing and mailing):	Other newsletters:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ is restricted in content; ■ is limited to eight pages, printed on both sides; ■ can be produced and paid for with government funds; and ■ must have the commander's statement and signature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ are not restricted in content (can have ads, financial reports, etc.), ■ are produced and paid for with FRG or personal funds, and ■ are reviewed by the commander.

Keep in mind that the commander is the publisher of the FRG newsletter and, therefore, is the final authority on content. However, an FRG may opt to publish a newsletter at its own expense. In that case, the publisher is the FRG or a key FRG member. These newsletters are not as limited in content, but the information should always be in good taste, and they require the commander's review. The commander reviews these newsletters to be certain that sensitive or mission-critical information is not included since this could compromise security and safety.

Official FRG newsletters may contain:

- notices from the FRG leader and commander;
- information on special events, such as the next FRG meeting and other activities;
- news of past FRG events;
- unit history, chain of command, and training schedule;
- information highlighting post agencies, such as ACS and community phone numbers;
- routine information, such as birth announcements, birthdays, marriages, anniversaries, arrival of new soldiers and families;
- local school information;
- government websites;
- recipes of any kind;
- original works (like poems) with a copyright release; and

- historical information.

Official newsletters published with appropriated funds cannot include the following items, as they are expressly prohibited:

- advertising for private business or commercial ventures,
- financial reports or dollar amounts (e.g., FRG fund reports or fundraising profit figures),
- political notices (e.g., mayoral elections, etc.),
- casualty or injury reports,
- copyrighted information without permission of the author (internet articles also require copyright releases), or
- professional sports scores.

For more information on this subject, see AR 360-81, the Official Mail Manual DoD 4525.8M (latest revision), and local policies on FRG newsletter publishing.

Getting Organized for the Newsletter

First of all, do some research. Does the unit want an FRG newsletter? Published at battalion or unit level? How often? What will the newsletter look like? How will it be paid for? Who will comprise the newsletter committee, and who will chair it? How will news features be gathered? How and where will the newsletter be reproduced and distributed?

To begin answering all these questions, FRG leaders and commanders should meet to discuss the questions and develop a proposal. The next step might be to request a battalion steering committee meeting, at which the proposal can be presented and discussed. Decisions made here will provide the plan's foundation.

If the decision is to go with a newsletter, a good next step is to visit the Directorate of Information Management (DOIM) on the installation to learn about post policies and procedures for official newsletters. While there, pick up the latest copy of their Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) on the subject. This MOI will answer a number of questions.

A newsletter committee is needed; check the FRG organizational structure (Figure 5, page 44) shown in Chapter 3 of this handbook. As shown, the committee should be headed by a chairperson, and ideally the chairperson will have experience with newsletters or similar publications. Additionally, the chairperson should have good people skills and the ability to coordinate the work to be done.

The chairperson will need help, too—talented volunteers with skills in reporting, writing, keyboarding, editing, photography, art, design, and layout. Another key player is

someone with experience using popular publishing and graphics software and scanners. The chairperson can identify members with such skills by canvassing the membership at an FRG meeting or by reviewing the file of FRG Information Surveys filled out previously, or both. Even without experience, talented FRG members can learn to produce a great FRG newsletter.

Be sure to coordinate with the family readiness liaison, who has duties relating to the newsletter. The FRL provides logistical support for newsletter publishing and provides up-to-date names and addresses for mailing.

Designing the Newsletter

What should the newsletter contain?

1. A masthead, which includes a logo, motto, and title unique to the unit. One easy way to get some great masthead designs is to have an art contest within the FRG, with prizes for the best two or three entries. All entries should incorporate the unit name, unit crest, motto, and other features unique to the kind of unit and the purpose of the newsletter.
2. An article by the commander or rear detachment officer on training, deployment news, etc.
3. An article by the FRG leader about past FRG events, steering committee actions, upcoming meetings, etc.
4. Columns by various FRG chairpersons (hospitality/welcome, special events, phonetree, newsletter, and other committees) featuring new families, departures, birthdays, anniversaries, upcoming FRG events, etc.
5. Special features, such as coping with separation and planning for reunion.
6. Other items.
7. The commander's statement and original signature.

Editing

When materials have been gathered for the coming edition, it's time for the newsletter steering committee to decide what will be included. The selected feature articles, together with photos, artwork, and captions, are ready to go to the talented and experienced editorial staff for careful reading and editing. They will examine each article for readability, substance, organization, style, and correctness. They will also correct any problems with scope, development, coherence, tone, voice, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. When they are finished, produce a "clean" copy, proofread, and then start laying out the newsletter.

Copyright Laws

The newsletter committee needs to be aware of current copyright laws. Be careful when quoting from published works. Copyright law protects original material such as books and novels, poetry, recorded music, sheet music, photographs—anything that exists as a “tangible medium.” Printing any portion of an author’s published or unpublished work is a copyright infringement and subject to lawsuit. Permission to quote from any of the above named items requires permission from the author. Simply giving the author credit does not protect you from copyright infringement.

Some material falls into the category of “public domain,” for example, facts discovered in the course of research. You are free to use this kind of information as long as you express it in your own words.

Under the “fair use” rule of copyright law, you may make limited use of someone’s work without getting permission. This includes excerpting from a work to use in a review or criticism, summarizing an article with short quotes in a news report, and limited photocopying for non-profit education purposes. For more information, check the *Law for All* website at: www.nolo.com.

Layout

Layout means the arrangement of articles, columns, graphics, and photographs in the newsletter; the easiest way to layout a newsletter is with a computer and publishing software. The official newsletter must be on regular white bond paper and printed only in black ink; it may be up to 16 pages in length (8 pages front and back). Normally, the major headline items are placed on the first several pages; longer articles are continued on later pages.

The layout may look something like this:

- Page 1: masthead at top, important headline articles and photos of deployed soldiers, a recent FRG event, plans for an upcoming FRG event, Hail and Farewell Corner for new families and departing ones.
- Page 2: Commander’s Corner, FRG Leader’s Corner, birth announcements, birthdays, anniversaries, volunteer recognition.
- Pages 3-plus: News from each unit FRG (battalion newsletter). Committee reports. Self-help and reminder articles (e.g., on dealing with separation or the importance of keeping the FRG phonetree up to date).
- Final page: This page must contain the mandatory commander’s statement and signature, which must be on the last page (not on a separate page).

When the rough layout is complete, determine what “holes” exist and how to fill them, what the page count will be, and the overall look of the newsletter.

Proofreading, Illustrations, Final Copy, and Pasteups

Once satisfied with the layout, the editors should proofread the newsletter again, correct any remaining errors (mostly cosmetic), and complete the newsletter. Also, scan and place photographs and graphics, and make sure the captions are in the correct locations, with the correct fonts. After another proofreading or two, consider any pasteups needed; some items may not scan well, so you may have to crop (trim) and paste them on the sheets with a glue stick. Make a few clean photocopies of the complete newsletter and take a copy to the FRG leader and commander for a final look. Any last changes should be purely cosmetic.

At this point, the manuscript is in camera-ready form. The newsletter chairperson and one or two editors should perform a final check of the layout, fonts, alignment, continuations, illustrations, captions, etc. Finally, read through the newsletter again to be sure it is free of errors.

The original copy of the newsletter can then go to the commander for a last look and signature on the last page.

Publishing the Newsletter

The policy for reproduction of newsletters varies from installation to installation. FRGs need to research local requirements. Reserve FRGs should follow the guidelines in USARC Regulation 608-1, 4-9.



Distributing the Finished Newsletter

When the print job is complete, the newsletter committee will need to fold the copies and affix mailing labels. Computer-generated labels for the FRG members will save time and effort.

If there are many copies to mail to one or two zip codes (not including hand-delivered copies), consider using bulk mail, which significantly lowers the cost to mail the newsletters. Check with the post office for instructions. Ordinarily you will need to separate the copies by zip codes into bundles of 10 or more, and count to be sure you have at least 200 copies to bulk mail. If so, affix the local bulk mail permit number. Keep in mind that zip code bundles less than 10 each do not count in the bulk mailing and must have first class postage. Take the bundles to the correct post office for bulk mailing.

Some FRG newsletters may not be funded by the Army. Some units staple these newsletters (and even some official ones—to save money) to the soldiers' LESs to make sure they take them home. This alternative is less trouble, but you have to expect that some spouses won't see the newsletters. When the unit is deployed, newsletters should be

mailed to all family members, including those who go home to stay with relatives while their soldiers are gone.



Electronic Distribution of the Newsletter

Many families have internet service now, and with new technology has come the opportunity to offer the newsletters over e-mail in a file format referred to as a Portable Document File (PDF). The capability to convert the completed newsletter to PDF is a standard feature in many of the newer software publishing and word-processing programs, so it doesn't always require the purchase of additional software.

The person receiving a PDF file that is attached to an e-mail message must have the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software installed on their computer (it may be downloaded from www.adobe.com) to view and print the file. The Adobe website provides easy-to-follow instructions for downloading and installing Acrobat Reader, and it is available for all major platforms, including Windows and Macintosh.

If the FRG plans to distribute newsletters electronically, be sure to include a place on the FRG Information Survey (sample shown in Figure 4, pages 41–42) to record the member's e-mail address.

FRG WEBSITE

Setting up an FRG website can be a complicated process. Since the FRG is connected to the unit, permission must be granted by the installation DOIM. If permission is granted, someone in the FRG must have knowledge of web design and be willing to maintain the site. Nothing is more frustrating to viewers than a web page that hasn't been updated in the last three years.

Many units, at least at brigade level, have established websites. Arranging for a page devoted to the FRG should be relatively easy to do. Again, it will require that someone in the FRG be responsible for updating information to the webmaster. This person can provide guidance on the content of information for use on the web.

MEDIA



To notify members of an active duty unit FRG about upcoming events and meetings, the FRG can utilize the installation newspaper and cable television network. Check with the Public Affairs Office, or the person who manages these services, for scheduling procedures and appropriate formats.

Guard and Reserve FRGs can use their local newspapers and television stations. Most television stations have a community events channel where upcoming events are listed. Newspapers do the same. This is an excellent way to reach a large number of members.

Being Interviewed by the Media

Members of the news media frequently seek to interview family members during a deployment. Everyone has a right to speak to the press, but be sure to follow some guidelines:

- Never give sensitive information that could jeopardize the safety and security of either soldiers or family members.
- Think before speaking.
- Know with whom you are talking.
- Know your limitations.
- If you don't have first-hand knowledge, don't speculate or guess.
- Respond as positively as you can.
- You always have the right to refuse an interview.

Here are some do's and don'ts for answering a reporter's questions:

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Think before speaking.■ Be cautious about "yes" or "no" responses.■ Avoid acronyms.■ Be brief.■ Get clarification.■ Stay on subject.■ Be positive.■ Be yourself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ speculate or guess,■ mislead,■ say "no comment,"■ say "off the record," or■ argue.

If you are approached by a member of the media for an interview, you may request that your public affairs officer be present. He or she can provide guidance on what you should and should not say. The media may even tape the interview; this prevents you from being misquoted and provides an accurate record.

Speaking with the media is an opportunity to present information about the FRG to the public. Use the chance to tell the Army story and to emphasize the important role of the family.



Chapter 7

Running an Effective FRG— Special Events

KEEP THE FUN TIMES COMING!

Certainly, all the ingredients for an effective FRG are essential, but no matter what else the FRG does, fun events are an absolute must. Fun activities are the best way to get to know other FRG members and develop unit cohesion. To create an FRG that is flourishing and growing strong, plan some fun things to do as a unit family. In fact, everything the FRG does should be fun or at least pleasant—even the business meetings.



CHOOSING FUN EVENTS

The FRG leader should allow FRG members to decide on the fun activities they would like to participate in as an FRG. This group decision should be the subject of one of the early FRG meetings. One way to develop a short list of fun activities that most of the membership will enjoy is to brainstorm ideas with the entire FRG.



Brainstorming.

Remember your AFTB classes in problem solving?

Brainstorming in a group setting was discussed as an excellent way to identify innovative ideas. Here's how it works:



- The special events chairperson tells the FRG that they want to plan some fun events by brainstorming for ideas. The chairperson then explains the rules, or norms, that the group will follow. In turn, each member suggests an idea—with no discussion, and no criticism or comments on anyone's input; everyone uses his imagination, “piggybacks” off others' ideas, and suggests a new idea.

- The chairperson records each person’s idea on a flip chart or blackboard and moves on to the next person. Speed and spontaneity are the keys.
- The chairperson works through the membership one at a time until everyone has contributed at least one idea. The whole process should take 10–15 minutes. (With a very large FRG, use a committee approach, with representatives from a cross section of the FRG.)
- Finally, the chairperson leads the group through voting to identify the top three to six ideas, which will be the short list of fun things most members really want to do. With this list in hand, these activities can be planned for sometime during the year.

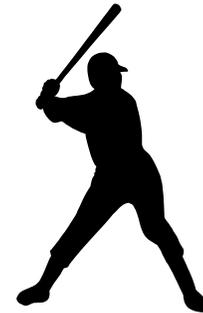
After brainstorming for fun ideas, the special events committee should convene to work out a proposed schedule for the year. Of course, they will check the training calendar to avoid conflicts. Next, the chairperson should visit with the FRG leader and commander to obtain approval for the proposed schedule. Once it’s settled, the schedule can be passed on to the FRG membership, via the FRG newsletter.



WHAT ARE SOME FUN THINGS TO DO?



Actually, the list is endless. Every major Army post has a healthy list of its own. How can leaders find out what’s going on?



- Log onto **www.mwr.com**, which is Morale, Welfare, and Recreation’s (MWR) website.



- Get copies of the directory published annually by Directorate of Community Activities (DCA)—it’s full of information about facilities and events for recreation on post.

- Also, obtain copies of the monthly MWR newsletter with information about entertainment, dining, outings at local recreation areas, athletic events, and special events.



- Check out the post newspaper, which is usually distributed weekly and has updates of events planned for the coming week.

- Log onto the websites of surrounding cities to see their calendars of events.

- Check out the local newspapers for more ideas.
- Reserve FRGs should plan to be a part of the unit's Family Day in order to promote and energize the FRG. See USARC Regulation 608-1 for some excellent ideas on things to include.

THE PLANNING PHASE

Now that FRG members have decided on the fun events they want, it's time to plan.

1. When?

- Schedule two to three large fun events per year—more if the FRG has enough volunteers to support them.
- Check the unit training schedule to avoid conflicts.
- Check the calendar for holiday weekends and other special weekends (Superbowl, for instance).
- Match events with the seasons.
- Propose logical dates and alternates for each event.
- Review the proposed schedule with the special events committee and then the commander.

2. Where?

- Will the event involve travel?
- How far is the location from the post?
- What are opening and closing times?
- Do they allow patrons to bring food and drinks there?

3. Costs?

- If traveling by bus, what is the cost?
- What is the admission fee for adults and children?
- Will the management give a volume discount?
- How will everyone be fed, and what is the cost?
- If a site must be rented, what is the cost and reservation deadline?
- Is childcare needed, and what is the cost?
- What are the overall costs for the event?
- How will these costs affect low-income soldiers and families?
- How will the expenses be paid?

- Does a fundraiser (or two or three) need to be held?

4. Who?

- Whole FRG? Remember single soldiers and single parents.
- Families only?
- Children?
- Extended family members?

5. How? Define tasks and schedules for key committees.

- Special Events (lead committee—site reservation, coordinate with other committees regarding tasks and schedules)
- Entertainment (games, activities, equipment, etc.)
- Food and drink (potluck, barbecue, purchase at site, etc.)
- Phonetree (get the word out to everyone)
- Newsletter (get the word out to everyone)
- Fundraiser (plan and supervise fundraisers)
- Treasurer (inform leadership of available funds; disburse as needed)
- Others committees as needed to help transport equipment to/from the site, set up, dismantle equipment, supervise games, etc.

There probably are other tasks to consider, and once again, brainstorming among the leadership will help bring them to mind. Once a good draft list of those tasks is compiled, put the key tasks and dates on a planning calendar. Use an event planning worksheet to help identify when critical tasks must be done. Start from the day of the event and work backward toward the present, writing down on a worksheet the tasks that must be done, who will be responsible, and when they must be accomplished. Figure 11 contains a sample event planning form.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Planning carefully and completely helps to ensure that all critical tasks are completed on time. It also provides leaders with an excellent tool for supervising key volunteers and monitoring progress. Provide a copy of the planning guide to each committee so they are tuned in to the plan, and make sure they know their roles. From time to time, meet with the committees, or exchange phone calls or e-mail to check the status of critical items.

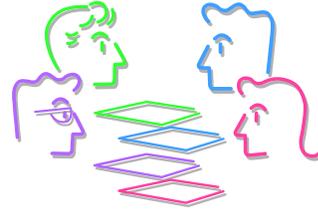
Be sure to thank and praise the committee chairpersons and all volunteers at regular intervals, especially publicly. If any critical tasks begin to slip, use kind and persuasive skills to help the committee chairperson involved to get on track. If necessary, assign someone else to help.

The key thing is to get everyone involved in doing something. Utilize single soldiers, too—and not just for the “dirty” work. Each FRG has a treasure trove of talent and ability to draw on. Use it well, and be pleasantly surprised at the outcome. **Remember, in addition to having fun together, the goal of special events is to build cohesion and improve morale among the unit family.** Make it happen!

FINALLY, THE AFTER ACTION REPORT

When the event is over, be sure to review and summarize all aspects of what was involved in planning and carrying out the event. Identify what went well; what areas or actions caused concern; what could have been done in a better, more efficient manner; who should be thanked; and what the group recommends about the event. This way, the FRG has a record of events that have occurred. In the future, they can choose to repeat a very successful event, repeat with certain changes to improve the event, or choose never to try that event again based upon the experiences of all involved. An After Action Report (see Figure 12 for a sample report form) is part of the history of the FRG that is passed on from leader to leader.

After Action Report



Event _____ Date _____

Successes:

What went well?

Concerns:

What could have been done better?

Thanks to:

Who helped?

Recommendations?

Figure 12. Sample After Action Report Form.

SAFETY AND HEALTH DURING FRG EVENTS

Food and Water Sanitation

Each time food is purchased, prepared, stored, transported, and served, think about preventing food-borne illness. Here are some basic pointers:

- Procure foods and water only from authorized sources.
- Do not allow frozen or chilled foods to stay unrefrigerated for too long.
- Store perishables at proper temperatures.
- Protect food from contamination by vermin.
- When thawing frozen meats, plan ahead—thaw in the refrigerator or, more quickly, in a microwave.
- Avoid contaminating food during preparation, transport, storage, and serving.
- Cook potentially hazardous foods (meats, poultry, fish, eggs, etc.) to the proper internal temperatures.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot and covered during transport, storage, and serving.
- Don't allow prepared foods to remain on the serving line for more than two hours (cumulative).
- Ensure that containers, plates, utensils, etc., are clean.
- Provide for handwashing near the dining area and restrooms.
- Try to serve all the food; don't keep leftovers that have been on the serving line for too long.
- Make sure ice for drinks is protected from contamination, and don't use the same ice for drinks that was used for cooling food.

The food committee chairperson and other volunteers should contact Preventive Medicine on the installation or the county health office for information and guidance on food safety questions.

Protection from Biting Creatures



Particularly during warm weather, chiggers, ticks, mosquitoes, spiders, and other creatures can cause discomfort and even serious illness. Take the following preventive measures for protection:

- Prior to the FRG event, make sure the area to be occupied is mowed. Tall grass harbors chiggers and ticks.



- Encourage all members to bring and use personal insect repellents. Apply the repellents while outside—not in enclosed areas.



- When families and soldiers arrive at the site, give them a safety and health briefing.
- Warn members, especially children, to stay away from high grass or undergrowth.



- Tell everyone to avoid contact with skunks, squirrels, snakes, and other indigenous animals in the area.



Protection from Heat and Sun



During outdoor FRG events in hot, humid weather, it is important to avoid heat injuries. Follow the suggestions below for protection:

- Ensure that plenty of water is available, and encourage everyone to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- Reserve a pavilion or other shelter large enough to provide shade for the membership.
- Caution all members about heat injury and sunburn, and encourage use of sunscreen, hats, drinking plenty of water, and moderation in activity during peak hours.
- Plan games and activities that will not cause overheating of members, especially children.
- Especially be sure that infants are not overexposed to the heat.
- Keep an eye out for members showing signs of impending heat injury, and take preventive measures right away.
- Start first aid immediately if anyone has a heat injury.

Water Safety

Especially when boating, canoeing, water skiing, or jet skiing, safety comes first.



- Learn and broadcast water safety rules at the locale.
- Alcohol is forbidden in water sports on post.
- Be sure everyone onboard wears a functional life vest.
- Keep speed down to reasonable level.
- No “hotdogging,” and especially watch out for swimmers.
- Help members who have little experience with boats.

- Return to shore (or don't go out) if the weather is or will be severe.
- Enforce rules and correct infractions.
- Encourage members not to swim until at least an hour after eating.

Driver/Passenger/Pedestrian Safety

- Be sure vehicles are parked and driven only in permitted lots and on roadways.
- Watch for children, especially if visibility is reduced.
- Observe posted warning and speed limit signs in recreational areas.
- No drinking and driving.

Other Safety Issues

- Keep propane cylinders away from fire and high heat.
- Keep a functional fire extinguisher near the cooking area.
- Lift heavy equipment properly to protect from back injuries; recruit sufficient help, and use legs instead of the back to lift.
- Ensure that electrical outlets, appliances, and cords are in good repair and are not operated in standing water.





Chapter 8

Running an Effective FRG — Money Matters

FUNDING THE FRG

Where does money for supplies, utilities, and other necessities of the FRG come from? How are fun events and other activities of the FRG financed? Younger soldiers and families cannot afford expensive outings, and no member should be excluded from events. Leadership is faced with the task of determining how to pay for the expenses of running the FRG.

There are several ways to legally fund the FRG:

- The commander can provide some funds—both appropriated (the unit’s share of the Defense budget) and non-appropriated (allocated from net revenues earned by post activities)—to support legitimate FRG activities. The commander may authorize the use of appropriated funds for training FRG volunteers at Army National Guard and Army Reserve Regional Academies and training conferences. The commander can also provide other supplies and equipment for the FRG. However, keep in mind that resources are always limited by the unit’s mission.
- Members can make donations to the FRG. Donations are strictly voluntary, and no soldier or family member should ever be coerced to donate.
- The FRG can plan and conduct fundraisers.
- Area businesses can make donations. Such donations are usually in the form of free or discounted products.

This chapter focuses primarily on the latter two avenues of funding the FRG. Consider these guidelines for FRG fundraising and FRG funds:

- FRGs are authorized to maintain informal funds for the benefit of the membership (not for any specific individuals).
- FRG funds normally are not subject to formal inspections; however, sound accounting procedures must be used for the funds. The commander or his/her appointee should review the books annually, or when a volunteer treasurer departs.

- FRG funds can be investigated in the event of alleged wrong-doing (misuse, unexplained loss, theft, etc.).
- The commander authorizes opening a bank account for the FRG fund and prepares a letter naming the fund and the persons authorized to sign checks drawn on the account.
- The commander or any other soldier should not be signatories of the account. The FRG should be run primarily by unit spouses, with support and occasional oversight by the commander, as needed.
- The commander also appoints a treasurer and an alternate to manage the FRG fund.
- FRG fund accounts should not be interest-bearing accounts. The purpose of the account is to provide a safe repository for FRG monies, not to produce taxable income.
- FRGs should not apply for private organization or non-profit organizational status.
- Especially note that the FRG does not sell goods and services—it seeks donations and gives goods and services to its donors.
- FRG monies cannot be commingled with personal or unit funds, and vice versa.
- The commander cannot use or authorize use of the unit fund for FRG purposes. The unit fund is formal, subject to inspection, and the direct responsibility of the commander; it is strictly for the benefit of soldiers assigned and attached to the unit.
- The FRG treasurer and alternate are the custodians of the FRG fund. They are personally responsible for the fund and liable for any loss or misuse of funds. They answer to both the FRG leader and the commander as to the status of the account.
- The unit commander is the approving authority for FRG outings and activities, as well as for all FRG fundraisers and solicitations to help finance those activities.
- The fund balance must not exceed \$1000, except in cases of an approved event. In those cases, commanders may authorize balances to exceed \$1000 to cover expenses planned for a particular activity. However, this should not be a long-term situation.
- Monies in the account must be earmarked for specific purposes. FRGs do not raise funds without specific purposes in mind.
- Members should not expect fundraising to pay the entire costs of FRG outings and other events.
- Use of FRG monies is limited to expenses that are consistent with the goals and functions of the FRG and with the intended purposes of fundraisers.
- Operation of the fund and the FRG's fundraising activities must be consistent with Army values and DODD 5500.7R, Joint Ethics Regulation.
- Unit letterhead cannot be used in relation to fundraising activities.

Guidance for FRG funds can be found in post regulations, AR 600-20, DA PAM 608-47, and DODI 1000.15.

ESTABLISHING AN FRG FUND ACCOUNT



The FRG leader should meet with the FRG co-leader, fundraising chairperson, treasurer and alternate, commander, and first sergeant to brainstorm the basic needs of the FRG, determine the requirements to set up an account, and make assignments.

First, be sure the battalion commander agrees with establishing an FRG fund account. If the battalion commander wishes to maintain only one FRG fund account for the battalion, it will not be necessary to establish a separate account for the unit FRG. In that case, it will be necessary to coordinate with the battalion FRG leader and treasurer to determine the ground rules. When the unit plans a unit FRG event or fundraiser, again coordination is necessary. (The unit commander and FRG leader should take care of these items.)



On the other hand, if a separate unit FRG fund account will be established, it is important to:

- Apply for an Employee Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS (a good assignment for the treasurer) using form SS-4. (The SS-4 form can be downloaded from the IRS website at www.irs.gov; then type SS-4 in the Forms and Publications finder search box. This will take you to the form and the instructions for completing it.) The EIN is needed to avoid paying federal income tax and to open the FRG fund bank account.
- Obtain state sales tax exemption (if required). When the IRS provides a letter with your FRG's EIN, write a letter to the state comptroller requesting an exemption from paying state sales taxes for taxable goods and services purchased for the FRG.
- Select the bank where the FRG fund account will be set up. Find out which banks charge per-check charges, monthly fees if the account balance drops below a minimum amount, and other charges. (This should be done by the treasurer or another FRG principal who will be authorized to draw on the account.)
- Decide who will be authorized to draw on the bank account on behalf of the FRG. For flexibility, the FRG leader, co-leader, treasurer and alternate should have that authority. No soldier should be a signatory for the account. However, to avoid confusion and other problems, the treasurer should maintain and account for one set of checkbooks.
- Prepare an authorization letter to the bank. Use the unit's official letterhead; indicate the FRG (not individuals' names) as the account name, and list the names and Social Security numbers of all persons authorized to open and draw on the



account. Affix the commander's signature block, and have the commander review and sign the letter. See Figure 13 for a sample authorization letter.

- Open the FRG fund account. Usually, all signatories go to the bank together and take the authorization letter, the IRS EIN, and their military ID cards with them. Set up the account in the name of the FRG. All principals sign the signature card. Finally, make an initial deposit (if any), and order a supply of checks with the FRG name and address on them.

[Unit Letterhead]		
Office Symbol (600-20)	[Date]	
Bank Name		
ATTENTION: New Business Accounts		
Bank Address		
City, State ZIP		
SUBJECT: Authorization to open a new business checking account for the <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 30%; margin: 5px auto;"></div> Family Readiness Group (FRG) Fund		
Dear New Accounts Manager:		
This letter is to authorize the following named individuals to open a checking account:		
Type Account: Ordinary business checking		
In the name of: <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 30%; display: inline-block;"></div> FRG Fund		
Type organization: Private, non-profit per IRS Code 501(c)(4)		
IRS Employee Identification Number: XXXX-XXXXX		
Mailing Address: c/o <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 15%; display: inline-block;"></div> , Address, City, State, ZIP		
Authorized signatories:		
<u>Name</u>	<u>SSN</u>	<u>Title</u>
<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>	XXX-XX-XXXX	FRG Treasurer
<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>	XXX-XX-XXXX	Alternate Treasurer
<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>	XXX-XX-XXXX	FRG Leader
<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>	XXX-XX-XXXX	Special Events Chair
If any questions, please contact <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 20%; display: inline-block;"></div> at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Thank you for your assistance.		
Sincerely,		
<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>		
Captain, US Army Commanding Officer		

Figure 13. Sample FRG Fund Account Authorization Letter.



BALANCE SHEET FOR MANAGING THE FRG FUND

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1. Set up ledger. No reimbursement without a receipt.
2. Be specific about expenditures. Never use the FRG funds for anything else.
3. Develop written guidelines for all expenditures. Don't overdraw the account.
4. Deposit all funds expediently.
5. Keep all receipts.
6. Safeguard checkbook and records.
7. Reconcile account monthly.
8. Prepare financial statement for monthly FRG meeting.

Note: Guard and Reserve treasurers must submit an annual report to the RSC or ARCOM Family Program Office.
9. Be sure members understand how FRG funds will be used.

Tips for FRG Leaders on Fund Management

- Inform members that all expenditures are for the benefit of the entire membership.
- Consult with the treasurer about the status of the FRG account on a regular basis; be aware of the account status at all times.
- Help the treasurer enforce spending guidelines.
- Support and praise the treasurer for a job done well; help correct any significant problem areas.

Review the job description for the treasurer in Chapter 4.

APPROPRIATE USES OF FRG FUNDS

Expenditure of FRG funds must benefit the entire membership in some way. Appropriate uses include, but are not limited to:

- special events to foster soldier and family cohesion and morale,
- FRG volunteer training,
- meeting refreshments,
- deployment and reunion activities,
- childcare expenses during FRG events,
- postage and operating supplies in support of the FRG, and
- any authorized expense approved in advance and in accordance with the spending plan.

It is notable that expenditures must benefit the entire membership. However, this does not mean that every member should receive precisely the same benefit as the next. Since FRG members have different circumstances, such as married vs. single, children vs. no children, new vs. experienced, and so on, expenditures on these various groups are necessarily different. The entire FRG benefits, though, due to the positive impact on morale.

FRG FUNDRAISERS

Authorized Fundraisers



Here are some fundraisers that may be conducted on post:

- bake sales (including fresh-baked and prepackaged products),
- sales of prepared foods (hot dogs, hamburgers, chili, etc.) ,
- cookbook sales,
- car washes,
- fun runs,
- dog washing service,
- opportunity auctions (donated goods and services),
- talent show,
- concession booth at post events,
- bazaars, and
- recycling drives.





Prohibited Fundraising Activities

Be aware of these prohibited fundraising practices, and be sure FRG members are aware of these, as well:

- raffles—illegal in some states without a license;
- chain letters and pyramid schemes;
- door-to-door solicitations;
- any activity that is immoral, pornographic, illicit and/or casts a negative light on the Army;
- dispensing or acquiring controlled substances;
- any activity involving soldiers in uniform;
- any activity that competes with AAFES or MWR facilities;
- any activity on private property without proper permission;
- any activity that violates a state or local ordinance;
- any activity or product that is dangerous or unduly risky; and
- fundraising activities conducted without an IRS EIN.

Obtaining Permission to Have a Fundraiser

Required permits and training must be obtained before having a fundraiser. The steps involved are:

- Be sure the FRG has its EIN.
- Discuss the proposed fundraiser with the commander (or rear detachment officer) and get approval.
- If the fundraiser will be held at a concession or a public area on post, ensure that the proposed site is available on the desired day. To do this, determine who controls fundraisers on the facility. In many cases, the concession also requires permission to have fundraisers on their property. (Depending on the installation's requirements, submit the request letter to DCA several working days prior to the fundraiser. If the event is planned for a weekend or a payday, be sure to reserve the site a few months in advance.)
- Prepare a letter to the appropriate authority requesting permission for the fundraiser. (Figure 14 contains a sample permission letter.) The letter should specify:

- the unit name,
 - type of event, date, time, and place;
 - use of the funds;
 - POC (must be a spouse, not a soldier); and
 - whether the approval letter should be mailed or will be picked up.
- If distributing food of any kind (including prepackaged foods), find out local requirements for handling food to be consumed by the public. It may be necessary for volunteers to attend a food handlers or food safety course provided by your local public health entity.
 - If planning the event outside a PX or commissary, contact the facility manager beforehand to get permission to occupy the site, or follow the policy established by your installation.

Keep in mind that all the above documentation and the trained food handler must be present at the concession site during the entire fundraising event.

<p>DCA/FMB ATTN: _____ P.O. Box XXXX City, State ZIP</p> <p>Dear _____,</p> <p>The Family Readiness Group of _____ requests approval to conduct a bake sale at the _____ Post Exchange on Tuesday 21 Oct from 0900 to 1200 hours. Funds will be used to help fund our unit's planned FRG picnic at post lake. POC is the undersigned, at 555-5555. I will pick up the approval letter when it is ready. Thanks.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sincerely,</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Jane Doe</i> Jane Doe FRG Fundraiser Chairperson _____ FRG</p>	Return Address 20 Jul 2002
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Figure 14. Sample Permission Letter for Fundraiser.

**Environmental Health & Preventive Medicine
or County Health Department**

Experts on food sanitation. Call to find out their requirements for sale of foods on the installation.

Safety at Fundraising Activities

Chapter 7 discussed the health and safety aspects of fun FRG events. That same advice applies to fundraisers, as well. The fundraising chairperson or a designee must plan safety and health considerations with other leaders, and plan for them ahead of time. Be sure to give a safety briefing to all participants beforehand. Keep an eye out, especially for children and young spouses. Remember—leaders don't let others and themselves get hurt or sick at FRG events.

Things to Remember When Fundraising



- When conducting fundraisers, FRGs are soliciting donations and giving goods and services to the donors—not selling them.
- Don't conduct fundraisers without the required authority, permits, and training. Start by talking with the commander or RDO about proposed fundraisers.
- Keep in mind that the Army does not officially endorse off-post fundraisers. The FRG bears sole responsibility for fundraising activities conducted off-post. Persons harmed or injured by those activities may seek legal recourse against those involved. For this reason, it is recommended that food fundraisers off post not be held and that great care be taken in keeping foods clean and safe for consumption anywhere they are dispensed.
- When having fundraisers off post, be sure to check with the city government in advance. They often have permit fees and other requirements.
- Soldiers cannot participate in fundraisers in uniform. Further, they may participate only during off-duty time (in civilian clothing), unless the unit commander has obtained written permission from the post commander for soldiers to help during on-duty time.
- Generally, FRG members should solicit donations for their goods and services. However, a specific minimum donation may be set for bake sales, craft fairs, and car washes.

- If the installation permits it, spouses (not soldiers) may solicit free or discounted food and other products from private businesses off post and concessions on post to help support FRG activities. However, this must be done as an individual, not as an Army representative.
- Thank you notes to commercial contributors are encouraged, but use FRG letterhead—not the unit's.
- Door-to-door solicitation is prohibited on post.
- During periods of drought and announced water use restrictions on post, car wash fundraisers are likely to be prohibited.
- Remember, too, that official FRG newsletters may not contain references to dollar amounts earned from fundraisers.
- Encourage all FRG members to participate in unit fundraisers. It's good for morale, and besides, when everyone helps with the FRG's work, it's fair to share in the benefits.



Chapter 9

The FRG—Bringing It All Together

Genuine caring and regard for all soldiers and families and a commitment of selfless service to them are exactly what make FRGs truly effective. This final chapter brings together all the essential ingredients and key tasks of effective FRGs. The central questions FRG leaders must answer are:

- Do I have a clear understanding of the vital role of the FRG in building soldier and family morale, cohesion, and self-reliance?
- Do I understand how critical an effective FRG is to successful accomplishment of the unit mission?
- Will I focus on the basic aspects of building and operating an effective FRG instead of fancy ideas that look good on paper but really do nothing to improve the well being of soldiers and families?
- Will I empathize with FRG members' concerns and needs and make my sole FRG agenda to help them successfully endure the stresses they face in military life?
- Will I set aside self-interest and give genuine, selfless service to them?

If you can answer affirmatively to all of these questions, then you, as an FRG leader, are ready to make good things happen in the FRG.

A CALM AND WELL-PLANNED APPROACH

There are several ways to bring any organization from concept to reality, but one of the best ways to build an effective FRG is to use the FRG Checklist (provided at the end of this chapter on pages 149–151) as a guide. Note that the checklist is built around a framework of the essential ingredients. Under each of these ingredients, key tasks are addressed in detail. Use this handy checklist:

- as a guide in getting started,
- to plan and use as a reference,
- to educate and train other leaders,

- to measure progress, and
- to pinpoint weak areas.

IMPROVING AN EXISTING FRG

When starting up an FRG, leaders need to blend **all** the essential ingredients—not just a couple and not just the easy ones—to accomplish the key tasks of an effective FRG. Likewise, all leaders of weak FRGs need to deal with **all** the important issues—not just the inconsequential ones. Many soldiers and families depend on the FRG leader’s ability to transform a weak FRG into an effective FRG. Once the FRG is going, the trick is to keep improving it and sustaining it during all the changes that occur—deployments, missions, commanders, FRG leaders, and any major stresses.

Many pitfalls of weak FRGs are symptoms of underlying problems. Listed below are some common symptoms of weak FRGs:

- There is no Soldier-Family Readiness Plan.
- Leadership has no or unclear family readiness goals.
- FRG meetings are tense and unfriendly.
- Few people participate in FRG functions.
- Infighting and turf wars are evident among FRG leaders.
- Soldiers and families know little about their unit FRG.
- Little or no information is passed to family members.
- Key FRG leadership positions are chronically vacant.
- The FRG doesn’t exploit resources available for members.
- There is no FRG phonetree, or the phonetree is badly out of date.
- No fun events are shared by unit families and soldiers.
- FRG leadership is not knowledgeable and skilled.
- Morale is poor in the unit and among the families.



What is the problem? It’s easy to recognize symptoms of a problem, but in order to correct it, leaders first have to identify the problem. Then the leader must focus on resolving the problem—not just focus on the symptoms.

Problem Solving

Techniques and skills for problem solving are so important that Operation READY materials and all three levels of AFTB include a problem-solving course. Every leader in the FRG should know and use these skills. Figure 15 shows the steps involved in the problem-solving process.



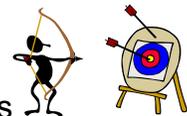
Identify Problem



Gather Information

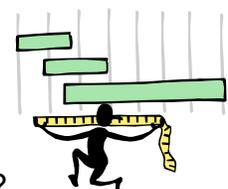


Identify Possible Solutions



Test Possible Solutions

Suitable?
Will it solve the problem?
Is it practical?
Will others accept it?



Time?



Cost?

Value?

Choose Best Solution and Implement



Figure 15. Problem-Solving Steps.

Identify the Problem. Identifying the problem is critical to the entire problem-solving process. Many people don't know the difference between the symptoms of a problem and the problem itself. Often, what people see is only the effect(s) and not the cause(s) of those effects. Leaders must correctly look at situations and discern the underlying cause, which is the real problem. Only then can the leader direct the group to a sound solution.

A great way to identify problems and possible solutions is to brainstorm with key leaders. After all, a group can usually come up with better ideas than an individual can alone. The technique of brainstorming is described in Chapter 7 of this handbook.

- Plan and conduct a workshop with key unit and FRG leaders (not with the entire FRG) to brainstorm the symptoms and possible causal connections.
- Be aware that some issues can be very sensitive—especially if those who are causing the problem are present. However, to improve the FRG, gentle and tactful honesty is necessary.
- Talk with the commander, first sergeant, and their spouses. Discuss plans for the FRG and get their inputs—even if one of these individuals may be at the heart of the problem.
- Another excellent way to identify problem areas is to use the FRG Checklist at the end of this chapter (pages 149–151). It would be helpful, in fact, to have a representative sample of spouses (of senior, middle and junior grade soldiers) complete the checklist. This approach ensures the best feedback about the actual problem or problems facing the FRG.

Gather Information/Research. As part of the process, leaders must do their homework—that is, gather relevant information to make sure they are on the right track. Also, leaders should realize that the steps can overlap and may even be repetitive. For example, if the leader gets halfway through the process and realizes that additional causal factors may exist, the leader should start the process again.

Identify and Test Possible Solutions. Analyzing possible solutions is crucial to selection of the best solution. But how do leaders decide which is the best solution? Three methods for selection are shown below:

- For each possible solution, make a table listing the positive and negative sides of the solution, considering factors such as cost, time requirements, etc. Do this for each suggested solution. Figure 16 contains a sample problem-solving table.
- Test each solution using these criteria:
 - Suitability—does the solution fit the problem?
 - Results—will it actually solve the problem?
 - Feasibility—is it practical? How much will it cost?
 - Acceptability—will others buy into it?
- Finally, the FRG leader and committee chairpersons can discuss solutions and vote on the best solution. This alternative is better than guessing at a solution.

Implement the Solution. This step in the problem-solving sequence accentuates the need to follow through once a decision is made. Some people will study a problem to death but never resolve it—simply because they can't put the decision into action. Leaders want to make sure decisions are carried out and need to be gently decisive to accomplish important tasks for the FRG members' benefit.

- Review the key tasks (see Chapter 3) that need attention.
- Brainstorm plans for improvement.
- Call your installation FRG trainer or your state Family Program Office for help, if needed.
- Make assignments, and provide copies to each leader.
- Review progress at intervals; make midcourse changes, if needed.
- Keep the leadership informed.
- Encourage and praise other leaders who help.
- Be patient. It might take a while, but the results are worth it!

Roadblocks to Good Problem Solving

- failure to pinpoint the problem,
- unsound analysis of solutions,
- fear of failure and its aftermath,
- desire to avoid conflict with others,
- unable to express ideas,
- situation is too tense,
- adverse attitudes or environment,
- pressure by the group, and
- past customs.



Decide It!

What is the problem?

What do I know about it?

Possible Solutions:

Solution	Positive Side	Negative Side

Which solution will work best?

Put it into action?

Figure 16. Sample Problem-Solving Table.

Before applying problem-solving techniques, the FRG leader must keep these things in mind:

- Realize that some people will welcome the outcome of the survey, and some will not.
- These efforts are not designed to point fingers or find fault. The FRG leader wants to make major improvements, not add to the problem. Remember, a lot of people depend on the FRG leader’s caring leadership.
- The FRG leader and others exploring the problem and solutions should avoid the appearance of criticizing anyone.
- Be objective but tactful.
- Make sure key leaders understand the ground rules before and during the problem-solving process.
- Be sure to keep the commander informed of the progress and results.
- When announcing results of the process to the task force, avoid embarrassing anyone. The old adage about the truth hurting applies here. Some things are best left unsaid—in public, anyway.
- There is no need to announce the “culprit” to the entire FRG. The best way to rebuild interest in the FRG is to show the members—not just tell them—the benefits of belonging.

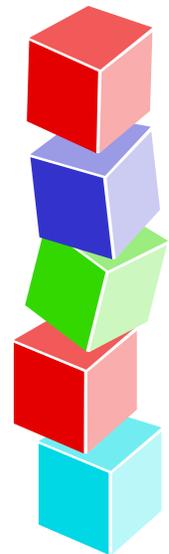
Prevalent Problems in Weak FRGs

In most weak FRGs, the underlying problem is poor leadership. Here are some of the possibilities.

The commander (or other key military leader):

- doesn’t understand the requirement to set up and support a unit FRG;
- doesn’t understand the benefits of a strong FRG;
- has no Family Readiness Plan or goals;
- exhibits a poor attitude toward families;
- exhibits public disrespect or prejudice toward others;
- dominates FRG meetings and runs them in a military manner; and/or
- fails to provide information needed by families.

How do you solve this problem? Start with a private discussion with the commander. Be calm and businesslike. If that doesn’t work, the issue may have to taken to the next level. If so, let the commander know, but don’t make it sound like a threat.





The FRG leader:

- doesn't understand what an FRG is and how it should work;
 - doesn't support (or actively opposes) the commander's family readiness goals;
 - is too formal—wears spouse's rank;
 - exhibits a poor attitude, prejudice, or disrespect toward others;
 - doesn't or can't get help with committees;
 - is too busy or does not want to fill the FRG leader role, but expects to be in charge when at FRG events;
 - doesn't have a phonetree established, or the phonetree is dysfunctional;
- is poorly organized;
 - spends FRG money on unauthorized or frivolous items or services;
 - doesn't praise worthy volunteers; and/or
 - resents public credit given to others for their efforts

FRG leaders may be surprised or shocked if they see that they are a part of the problem in the FRG, but they must dig down deep and make some serious mental adjustments—for the good of the unit and the families.

FRG committee chairperson:

- exhibits a poor attitude, prejudice, or disrespect toward others;
- undermines the FRG leader's efforts;
- engages in gossip without regard to the harm it can do;
- assigns volunteers all the “dirty work” but does not help;
- is not dependable;
- is poorly organized; and/or
- is unable to motivate other volunteers to help with FRG work.



To solve this problem, discuss the issue privately with the chairperson. The chairperson may not be aware of the impact.

It's no accident that the prevalent problem areas in FRGs just happen to match the essential ingredients of an effective FRG. The ingredients FRGs need the most to survive and thrive are often the ones missing. And that is precisely why the essential ingredients were chosen in the first place.

Most Common FRG Problems

In order of prevalence, these are the problems that affect FRGs:

- Leadership—most common problem of all.
- Fun FRG events—when people do not enjoy themselves at FRG functions, they are unlikely to participate again.
- Organization—if FRG structure and functions are lacking, family readiness goals and benefits will be missing.
- Communication—no effective system for passing important information to members or giving them a way to request it.
- Training—leaders need to learn family readiness topics and skills that will help soldiers and families.



GETTING FAMILIES AND SOLDIERS READY

Remember, the primary goal of the FRG is family readiness. Aside from providing information, a social outlet, family-unit cohesion, and improved morale, FRG leadership should be focused on readiness. Prepare FRG families and soldiers for deployment with the following activities:

<i>TO DO</i>	<i>Description</i>
✓	Make sure the FRG phonetree is current and active.
✓	Ensure that predeployment briefings are scheduled for the unit. Invite members of Family Advocacy and Prevention, Red Cross, SJA, the chaplain, the designated RDO/FRL, and the unit financial officer. Arrange for all speakers in advance—don't wait until the last possible moment to request their help!
✓	Give soldiers and families ample notice (10–15 days) so they can plan to be there. Use the phonetree to get the word out.
✓	Prepare the agenda; the entire briefing should be no longer than an hour. This means each speaker should talk no more than 10 minutes each.
✓	Ensure that information on the mission and schedule are available for members.

- ✓ Ensure that new soldiers and families are invited and included in the FRG phonetree.
- ✓ Ensure that children are included in readiness training at their level.
- ✓ Make sure single parents or vulnerable parents (pregnant, ill, injured, etc.) have current Family Care Plans in place.
- ✓ Check with the unit to determine when Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) is scheduled.
- ✓ Make sure everyone knows how to contact deployed soldiers.
- ✓ Make sure spouses (especially young ones) have access to important personal documents, safe deposit box, car keys, checkbook, etc.
- ✓ Make sure the FRG leader and other key leaders, as well as military leaders, attend family readiness classes. Schedule special classes for the unit, if desired.
- ✓ Obtain training materials for all families, including:
 - a copy of the *Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook* (Operation READY);
 - a copy of the ACS community phone directory of important resources on and off post;
 - a copy of *Mission Readiness*, an excellent pamphlet for assisting and preparing soldiers and their families for deployments and separations;
 - copies of Operation READY children’s workbooks for the appropriate ages, and
 - Operation READY videotapes for FRGs, including: *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles*, *Making Your Reunion Work*, *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong*, and *Coping with Stress*.
- ✓ Schedule these briefings at intervals throughout the year to make sure new spouses get the training they need, too.
- ✓ Schedule going away and reunion events for all FRG members.

SUSTAINING THE FRG DURING A MISSION



Mission time is the primary reason the FRG exists. All of the hard work the FRG leader, other key leaders, and the commander have done pays off while the unit is performing the

mission—whatever it is. When an effective FRG is in place year round and before missions, soldiers and their families can function well during missions.

Certain key tasks need to be emphasized that will keep the FRG running well throughout the mission and beyond. What are they? Get out the FRG Checklist (located at the end of this chapter) and review it. Which key tasks take on major importance now?

- Support the mission.
- Encourage frequent contact with soldiers.
- Welcome new members.
- Get critical information out.
- Keep the phonetree working well.
- Keep installation resources available in sufficient quality and quantity.
- Stay connected—inside and outside of the FRG.
- Deal intelligently with crises.
- Solve problems at the lowest level.
- Know where people are located.
- Plan and do more fun things together.
- Maintain stability.
- Arrange professional counseling and material assistance when needed.
- Counteract gossip.
- Provide training on dealing with separation, loneliness, and reunion.
- Prepare for reunion—welcome home at arrival and a party, if appropriate.
- Avoid burnout.

Important Contacts

During a mission, the FRG leader should maintain close contact with the following people:

- FRG advisor or steering committee leader,
- FRG co-leader,
- RDO/RDNCO,
- FRG committee leaders,
- Battalion chaplain,
- Family Readiness Liaison Officer/NCO, and
- ACS resource representative.

Children's Issues during a Mission



Deployments can impact children in negative ways. It's easy to overlook this fact by thinking that children "wouldn't understand anyway." Children are intelligent and need preparation for deployments and reunions at their levels, too. They suffer stress when there is any change in the family composition or a different situation occurs. The following list will assist adults as they help children adjust to the changes and emotions encountered during a mission:

- Support the soldier's mission.
- Explain what is going to happen and why—do this calmly and during a quiet time.
- Allow children to express sadness, anger, or grief; show empathy.
- Reassure children that their soldier-parent loves them and is not abandoning them.
- Reassure children that their soldier-parent will be okay and will come home.
- Reassure children that their family will maintain contact with the soldier-parent.
- Reassure children that their family will get along fine.
- Keep things normal and stable, just as always.
- Watch for "acting out"—let caregivers or teachers know the situation ahead of time.

Operation READY has a series of children's workbooks to help parents deal with children's issues during deployment and reunion. Provide age-appropriate copies to families in the FRG.

MAINTAINING THE FRG AFTER THE MISSION



This may seem like common sense, but keep in mind that the sense of urgency among a number of key people—the FRG leader, commander, and other leaders—will decrease once the troops return to garrison. This is a time when it would be easy to allow all the hard work to die on the vine, but don't let that happen. It's easier to keep things going well than to let the FRG die and then have to build it again from scratch when the next mission pops up, which can happen without warning.

Now is the time to put the FRG in a "lower gear," but keep it moving. Continue all the key tasks. Especially keep up fun activities and the flow of information to the membership. Be sure to publicly recognize the hard work and caring help rendered by the members and the contacts who worked during the mission. Use the

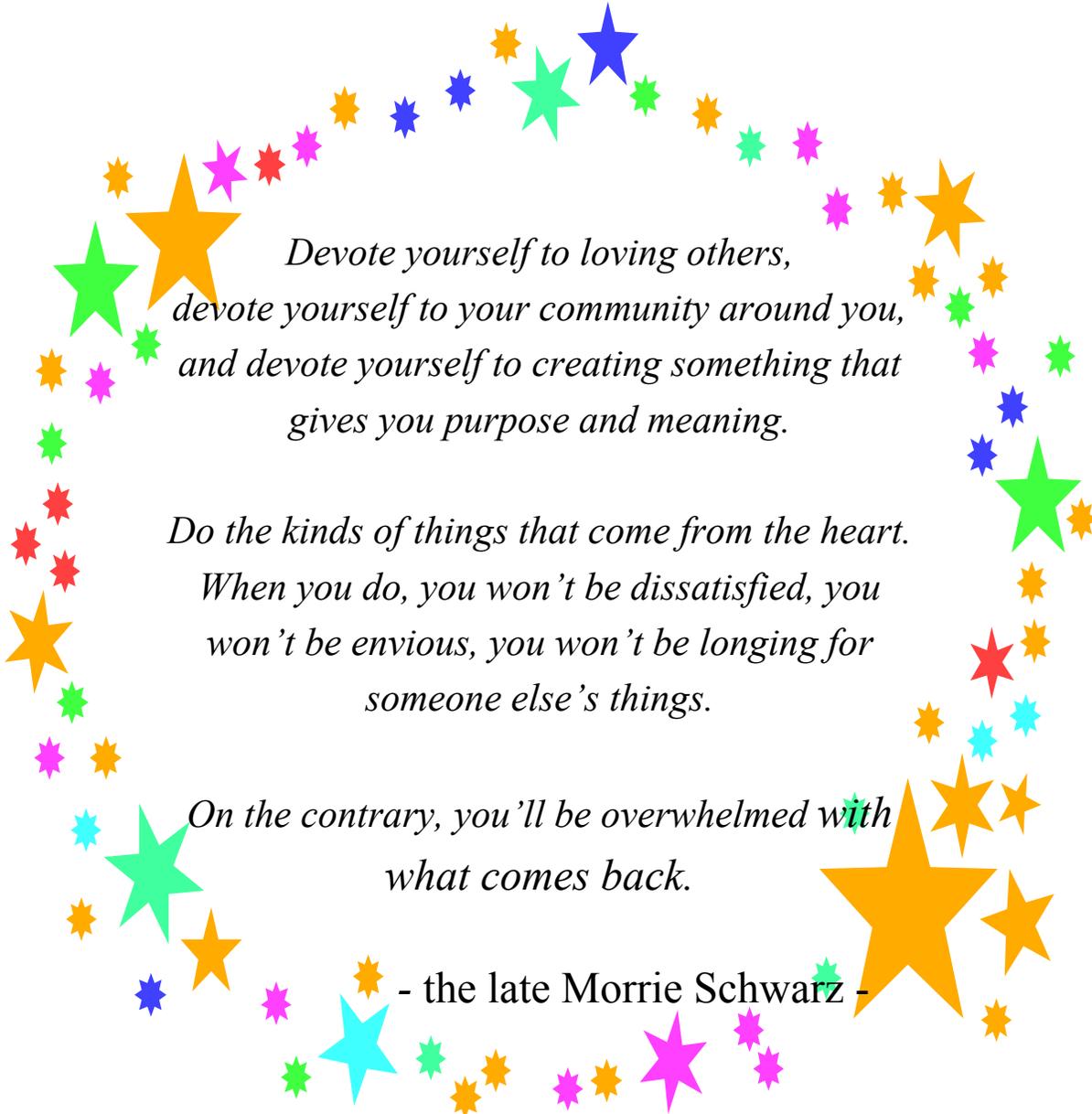
FRG Checklist periodically to gauge where the FRG stands. Make smart changes where needed. Quietly keep things humming along, and keep the FRG effective.



AVOIDING BURNOUT

- First and foremost, FRG leaders should take care of themselves and their families. FRG functions, socials, and obligations should never come before the needs of your own family. A sick child, a marital problem, your job, feeding your family, and other basic issues take priority over your FRG duties. Make sure you eat and sleep as regularly as possible. Look for your own support—friends, family, church, and ACS. Use an answering machine, and screen calls when necessary.
- Know your limits; set priorities, and learn to say “no.” Nicely, of course. Don’t try to do everything yourself. Get help. Recruit and train good people; give them clear job descriptions and goals; treat them with respect and regard, and stand back—let them shine in the FRG! Committee chairpersons and other FRG members want to help, so let them!
- Understand and stick to your role as a leader. Whatever you do, keep in mind that you are there to serve others.
- Leadership can be difficult, so don’t try to please everyone. There are times when you can’t. Sometimes others will be disappointed, but demonstrate that you care and want to make things work for the FRG, and everyone should understand and support you. Don’t be afraid to try new ideas, but remember to focus on basics first.
- Learn resources for referring problems and follow through. Stick to leading, and let the Army deliver specific services. We need to teach Army families to be more self-reliant. Remember that problem people can take up disproportionate amounts of time—refer them to professionals. Remember that confidentiality is a must!
- Learn and teach sound problem-solving techniques. Let people or groups solve their own problems, when feasible. Help people or get help for them when it makes sense.





*Devote yourself to loving others,
devote yourself to your community around you,
and devote yourself to creating something that
gives you purpose and meaning.*

*Do the kinds of things that come from the heart.
When you do, you won't be dissatisfied, you
won't be envious, you won't be longing for
someone else's things.*

*On the contrary, you'll be overwhelmed with
what comes back.*

- the late Morrie Schwarz -

FRG Checklist

<p>Name _____</p> <p>Unit _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mark Yes or No in each blank</p> <p>1. Effective Leadership</p> <p>a. The commander has prepared a Family Readiness Plan. _____</p> <p>b. The commander has unit readiness goals. _____</p> <p>c. The commander has appointed an FRG leader or co-leaders in writing. _____</p> <p>d. The commander appointed an FRG fund treasurer and alternate in writing. _____</p> <p>e. The commander delegates leadership of the FRG to the FRG leader. _____</p> <p>f. The commander actively supports the FRG materially and morally. _____</p> <p>g. The commander encourages participation of all soldiers and spouses in FRG events. _____</p> <p>h. The commander exhibits a friendly and respectful attitude toward all FRG members. _____</p> <p>i. The commander actively promotes diversity within the FRG. _____</p> <p>j. The FRG leader supports the unit readiness goals of the commander. _____</p> <p>k. The FRG leader is assertive yet kind and tactful toward all members. _____</p> <p>l. The FRG leader actively encourages and trains other leaders to be assertive but kind and tactful to all members. _____</p> <p>m. The FRG leader shares leadership authority and responsibility with others. _____</p> <p>n. The FRG leader often recognizes others' efforts and contributions. _____</p> <p>o. Our FRG meetings and events are well attended. _____</p> <p>p. People volunteer readily to work on FRG committee projects. _____</p> <p>q. We genuinely enjoy our FRG events as a unit family. _____</p> <p>r. Morale is high in our FRG. _____</p> <p>Results, Section 1: Total yes answers _____ Total no answers _____ Percent of yes answers _____</p>	<p>Phone _____ Date _____</p> <p>FRG Position _____</p> <p>2. Effective Organization</p> <p>a. Our FRG is organized into several committees, each with a leader and a number of volunteers to help do tasks. _____</p> <p>b. Each committee chairperson has a written job description. _____</p> <p>c. The committee chairperson shares his/her job description with other volunteers so they understand the duties. _____</p> <p>d. The committee chairpersons attend all organizational meetings. _____</p> <p>e. FRG leaders plan and run our meetings well, with an agenda. _____</p> <p>f. Our FRG meetings are short, focused, and follow the agenda. _____</p> <p>g. Our FRG meetings are relaxed but business-like. _____</p> <p>h. We have snacks, drinks and <u>childcare</u> provided at FRG meetings. _____</p> <p>i. Committee chairpersons present reports of their activities. _____</p> <p>j. The treasurer presents an up-to-date status of the FRG fund. _____</p> <p>k. There are plenty of volunteers to help with FRG projects. _____</p> <p>l. We have an up-to-date FRG phonetree and POCs for all families. _____</p> <p>m. Our FRG has a newsletter. _____</p> <p>n. At our fundraisers, there is always a good mix of members to help. _____</p> <p>o. Our hospitality/welcome committee does a great job of helping new families feel welcome to the unit FRG. _____</p> <p>p. We have a special events calendar set up for the whole year. _____</p> <p>q. Our FRG secretary keeps excellent records of our meetings. _____</p> <p>r. The special events chairperson schedules training presentations by Family Readiness Program. _____</p> <p>Results, Section 2: Total yes answers _____ Total no answers _____ Percent of yes answers _____</p>
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FRG Checklist (Page 2)

3. Effective Communication

- a. Our FRG has a functional phonetree headed by a chairperson. _____
- b. Every family has a phonetree point of contact (POC) assigned to it. _____
- c. Our POCs are trained, knowledgeable, and helpful. _____
- d. Our phonetree is updated regularly and distributed to the POCs. _____
- e. The POCs test their branches of the phonetree at least monthly. _____
- f. The phonetree works well when important news is passed down. _____
- g. Members can contact a POC readily when they need information. _____
- h. Our FRG publishes a newsletter at least quarterly. _____
- i. The newsletter is a good source of information about upcoming events. _____
- j. The newsletter is well designed, laid out, and composed. _____
- k. FRG members are encouraged to submit articles for the newsletter. _____
- l. We have FRG meetings on a regular basis to get important information. _____
- m. At our meetings, everyone has an opportunity to be heard. _____
- n. We frequently have guest speakers at our meetings to provide special information or training. _____
- o. We have access to useful FRG training materials. _____
- p. We have a detailed, up-to-date Family Readiness Guide. _____
- q. Our FRG also uses the internet to distribute information. _____
- r. Our members are well informed of FRG activities and other items. _____
- s. Our leadership is accessible and approachable when help or information is needed. _____

Results, Section 3:

Total yes answers _____
Total no answers _____
Percent of yes answers _____

4. Effective Training

- a. Our FRG leaders have completed all Operation READY FRG training. _____
- b. Our FRG leaders have completed Level 1 of Army Family Team Building. _____
- c. At least 50 percent of platoon leaders and platoon sergeants have completed some portion of AFTB. _____
- d. At least 50 percent of E5 and E6s and their spouses have completed AFTB Level I. _____
- e. At least 50 percent of soldiers E4 and below and their spouses have completed AFTB Level I. _____
- f. Our phonetree POCs have received a two-hour training course in proper operation of the FRG phonetree. _____
- g. Our unit has received training on Operation READY FRG Overview, Preparation for Deployment, and Dealing with Separation and Reunion during the last 12 calendar months. _____
- h. Our rear detachment officer and NCOs have all completed the required certification course. _____
- i. All volunteer hours served are recorded and reported to Volunteer Services Branch. _____

Results, Section 4:

Total yes answers _____
Total no answers _____
Percent of yes answers _____

FRG Checklist (Page 3)

- 5. Fun Events**
- a. Our FRG has at least one fun event each quarter. _____
 - b. Decisions on FRG events are discussed at FRG meetings. _____
 - c. Our FRG events are scheduled at least six months out. _____
 - d. We also plan an alternate event in the event of bad weather. _____
 - e. Preparation for FRG events is well planned and executed. _____
 - f. Soldiers and families are well organized for preparation. _____
 - g. We always have plenty of help for planning and setting up events. _____
 - h. There is plenty of good food and drinks at our outings. _____
 - i. Ample games, equipment, and facilities are available for our events. _____
 - j. Our FRG events include everyone—soldiers with families, the families, single soldiers and fiancées. _____
 - k. Most of our soldiers and families participate in our FRG outings. _____
 - l. All of our FRG events so far have been fun. _____
 - m. There is something fun to do for everyone at our outings. _____
 - n. The FRG leader always emphasizes health and safety before and during every FRG outing. _____
 - o. Our FRG safety record has been outstanding so far. _____
 - p. Expenses for our outings are funded mostly by money raised by the members. _____
 - q. Ample donations from senior soldiers and spouses make up any shortfall. _____

Results, Section 5:
Total yes answers _____
Total no answers _____
Percent of yes answers _____

Overall Results:

Grand Total yes answers _____
Grand Total no answers _____
Overall Percent yes answers _____

Grading Criteria:

Effective FRG—90 percent or higher
Above Average FRG—80 to 89 percent
Average FRG—70 to 79 percent
Marginal FRG—60 to 69 percent
Ineffective FRG—below 60 percent

Results:

Based on the completed checklist and above grading criteria, my unit FRG is a(n) _____ FRG.

Favorable areas:

Area(s) needing improvement:

Attach additional sheet(s) as needed.

FRG Training Workshop Lesson Plans

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Facilitator's Guidelines

This FRG training module provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Goal: Volunteers will learn to establish and run a Family Readiness Group.

Audience: Volunteer leaders, commanders, and liaison officers

Time Required: 12 hours for complete workshop

Room Requirements: This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the participants comfortably. It is designed as a group process, with tables seating 6-8 people. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of flip charts, videos, and overheads.

Facilitator's Preparation:

1. Reserve a room large enough to accommodate the number of participants. Consider space for displays and refreshments.
2. The facilitator is responsible for leading the workshop, which includes set up, printing and distributing handouts and other materials, and arranging group activities. Other tips include:
 - Plan an icebreaker activity.
 - Arrange for guest speakers or subject matter experts as presenters.
 - Gather needed materials.
 - Offer refreshments.
 - Arrange for childcare.
 - Enjoy yourself.
3. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([]) in the lesson text. The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The suggested activities list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.
4. PowerPoint slides are provided on the CD-ROM, or from the <http://www.goacs.org> website. PowerPoint Notes Pages are included in this handbook (pages 217–334) for your use in teaching the lesson. You may choose to add other slides to the presentation as you see fit. The slides may be projected from the CD, copied to a file and projected if your laptop computer does not have a CD-ROM, or copied onto plastic overheads.
5. Preview the videos, *Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong* and *Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Army Life, Think ACS*.

Note: The FRG video may be used as an introduction to the workshop or as a review at the end of the workshop. The ACS video may be introduced as resource information for FRG leaders. The video script is included in this handbook (pages 389–393) for your use in teaching the lesson.

6. Assemble all other necessary workshop materials and equipment.

Handouts:

FRG Leader's Handbook (pages 1–152). Provide a copy for each participant.

Handouts. See the Workshop Overviews (page 157 for Part One lessons and page 195 for Part Two lessons) to easily determine the handouts needed for each lesson.

Workshop materials:

Flip chart paper on easel and colored markers

Masking tape for securing charts

Pens and pencils for participants' use

Equipment:

Overhead transparency projector, or laptop computer with LCD projector and screen

Television and VCR

7. The workshop is divided into two parts. **Part One** is “Building Your Family Readiness Group” and consists of an overview and four lessons. **Part Two** is “Running Your Family Readiness Group” and consists five lessons. Each of the lessons may be taught individually, if required by a military unit.
8. Select assistants, who may include subject matter experts, experienced FRG leaders, newsletter editors, chaplain or Family Advocacy Program staff member experienced in crisis intervention.

Part One: Building Your Family Readiness Group

Part One—Workshop Overview Estimated Time: 4 hours

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual = V Handout = H
5 minutes	Introduction	V #1
20 minutes	Agenda Icebreaker Objectives	V #2–3 H #1–2 H: <i>FRG Leader's Handbook</i> V #4
45 minutes	Lesson One: FRG Overview	V #5–21 Video: <i>FRG: A Place to Belong</i> H #3
45 minutes	Lesson Two: Leadership for Effective FRGs	V #22–39 H #4–7
30 minutes	Lesson Three: Building Your FRG—Getting Started	V #40–51 H #8
50 minutes	Lesson Four: Building Your FRG—Volunteers	V #52–64 H #9–10
20 minutes	Lesson Five: Building Your FRG—Making Contact	V #65–72

Part One: Workshop Welcome and Introduction

[Visual #1: Family Readiness Group Training Workshop]

Welcome to the Family Readiness Group Training Workshop. The purpose of this course is to train you as leaders and FRG volunteers to establish and operate a successful and effective FRG. The workshop is designed for FRG volunteers, commanders, Family Readiness Liaison, and all those concerned with the well being of the Army family. It is designed in two parts. Part One consists of an Overview and four lessons on setting up the FRG. Part Two consists of four lessons on operating the FRG and ends with a wrap up session.

AGENDA

[Visuals #2 and #3: Agenda] (Show both visuals if you are presenting both parts of the workshop consecutively. If only presenting Part One, show only Visual #2.)

This is the agenda for our training. We will conclude the workshop with an opportunity for each of you to share experiences and materials that you are extremely proud of and any advice those of you who have been or are now leaders are willing to share. All of you have practical hints to give to those new to FRG leadership. Newsletters, flyers, handouts, certificates, and volunteer recognition ideas are some of the things that can be shared. Opinions and comments are welcome at any time during the training, as well.

[Begin with any “housekeeping” items that may apply: location of rest rooms, snacks, breaks, lunch arrangements, childcare issues, etc. Also include an icebreaker activity that will allow participants to get acquainted and learn about one another. Examples of icebreaker activities can be found in your Handouts section—Handouts #1 and 2].

[Distribute the FRG Leader’s Handbook to all participants.]

OBJECTIVES

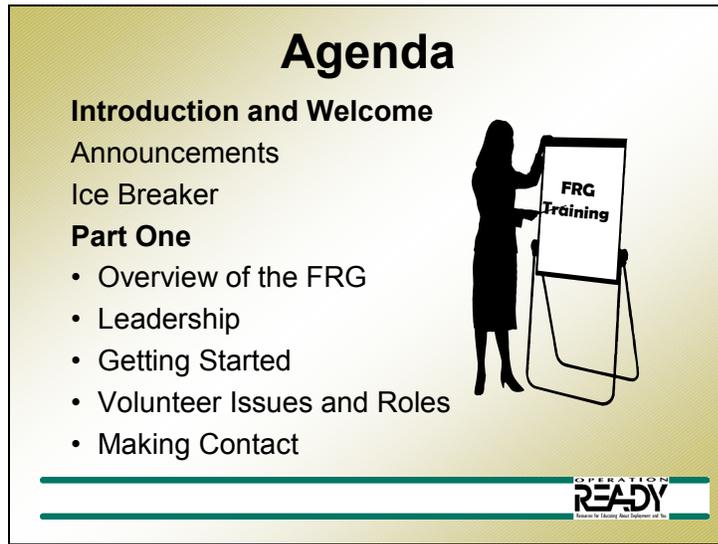
[Visual #4: Objectives]

In this workshop, we will focus on these objectives. Participants will learn:

- to understand the value and importance of the FRG for the unit, soldiers, and families;
- about the essential ingredients and key tasks of the FRG;
- how to establish and run an effective FRG; and
- to develop strong, organized, and caring FRG volunteers.



Welcome to the Family Readiness Group Training Workshop. The purpose of this course is to train you as leaders and FRG volunteers to establish and operate a successful and effective FRG. The workshop is designed for FRG volunteers, commanders, Family Readiness Liaison, and all those concerned with the well being of the Army family. It is designed in two parts. Part One consists of an Overview and four lessons on setting up the FRG. Part Two consists of four lessons on operating the FRG and ends with a wrap up session.



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[Distribute the FRG Leader’s Handbook to all participants.]



[Continue reviewing the agenda if presenting both parts of the workshop consecutively.]

Objectives

Participants will:

- understand the value and importance of the FRG for the unit, soldiers, and families
- learn about the essential ingredients and key tasks of the FRG
- learn how to establish and run an effective FRG
- learn how to develop strong, organized, caring FRG volunteers

OPERATION READY
Mission to Ready the Nation

In this workshop, we will focus on these objectives.

Participants will learn:

- to understand the value and importance of the FRG for the unit, soldiers, and families;
- about the essential ingredients and key tasks of the FRG;
- how to establish and run an effective FRG; and
- to develop strong, organized, and caring FRG volunteers.

[Go to Lesson #1]

Getting to Know You Icebreaker Activity

Write down information about yourself next to each item below. Then move around the room and find someone who matches what you wrote about yourself. Have that person sign on the line that matches what you wrote.

1. My birth month _____
2. Was president when I was born _____
3. My favorite drink _____
4. Number of children in my family of origin _____
5. A bad habit I have _____
6. A food I dislike _____
7. Favorite color _____
8. My FRG job _____
9. Favorite kind of music _____
10. Best vacation spot _____
11. Sport I watch on TV _____
12. My hobby _____

Bingo Icebreaker Activity

Within the group, find a match for each statement. Have the person initial the block.

Likes Italian food	Likes to dance	Has owned a convertible	Bakes their own bread
Is a night owl	Has lived in a really unusual place	Has hugged someone today	Drives a red car
Has been stationed in Alaska	Bites his/her fingernails	Plays a musical instrument	Is relaxed
Has their own business card	Has a birthday this month	Has a spouse who is deployed	Listens to rap music

Lesson One

FRG Overview

Estimated Time: 50 minutes

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #5: Family Readiness Group Overview]

We will begin with an overview of Family Readiness Groups, their purpose, functions, benefits, entitlements, and activities.

[You may choose to show the Operation READY video: Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong” as part of the introduction.]

The overview is found in Chapter 1 of your FRG Leader’s Handbook.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #6: Objectives]

As we work through this lesson, we want to achieve these objectives:

- to understand the value of the FRG,
- to learn the functions and benefits of the FRG,
- to see the FRG as the unit’s family, and
- to learn the essential ingredients of a successful FRG.

[Review each objective with the participants.]

ARMY FAMILIES

[Visual #7: Research: What We Know about Army Families]

Army families have been a favorite topic for researchers for years. A great deal of research data have been accumulated in the last 20 years, and the results are clear. Army families are critical to soldiers in terms of recruitment, readiness, and retention.

Soldiers are concerned about their families and how they are supported, particularly in a deployment. FRGs help to develop a confidence in soldiers that family members will receive reliable and friendly support when the soldier is away.

While deployed—and keep in mind that a deployment involves moving soldiers and their equipment away from the garrison—a soldier who is distracted by family problems back home can be dangerous to himself and his unit.

But if the family is under the care of the Family Readiness Group and is getting help in solving their problems effectively, the soldier is free to focus on the mission.

When a spouse feels valued, connected, and part of the unit, that spouse is much more likely to support a soldier's decision to re-enlist and continue a career in the military.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT FRGS

[Visual #8: FRGs Are Not]

Some misunderstanding exists at times about the purpose of a unit's FRG. The following are some common misunderstandings:

- Coffee groups and FRGs are not the same thing. A unit may have any number of coffee groups based on a variety of criteria, but these are not FRGs. There is only one FRG per unit, and everyone connected to that unit is a member—actively involved or not. Soldiers—both married and single, family members—immediate and extended, civilian employees, and retirees may be part of the FRG.
- FRGs should exist and function in the unit at all times. The focus and activities change while the unit is deployed.
- While the FRG may refer those members who are having problems to the appropriate agency or service, this is not their only function.
- FRGs may look after someone's children in the event of an emergency, but they do not provide long-term care. They can assist someone in finding a long-term solution by referring them to installation or community agencies.
- FRG members are never required to be part of casualty notification. This is the responsibility of the Casualty Assistance Office. FRGs may be involved after the notification, providing help as any good neighbor would do in this kind of situation.
- The FRG is permitted to raise money to support the FRG's events and activities. Events planned by the unit are not the responsibility of the FRG. The FRG does not raise money for the unit. Unit funds and FRG funds should never be mixed.

THE FRG ROLE

[Visual #9: The FRG's Role]

What then is the role of the FRG?

It is said that first impressions are lasting ones. For a new soldier and family in the unit, the positive impression the FRG makes will go a long way to making soldiers and families feel at home. FRG welcome activities for new families are key to this.

FRGs provide support that communicates command caring, integrity of care, and as open and honest communication as possible.

FRG members are usually actively involved in community activities and are knowledgeable about community resources. This information is a key part of FRG activities.

An important function of the FRG is providing information to the family about unit activities. The FRG leader works closely with the unit commander and uses meetings, newsletters, and/or telephone tree communication to distribute information.

Unit FRGs foster a sense of belonging to the unit and community, and they provide a means for families to develop friendships while they gain information. In addition, they provide referrals to helping agencies and share support while soldiers are gone. Through successful FRG efforts, many spouses have developed a more positive attitude toward themselves and a better understanding of the Army mission to maintain readiness.

[Visual #10: FRG is the Unit's Family]

For too long, the family was thought of as an extension of the soldiers. In reality, the soldier is an extension of the family. When we bring resources to the family and involve them in FRG activities, we strengthen the family and the soldier.

Soldiers (Active, Guard, and Reserve) and their families, as well as civilian employees, retirees and their family members, and single soldiers are members of the Family and Soldier Readiness System and are included in FRG membership.

The FRG is in reality the “family” of the unit to which it belongs. As in all families, some members need help and assistance from time to time to solve problems. The “family” is there for them. This seems to happen more often during deployments, in accordance with Murphy’s Law.

Family members in waiting for sponsors on an unaccompanied tour remain part of the unit’s FRG, even if the soldier has departed.

FRGs should not overlook the single soldiers who may have family in the immediate area. Even sending a newsletter to geographically distant family members can be a morale booster for everyone.

FRG BENEFITS

[Visual #11: FRG—Benefits for Families]

The FRG gives a sense of belonging to the unit and the Army community. It is a means of developing friendships and connections to people with similar interests. The FRG can provide knowledge of the Army and its mission, resources in the community, and support during separations. Involvement in the FRG fosters more positive attitudes among Army families.

[Visual #12: FRG—Benefits for Soldiers]

Soldiers also benefit from a well-run FRG. They can be assured that their families are cared for and supported during separations, allowing them to focus on their duties, perform better, and be safer.

[Visual #13: FRG—Benefits for Commanders]

Commanders and other supervisors, too, benefit from the FRG. Good, strong volunteers who are dedicated to helping unit families can lighten the commander's workload. They are an important part of the readiness goals and can enhance unit readiness by promoting self-reliance. Families who identify with the unit make the commander's job easier.

[Visual #14: FRG—Benefits for the Community]

A well-run FRG can assist the community—whether military or civilian—by strengthening families and helping them to develop coping skills. This can reduce demands on community agencies. The FRG, by fostering diversity, can help the community to thrive and benefit from the presence of the military. The Army benefits by retaining high quality soldiers, whose family members support them, and society as a whole feels confidence in its military.

FRG STRUCTURE

[Visual #15: FRG Structure]

Generally, the most successful FRGs are organized at the unit level—company, battery, troop, or detachment. These are the people who work most closely together.

The battalion is responsible for support and guidance. The steering committee at battalion level can organize events that involve all unit FRGs in seeing that all readiness goals are met. Volunteer training, Operation READY classes, and even large parties can be accomplished at battalion level, with the help of all unit FRGs.

In some instances, a single central FRG may exist at battalion level. These are usually found in military school situations where the permanent party personnel are few in number.

WHO LEADS THE FRG?

[Visual #16: FRG—Who Leads It?]

A variety of volunteer leadership options occur in FRGs.

The most important factor is that the person is truly a volunteer and not assuming the position of leadership merely because of his or her spouse's military position.

Commanders are ultimately responsible for unit FRGs, and the commander must approve FRG leaders. The commander or any other soldier should not be the leader.

Leaders of FRGs are usually volunteers elected by the group, volunteers who emerge from the group, or volunteers who are appointed by the commander. For example, if the commander's spouse chooses not to take the role of the unit FRG leader, this person can be recognized as an advisor to the FRG and an informal intermediary with senior spouses in the "chain of concern" or command spouse organization within the community. Commanders' spouses may be included in planning and executing programs and activities to the extent they wish to be involved.

Regardless of the method used in designating the FRG leader, leaders and key volunteers should be acknowledged in writing. Handout #3 contains a sample appointment order.

[Distribute Handout #3.]

Other elements of the Soldier and Family Readiness structure can be found on page 15 of your FRG Leader's Handbook.

CHAIN OF COMMAND/CHAIN OF CONCERN

[Visual 17: Chain of Command/Chain of Concern]

There are two major support chains associated with any FRG: the Chain of Command and the Chain of Concern. The Chain of Command is comprised of military leaders and senior staff members. The Chain of Concern is comprised of spouse volunteers. The FRG

is the link that conveys important information from the military leadership to the families and also conveys family members' concerns and issues to the command.

The responsibilities of members of both the Chain of Command and Chain of Concern can be found on pages 16–17 of your FRG Handbook.

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF SUCCESSFUL FRGS

[Visual #18: Essential Ingredients of Successful FRGs]

The Army originally called its family support network the “Family Support Group (FSG),” which is a term still found in many references. The concept had early roots among family members, who banded together during war or tours overseas or other isolated locations, to provide information, moral support, and social outlets to their members. The Army focused sharply on family readiness as a result of lessons learned during the 1990–91 Gulf War.

On 1 June 2000, Department of Army renamed it “Family Readiness Group (FRG)” Army-wide, to emphasize the need for readiness and self-sufficiency among family members in the modern Army.

Today, we go a step farther, emphasizing the critical need for *effective* FRGs. What we mean by an *effective* FRG is a family of soldiers and family members who:

- have strong, caring **leadership**;
- have an effective **organization** in a positive, friendly environment;
- work, **train**, and play well together;
- plan and enjoy **fun activities**, and include everyone;
- **communicate** well and share timely, accurate information; and
- make Army units and families stronger.

These are the five essential ingredients of an effective FRG.

PITFALLS

[Visual #19: Pitfalls for an Organization]

An FRG is similar to a growing plant. You can't force it to grow, but you can create an atmosphere conducive to growth by providing plenty of light, water, and care. The same principle affects a growing FRG. Mandatory participation will kill its growth, but making an FRG inviting for others to attend produces an atmosphere conducive to growth.

There's no rank among spouses in an FRG. It's a volunteer group—a small pocket of democracy in the midst of a rule-bound organization. It must remain this way to work. Claiming ownership and telling others what to do can kill participation quickly, but providing an inviting context for participation can bring positive results.

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL BRIDGES

[Visual #20: Building Organizational Bridges]

How do you make meetings inviting? Three essential things are necessary:

- childcare,
- food (nourishing snacks and beverages—check the dining facility for help), and
- door prizes. People will come out for prizes and food! Ask local merchants, restaurants, and hotels to donate gift certificates. They want the business, and this gets folks in the door.

Sincerity goes a long way in making folks feel welcome. Genuineness in human relations is something we all long for. You can model it in your FRG.

Since the reason for being an FRG is for mutual support, it is important to keep the needs of families in mind during deployments to have an effective FRG. Knowing the needs of your own family will help you discern the needs of others. Take the initiative in meeting those needs by modeling family assistance, which will motivate others to lend a hand and do the same. Volunteerism is contagious—thank goodness!

Remember, people will support what they help to create. Give them a voice and the opportunity to be involved.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

[Visual #21: Things to Remember]

Some things to keep in mind when establishing the FRG include:

- Rank has no place in the FRG.
- FRGs may not charge dues.
- Anyone can be the leader, provided they willing to do the job, willing to be trained to do the job, and they keep the welfare and well being of unit soldiers and family members first and foremost in their minds and hearts.

In our next class, we'll take a closer look at leadership.



We will begin with an overview of Family Readiness Groups, their purpose, functions, benefits, entitlements, and activities.

[You may choose to show the Operation READY video: Family Readiness Groups—A Place to Belong” as part of the introduction.]

The overview is found in Chapter 1 of your *FRG Leader’s Handbook*.

Objectives

- to understand the value of the FRG
- to learn the functions and benefits of the FRG
- to see the FRG as the unit's family
- to learn the essential ingredients of a successful FRG

OPERATION
READY
Ready to Change the World

As we work through this lesson, we want to achieve these objectives:

- to understand the value of the FRG,
- to learn the functions and benefits of the FRG,
- to see the FRG as the unit's family, and
- to learn the essential ingredients of a successful FRG.

[Review each objective with the participants.]

Research: What We Know about Army Families

- **Performance:** Family members have a direct effect on unit morale and cohesion.
- **Readiness:** Soldiers with personal and family problems increase risk.
- **Retention:** Spouse satisfaction influences the soldier.



The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word 'READY' in a bold, stylized font with 'OPERATION' above it and 'Supporting the Soldier's Family' in smaller text below.

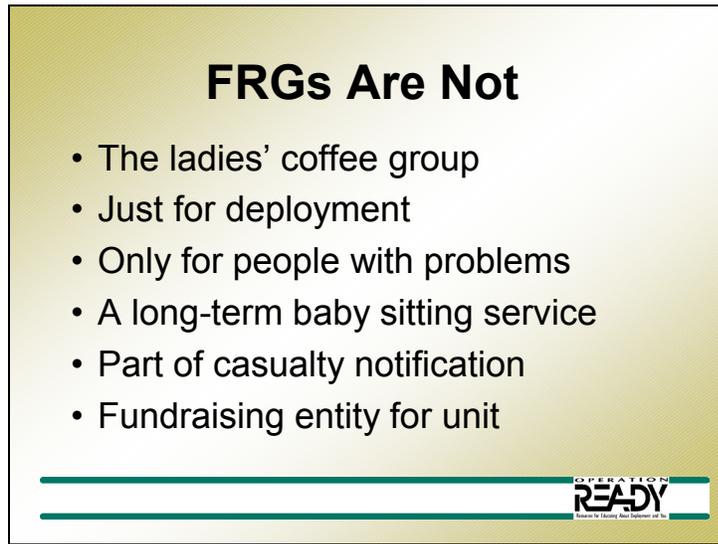
Army families have been a favorite topic for researchers for years. A great deal of research data have been accumulated in the last 20 years, and the results are clear. Army families are critical to soldiers in terms of recruitment, readiness, and retention.

Soldiers are concerned about their families and how they are supported, particularly in a deployment. FRGs help to develop a confidence in soldiers that family members will receive reliable and friendly support when the soldier is away.

While deployed—and keep in mind that a deployment involves moving soldiers and their equipment away from the garrison—a soldier who is distracted by family problems back home can be dangerous to himself and his unit.

But if the family is under the care of the Family Readiness Group and is getting help in solving their problems effectively, the soldier is free to focus on the mission.

When a spouse feels valued, connected, and part of the unit, that spouse is much more likely to support a soldier's decision to re-enlist and continue a career in the military.



Some misunderstanding exists at times about the purpose of a unit's FRG. The following are some common misunderstandings:

- Coffee groups and FRGs are not the same thing. A unit may have any number of coffee groups based on a variety of criteria, but these are not FRGs. There is only one FRG per unit, and everyone connected to that unit is a member—actively involved or not. Soldiers—both married and single, family members—immediate and extended, civilian employees, and retirees may be part of the FRG.
- FRGs should exist and function in the unit at all times. The focus and activities change while the unit is deployed.
- While the FRG may refer those members who are having problems to the appropriate agency or service, this is not their only function.
- FRGs may look after someone's children in the event of an emergency, but they do not provide long-term care. They can assist someone in finding a long-term solution by referring them to installation or community agencies.
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What then is the role of the FRG?

It is said that first impressions are lasting ones. For a new soldier and family in the unit, the positive impression the FRG makes will go a long way to making soldiers and families feel at home. FRG welcome activities for new families are key to this.

FRGs provide support that communicates command caring, integrity of care, and as open and honest communication as possible.

FRG members are usually actively involved in community activities and are knowledgeable about community resources. This information is a key part of FRG activities.

An important function of the FRG is providing information to the family about unit activities. The FRG leader works closely with the unit commander and uses meetings, newsletters, and/or telephone tree communication to distribute information.

Unit FRGs foster a sense of belonging to the unit and community, and they provide a means for families to develop friendships while they gain information. In addition, they provide referrals to helping agencies and share support while soldiers are gone. Through successful FRG efforts, many spouses have developed a more positive attitude toward themselves and a better understanding of the Army mission to maintain readiness.

FRG is the Unit's Family

- Soldier is an extension of the family
- All soldiers and families are members
- Families are involved in career decisions
- Families in waiting need help, too
- Single soldiers have families, too



The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word "OPERATION" in small letters above "READY" in large, bold letters, with a tagline below it.

For too long, the family was thought of as an extension of the soldiers. In reality, the soldier is an extension of the family. When we bring resources to the family and involve them in FRG activities, we strengthen the family and the soldier.

Soldiers (Active, Guard, and Reserve) and their families, as well as civilian employees, retirees and their family members, and single soldiers are members of the Family and Soldier Readiness System and are included in FRG membership.

The FRG is in reality the “family” of the unit to which it belongs. As in all families, some members need help and assistance from time to time to solve problems. The “family” is there for them. This seems to happen more often during deployments, in accordance with Murphy’s Law.

Family members in waiting for sponsors on an unaccompanied tour remain part of the unit’s FRG, even if the soldier has departed.

FRGs should not overlook the single soldiers who may have family in the immediate area. Even sending a newsletter to geographically distant family members can be a morale booster for everyone.

FRG—Benefits for Families

- Develop friendships
- Share information
- Obtain referrals
- Moral support
- Positive attitude



The FRG gives a sense of belonging to the unit and the Army community. It is a means of developing friendships and connections to people with similar interests. The FRG can provide knowledge of the Army and its mission, resources in the community, and support during separations. Involvement in the FRG fosters more positive attitudes among Army families.

FRG—Benefits for Soldiers



- Peace of mind
- Ability to focus
- Improve job performance
- Safety

OPERATION READY
Supporting the Warfighter

Soldiers also benefit from a well-run FRG. They can be assured that their families are cared for and supported during separations, allowing them to focus on their duties, perform better, and be safer.

FRG—Benefits for Commanders

- Lighten workload
- Improve readiness
- Promote self-reliance
- Enhance camaraderie



Commanders and other supervisors, too, benefit from the FRG. Good, strong volunteers who are dedicated to helping unit families can lighten the commander's workload. They are an important part of the readiness goals and can enhance unit readiness by promoting self-reliance. Families who identify with the unit make the commander's job easier.

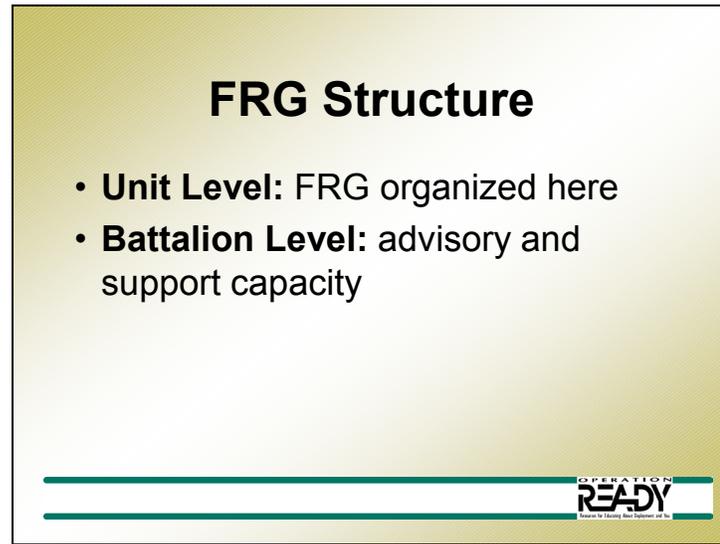
FRG—Benefits for the Community

- Forestall serious family problems
- Reduce demand on agencies
- Promote diversity



The visual is a slide with a light green background. At the top, the title 'FRG—Benefits for the Community' is centered in bold black text. Below the title is a bulleted list of three items: 'Forestall serious family problems', 'Reduce demand on agencies', and 'Promote diversity'. To the right of the third bullet point is a small square illustration of a coastal town with red and yellow houses, a church steeple, and a boat in the water. At the bottom right of the slide is the 'Operation READY' logo, which includes the text 'OPERATION READY' and 'Supporting the Army's Mission'.

A well-run FRG can assist the community—whether military or civilian—by strengthening families and helping them to develop coping skills. This can reduce demands on community agencies. The FRG, by fostering diversity, can help the community to thrive and benefit from the presence of the military. The Army benefits by retaining high quality soldiers, whose family members support them, and society as a whole feels confidence in its military.



Generally, the most successful FRGs are organized at the unit level—company, battery, troop, or detachment. These are the people who work most closely together.

The battalion is responsible for support and guidance. The steering committee at battalion level can organize events that involve all unit FRGs in seeing that all readiness goals are met. Volunteer training, Operation READY classes, and even large parties can be accomplished at battalion level, with the help of all unit FRGs.

In some instances, a single central FRG may exist at battalion level. These are usually found in military school situations where the permanent party personnel are few in number.

FRG – Who Leads It?

- Commander establishes and supports the FRG but is NOT the leader
- Leaders may:
 - volunteer
 - be appointed
 - be elected
- Leaders should receive appointment letters



A variety of volunteer leadership options occur in FRGs.

The most important factor is that the person is truly a volunteer and not assuming the position of leadership merely because of his or her spouse's military position.

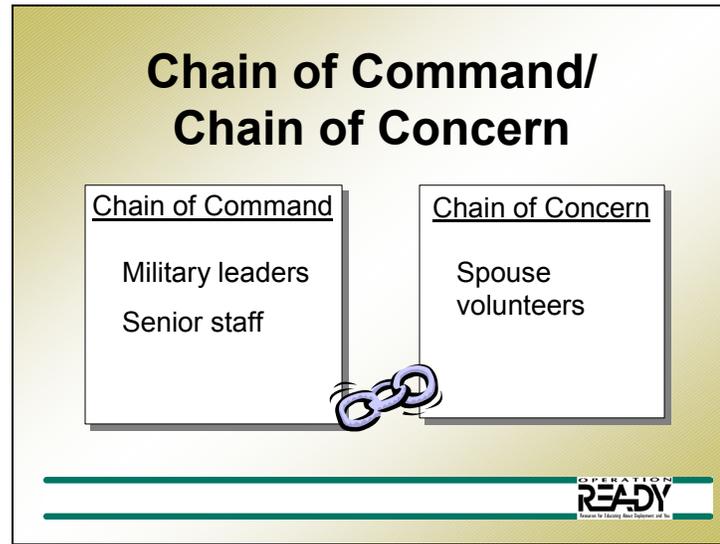
Commanders are ultimately responsible for unit FRGs, and the commander must approve FRG leaders. The commander or any other soldier should not be the leader.

Leaders of FRGs are usually volunteers elected by the group, volunteers who emerge from the group, or volunteers who are appointed by the commander. For example, if the commander's spouse chooses not to take the role of the unit FRG leader, this person can be recognized as an advisor to the FRG and an informal intermediary with senior spouses in the "chain of concern" or command spouse organization within the community. Commanders' spouses may be included in planning and executing programs and activities to the extent they wish to be involved.

Regardless of the method used in designating the FRG leader, leaders and key volunteers should be acknowledged in writing. Handout #3 contains a sample appointment order.

[Distribute Handout #3.]

Other elements of the Soldier and Family Readiness structure can be found on page 15 of your FRG Leader's Handbook.



There are two major support chains associated with any FRG: the Chain of Command and the Chain of Concern. The Chain of Command is comprised of military leaders and senior staff members. The Chain of Concern is comprised of spouse volunteers. The FRG is the link that conveys important information from the military leadership to the families and also conveys family members' concerns and issues to the command.

The responsibilities of members of both the Chain of Command and Chain of Concern can be found on pages 16–17 of your FRG Handbook.

Essential Ingredients of Successful FRGs

- Caring leaders
- Well-trained
- Well-organized
- Great communications
- Fun FRG events



**OPERATION
READY**
Supporting the Army's Family Support Network

The Army originally called its family support network the “Family Support Group (FSG),” which is a term still found in many references. The concept had early roots among family members, who banded together during war or tours overseas or other isolated locations, to provide information, moral support, and social outlets to their members. The Army focused sharply on family readiness as a result of lessons learned during the 1990–91 Gulf War.

On 1 June 2000, Department of Army renamed it “Family Readiness Group (FRG)” Army-wide, to emphasize the need for readiness and self-sufficiency among family members in the modern Army.

Today, we go a step farther, emphasizing the critical need for *effective* FRGs. What we mean by an *effective* FRG is a family of soldiers and family members who:

- have strong, caring **leadership**;
- have an effective **organization** in a positive, friendly environment;
- work, **train**, and play well together;
- plan and enjoy **fun activities**, and include everyone;
- **communicate** well and share timely, accurate information; and
- make Army units and families stronger.

These are the five essential ingredients of an effective FRG.

Pitfalls for an Organization

- Don't even try
- Make participation mandatory
- Try to pull rank
- Claim ownership
- Tell others what to do



An FRG is similar to a growing plant. You can't force it to grow, but you can create an atmosphere conducive to growth by providing plenty of light, water, and care. The same principle affects a growing FRG. Mandatory participation will kill its growth, but making an FRG inviting for others to attend produces an atmosphere conducive to growth.

There's no rank among spouses in an FRG. It's a volunteer group—a small pocket of democracy in the midst of a rule-bound organization. It must remain this way to work. Claiming ownership and telling others what to do can kill participation quickly, but providing an inviting context for participation can bring positive results.

Building Organizational Bridges

- Make meetings inviting.
- Make participation voluntary.
- Be real and genuine.
- Keep families' needs in mind.
- Involve as many people as possible, and give them a voice.





How do you make meetings inviting? Three essential things are necessary:

- childcare,
- food (nourishing snacks and beverages—check the dining facility for help), and
- door prizes. People will come out for prizes and food! Ask local merchants, restaurants, and hotels to donate gift certificates. They want the business, and this gets folks in the door.

Sincerity goes a long way in making folks feel welcome. Genuineness in human relations is something we all long for. You can model it in your FRG.

Since the reason for being an FRG is for mutual support, it is important to keep the needs of families in mind during deployments to have an effective FRG. Knowing the needs of your own family will help you discern the needs of others. Take the initiative in meeting those needs by modeling family assistance, which will motivate others to lend a hand and do the same. Volunteerism is contagious—thank goodness!

Remember, people will support what they help to create. Give them a voice and the opportunity to be involved.

Things to Remember



- There is no rank!
- There are no dues.
- Leadership is not based upon sponsor's position.
- Participation is voluntary.



Some things to keep in mind when establishing the FRG include:

- Rank has no place in the FRG.
- FRGs may not charge dues.
- Anyone can be the leader, provided they willing to do the job, willing to be trained to do the job, and they keep the welfare and well being of unit soldiers and family members first and foremost in their minds and hearts.

In our next class, we'll take a closer look at leadership.

Sample Appointment Order

(DATE)

MEMORANDUM FOR *(Name of Volunteer)*

SUBJECT: Appointment of *(Name of Position)*

1. This is to confirm your appointment as (position) of B Battery 1-23 Battalion Family Readiness Group for a period of one year (or whatever time period your FRG has agreed upon) beginning (date).
2. Your activities as (position) must be in accordance with DA PAM 608-47 and the Joint Ethics Regulation. Your Point of Contact on my staff is SSG John Doe (if a liaison is appointed).
3. Please accept my sincere thanks for volunteering for this position, a most important duty for our Family Readiness Group.

(Commander's Signature Block)

Copy furnished:
(Liaison) SSG John Doe

Lesson Two

Leadership for Effective FRGs

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #22: Building Your FRG—Leadership]

Welcome to our class on leadership for effective FRGs. We will be referring to Chapter 2 of your FRG Leader’s Handbook and accompanying handouts throughout this class.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #23: Objectives]

In this class we will focus on leadership characteristics and the skills needed to be an effective FRG leader. Participants will:

- learn the characteristics of effective leaders, and
- understand leadership skills of teamwork, decision making, supervising people, problem solving, and public speaking.

LEADERSHIP

[Visual #24: Leadership]

“Leadership—the ability to influence others to act in a given way.” This is a standard definition of leadership found in many classes on the subject. What exactly does it mean, and how do we acquire this ability? This class is designed to help you become this kind of leader.

[Visual #25: Do You Want to be the Leader?]

As we begin to talk about leading the FRG, the first thing you may want to do is to think about your commitment to the job. Ask yourself these questions:

- Can you do the job? (Most everyone can.)
- Should you do it? Only you can answer that. As you are looking at this aspect, think about the following things. What does your personal schedule look like? Do you work outside the home? Are you going to school? Do you have small children? Can you devote the necessary time to the job based upon these factors?

Do a personal assessment based upon this list. Remember, FRG leadership is a volunteer position. It is not required that you take on the responsibilities because your soldier is the commander or the first sergeant. To be an effective leader, you must be committed to helping families and assisting the unit in carrying out its readiness goals.

[Distribute Handout #4 for the Group Discussion. These items can be discussed by the entire class, or the class can be divided into two groups, with each group discussing the situation and reports.]

[Visual #26: Characteristics of an Effective Leader]

You will find here, and also in Chapter 2 of your FRG Handbook, a list of the characteristics of an effective leader. No one person has all of these, but the more of these traits a leader exhibits, the better the chance of influencing people to want to be involved in their FRG. These traits can be acquired with training and ingrained with practice.

(Activity: Have several class participants select a trait and discuss what that trait involves and how that trait affects the FRG.)

Although the FRG is managed by volunteers, they are not the only ones who should have these traits. Commanders and other officers, the first sergeant, and other NCOs need to have these traits as well to be effective leaders.

What kind of leader are you? When we have finished this class, you will have an opportunity to take an assessment of your leadership skills so you will be able to identify your strong points and those areas where you need to improve.

[Visual #27: Leadership Goals]

We have identified the traits necessary for effective leadership. Now let's look at some of the goals you might want to accomplish as a leader:

- Understand the commander's goals.
- Convey the goals to soldiers and families.
- Get everyone's support for the goals.
- Recruit other volunteers.
- Get organized.
- Get everyone trained.
- Interact effectively.

As we continue this training course, we will be discussing ways in which these goals may be accomplished.

THE COMMANDER/FRG LEADER RELATIONSHIP

[Visual #28: Commander/FRG Leader Relationship]

As a leader, one of the first things you need to do is to establish a working relationship with the commander. He or she is ultimately responsible for the FRG, establishing it as part of the family readiness plan and supporting your efforts to make it successful. The commander needs to know that your goals are aligned with his (hers). Going off in opposite directions will create many problems. An adversarial position is most uncomfortable, and in the long run, it accomplishes nothing. If you feel that the commander does not understand the role and mission of the FRG, invite him to training, and share the information. Attempt to find some common ground. Listed here are some of the things a commander should expect of you—the leader:

- Serve others.
- Show respect.
- Be sensitive and honest.
- Support goals.
- Be dependable.
- Share information.
- Be discreet.

Additionally, the leader needs these things from the commander:

- Inform.
- Be supportive.
- Be dependable.
- Show respect.
- Lead.
- Be committed to families.

Notice the similarities? If you work together—not against one another—these can be accomplished.

DO YOU NEED A CO-LEADER?

[Visual #29: Do You Need a Co-Leader?]

Many leaders—especially those who are taking on this job for the first time—often look for a co-leader. This can work well, but it can also lead to tension and problems. Having both an officer’s spouse and an NCO’s spouse co-leading can be very effective because it sets an excellent role model for all soldiers and family members. To minimize difficulties, the co-leaders must agree upon some things from the beginning. Tasks and responsibilities must be clearly defined. You must communicate openly with one another. Decisions should be made jointly. FRG members need to see you as a good team. Any tensions will be quickly noticed and can divide the group into factions. The resulting damage can take quite a while to heal.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

[Visual #30: Leadership Styles (Directing)]

Let’s take a look at leadership styles. The way we lead groups can be described in four different manners.

Directing. The leader using this style is very task oriented and focused on getting the job done. There is little group input—perhaps because the group is inexperienced or perhaps something must be done in a limited amount of time. Although this style may sometimes be required, this is not the best style for most groups. There will be members with experience and members who want to have input. Not allowing group participation can turn people away.

[Visual #31: Leadership Styles (Coaching)]

The leader who coaches is both task oriented and group oriented—he or she directs and encourages. The leader keeps people on track but allows them to express ideas and opinions. The leader monitors progress and gives ideas and suggestions for getting the task accomplished. This is a more effective style for a group of volunteers.

[Visual #32: Leadership Styles (Supporting)]

As the group gains in experience, the leader can set goals, assign tasks, and support the efforts of the group. The leader reviews progress and suggests changes. This also is an effective style for leading volunteer groups.

[Visual #33: Leadership Styles (Delegating)]

With this leadership style, the group is in control of the task; they define the goals, plan, and make decisions. The leader is concerned more with how the group members interact

than with the outcome of the project. Routine tasks should be delegated with a highly experienced group. Your FRG Handbook has some ideas for when each of these styles is most effective.

SUPERVISING PEOPLE

[Visual #34: Supervising People]

Leadership skills and leadership styles are part of the ability to supervise and motivate people, manage the tasks, and work together with the FRG volunteers. Some of the do's and don'ts of supervising people are listed here and in your FRG Handbook.

- Everyone—regardless of their level of experience and knowledge—deserves to be treated in a friendly and considerate manner.
- Make sure your volunteers have written job descriptions. This avoids confusion and conveys your trust in their ability to do the job.
- Know your volunteers—their skills, abilities, and reliability. Assign tasks accordingly, and be sure that all of you understand the goals you want to achieve.
- Encourage, praise, and thank people often, but don't let it lose its very special meaning. Praise and thanks must be sincere.
- Provide feedback on progress—just enough to let people know you are interested.
- Give them a task, and let them do it.

[Visual #35: Supervising People]

On the other hand:

- Don't "change horses in the middle of the stream." Stepping in unnecessarily while a work is in progress creates frustration and discouragement.
- Don't undermine the efforts of your chairpersons.
- Checking on progress is good; getting in the way of progress is micromanaging. If you micromanage, you will soon find yourself doing everything alone.
- If people need correcting, do it in private. Treat people the way you would like to be treated.
- Be careful about assessing blame. Some things are beyond our control. Try to find solutions instead of pointing fingers.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

[Visual #36: Promoting Diversity]

A truly effective leader promotes diversity. Inclusion and fair treatment of all people is essential—not just to the FRG, but to the entire Army. Every group contains a variety of skills, abilities, interests, and motivations in addition to rank, gender, cultural background, race, religion, and age. Put all of this to work in the group. The result is a strong team where each person is valued. Prejudice and unfairness exist, but the leader can act to minimize and correct these behaviors. The leader sets the tone and models the role. Plan activities that bring people together rather than setting them apart. The result is a stronger team. Your FRG Handbook lists actions you can take if you observe unacceptable behavior.

[Distribute Handout #5, “Strength from Diversity.” Participants should answer on their own time to assess their own FRGs.]

DECISION MAKING

[Visual #37: Making Decisions]

The FRG leader is responsible for making decisions that keep a group or a project running well. These decisions are made at a number of different levels, and it is necessary for the leader to use good judgment in selecting the proper level. Sometimes the leader must make the decision on her own, without input from anyone in the group. At other times, the leader and the commander decide upon a course of action. One or more chairpersons may be involved in the decision-making process. And there are those situations that must be decided upon by the entire FRG.

Some typical situations that an FRG leader might encounter can be found in Handout #6.

[Distribute Handout #6. Divide into groups of 4–6 people. Have each group take one situation, discuss it, and decide: Who should make the decision in each of these cases?]

[Visual #38: Making Good Decisions]

Whether the leader makes the decision or the entire group makes the decision under the leader’s direction, some key steps apply to all:

- Do all the background work before coming to a decision. Know all the facts, and understand what is actually going on.
- Good judgment should be applied. Don’t rush into a solution or allow yourself to be pushed in a direction you aren’t sure about. Know when each of the choices already discussed is the appropriate one to use.

- Be flexible when others are involved in the process. You may not always see things the same way.
- Once the decision is made, be sure to share the credit and accept the blame if it doesn't work.

SPEAKING BEFORE YOUR FRG

[Visual #39: Speaking before Your FRG]

Standing up and talking to a group of people can be an unnerving prospect for some people. Remember that it is not necessary to be tied to formality when leading your FRG. There are times when formality and procedure are important, such as briefing a dignitary or a senior spouse. However, in this class we are speaking of the normal, everyday speaking to your FRG committee chairs and your FRG membership.

[Distribute copies of Handout #7: Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking.]

Keep in mind the things you see listed here when talking to your FRG. Relating well to others and getting the job done are the focus. People need to see you as friendly, caring, informative, and helpful. Keep it simple, brief, and to the point. Invite input, but don't let another person dominate. Individual concerns that do not apply to the entire group should be dealt with after the meeting. Make sure everyone understands the important points by summarizing them, and end on a positive note.

You will find an FRG Leadership Checklist in your handbook (page 33). Take some time to check yourself, and be as objective as possible. Follow the instructions for scoring at the bottom of the page. Identify your strong points, and vow to work on those areas where you need to improve.



Welcome to our class on leadership for effective FRGs. We will be referring to Chapter 2 of your FRG Leader’s Handbook and accompanying handouts throughout this class.

Objectives

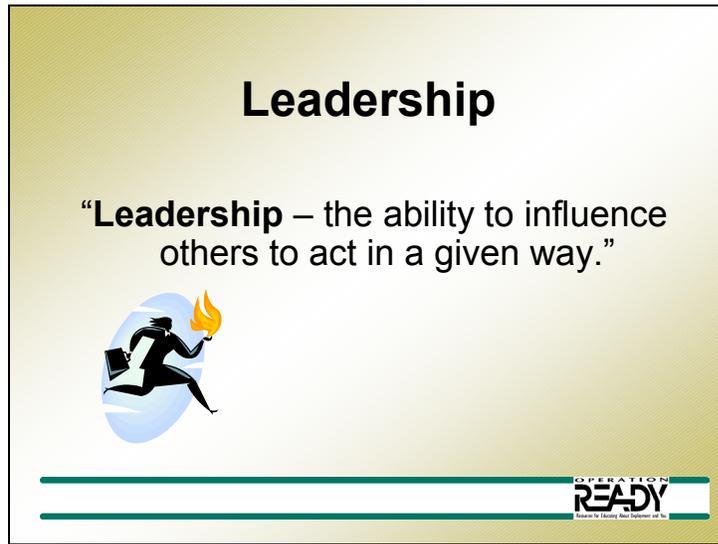
Participants will:

- learn the characteristics of effective leaders
- understand leadership skills of teamwork, decision making, supervising people, problem solving, and public speaking

OPERATION
READY
Army's Global Response Force

In this class we will focus on leadership characteristics and the skills needed to be an effective FRG leader. Participants will:

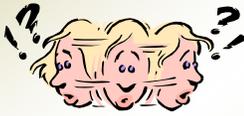
- learn the characteristics of effective leaders, and
- understand leadership skills of teamwork, decision making, supervising people, problem solving, and public speaking.



“Leadership—the ability to influence others to act in a given way.” This is a standard definition of leadership found in many classes on the subject. What exactly does it mean, and how do we acquire this ability? This class is designed to help you become this kind of leader.

Do You Want to be the Leader?

- Can you do it?
- Should you do it?



Things to think about:

- Your schedule
- Personal problems
- Your personality
- Public speaking ability
- Fear of failure
- Your health
- Interest level



As we begin to talk about leading the FRG, the first thing you may want to do is to think about your commitment to the job. Ask yourself these questions:

- Can you do the job? (Most everyone can.)
- Should you do it? Only you can answer that. As you are looking at this aspect, think about the following things. What does your personal schedule look like? Do you work outside the home? Are you going to school? Do you have small children? Can you devote the necessary time to the job based upon these factors?

Do a personal assessment based upon this list. Remember, FRG leadership is a volunteer position. It is not required that you take on the responsibilities because your soldier is the commander or the first sergeant. To be an effective leader, you must be committed to helping families and assisting the unit in carrying out its readiness goals.

[Distribute Handout #4 for the Group Discussion. These items can be discussed by the entire class, or the class can be divided into two groups, with each group discussing the situation and reports.]



You will find here, and also in Chapter 2 of your FRG Handbook, a list of the characteristics of an effective leader. No one person has all of these, but the more of these traits a leader exhibits, the better the chance of influencing people to want to be involved in their FRG.

These traits can be acquired with training and ingrained with practice.

(Activity: Have several class participants select a trait and discuss what that trait involves and how that trait affects the FRG.)

Although the FRG is managed by volunteers, they are not the only ones who should have these traits. Commanders and other officers, the first sergeant, and other NCOs need to have these traits as well to be effective leaders.

What kind of leader are you? When we have finished this class, you will have an opportunity to take an assessment of your leadership skills so you will be able to identify your strong points and those areas where you need to improve.

Leadership Goals

- Understand commander's goals
- Convey them to soldiers and families
- Get everyone's support
- Recruit other volunteers
- Get organized
- Get everyone trained
- Interact effectively

OPERATION
READY
Be Ready to Do What It Takes

The graphic is a rectangular box with a light green background and a dark green border. It contains the title 'Leadership Goals' in bold black text, followed by a bulleted list of seven items. At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'OPERATION READY' with the tagline 'Be Ready to Do What It Takes'.

We have identified the traits necessary for effective leadership. Now let's look at some of the goals you might want to accomplish as a leader:

- Understand the commander's goals.
- Convey the goals to soldiers and families.
- Get everyone's support for the goals.
- Recruit other volunteers.
- Get organized.
- Get everyone trained.
- Interact effectively.

As we continue this training course, we will be discussing ways in which these goals may be accomplished.

Commander/ FRG Leader Relationship	
Commander needs the leader to:	Leader needs the commander to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve others • Show respect • Be sensitive & honest • Support goals • Be dependable • Share information • Be discreet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform • Be supportive • Be dependable • Show respect • Lead • Be committed to families
	

As a leader, one of the first things you need to do is to establish a working relationship with the commander. He or she is ultimately responsible for the FRG, establishing it as part of the family readiness plan and supporting your efforts to make it successful. The commander needs to know that your goals are aligned with his (hers). Going off in opposite directions will create many problems. An adversarial position is most uncomfortable, and in the long run, it accomplishes nothing. If you feel that the commander does not understand the role and mission of the FRG, invite him to training, and share the information. Attempt to find some common ground. Listed here are some of the things a commander should expect of you—the leader.

Additionally, the leader needs these things from the commander. Notice the similarities? If you work together—not against one another—these can be accomplished.

Do You Need a Co-Leader?



- Someone to share the load
- Good communication a must
- Clear division of tasks
- Joint decision making

OPERATION
READY
Army's Family Support Program

Many leaders—especially those who are taking on this job for the first time—often look for a co-leader. This can work well, but it can also lead to tension and problems. Having both an officer's spouse and an NCO's spouse co-leading can be very effective because it sets an excellent role model for all soldiers and family members. To minimize difficulties, the co-leaders must agree upon some things from the beginning. Tasks and responsibilities must be clearly defined. You must communicate openly with one another. Decisions should be made jointly. FRG members need to see you as a good team. Any tensions will be quickly noticed and can divide the group into factions. The resulting damage can take quite a while to heal.

Leadership Styles

- **Directing**
 - Task oriented
 - Little group input
 - Limited group experience
 - Limited time



OPERATION
READY
Prepared to Respond

Let's take a look at leadership styles. The way we lead groups can be described in four different manners.

Directing. The leader using this style is very task oriented and focused on getting the job done. There is little group input—perhaps because the group is inexperienced or perhaps something must be done in a limited amount of time. Although this style may sometimes be required, this is not the best style for most groups. There will be members with experience and members who want to have input. Not allowing group participation can turn people away.

Leadership Styles



- **Coaching**
 - Task & group oriented
 - Directs & encourages
 - Group has more input
 - Tracks progress

OPERATION
READY
Ready to Change the World

The leader who coaches is both task oriented and group oriented—he or she directs and encourages. The leader keeps people on track but allows them to express ideas and opinions. The leader monitors progress and gives ideas and suggestions for getting the task accomplished. This is a more effective style for a group of volunteers.

Leadership Styles

- **Supporting**
 - Group oriented
 - Sets goals and then supports
 - Group is experienced
 - Group has major input
 - Leader reviews and suggests



As the group gains in experience, the leader can set goals, assign tasks, and support the efforts of the group. The leader reviews progress and suggests changes. This also is an effective style for leading volunteer groups.

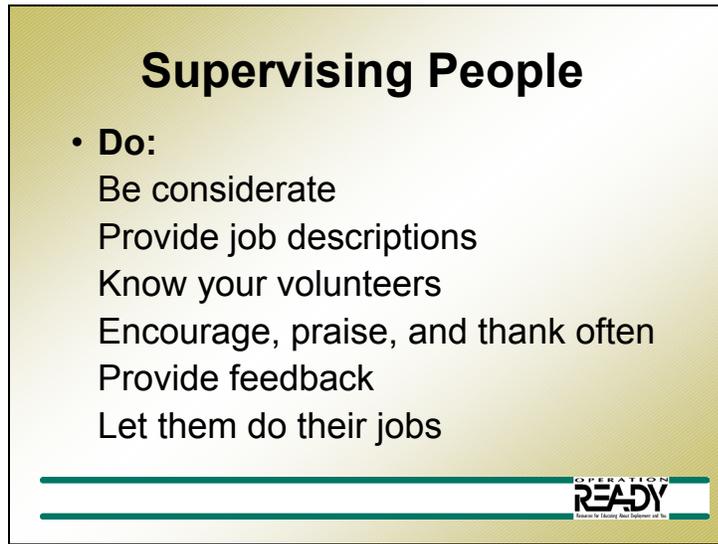
Leadership Styles



- **Delegating**
 - Focus on interaction, not outcome
 - Group highly experienced
 - Group controls own work

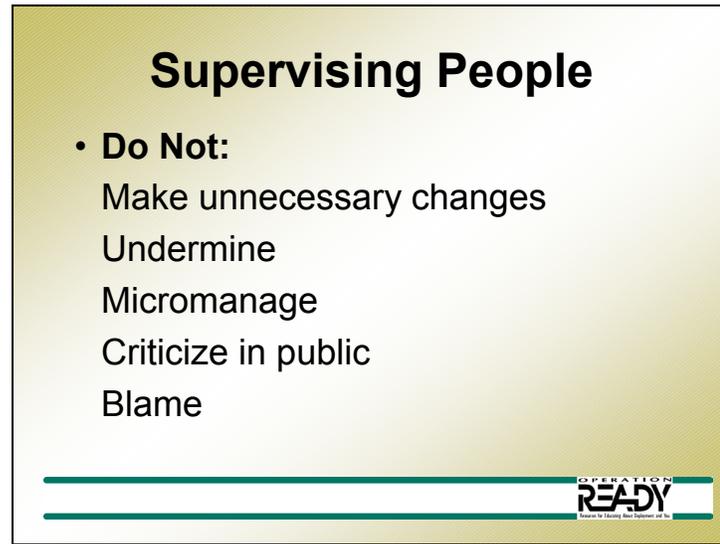
OPERATION
READY
Ready to Change the World

With this leadership style, the group is in control of the task; they define the goals, plan, and make decisions. The leader is concerned more with how the group members interact than with the outcome of the project. Routine tasks should be delegated with a highly experienced group. Your FRG Handbook has some ideas for when each of these styles is most effective.



Leadership skills and leadership styles are part of the ability to supervise and motivate people, manage the tasks, and work together with the FRG volunteers. Some of the do's and don'ts of supervising people are listed here and in your FRG Handbook.

- Everyone—regardless of their level of experience and knowledge—deserves to be treated in a friendly and considerate manner.
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- Encourage, praise, and thank people often, but don't let it lose its very special meaning. Praise and thanks must be sincere.
- Provide feedback on progress—just enough to let people know you are interested.
- Give them a task, and let them do it.



On the other hand:

- Don't "change horses in the middle of the stream." Stepping in unnecessarily while a work is in progress creates frustration and discouragement.
- Don't undermine the efforts of your chairpersons.
- Checking on progress is good; getting in the way of progress is micromanaging. If you micromanage, you will soon find yourself doing everything alone.
- If people need correcting, do it in private. Treat people the way you would like to be treated.
- Be careful about assessing blame. Some things are beyond our control. Try to find solutions instead of pointing fingers.

Promoting Diversity

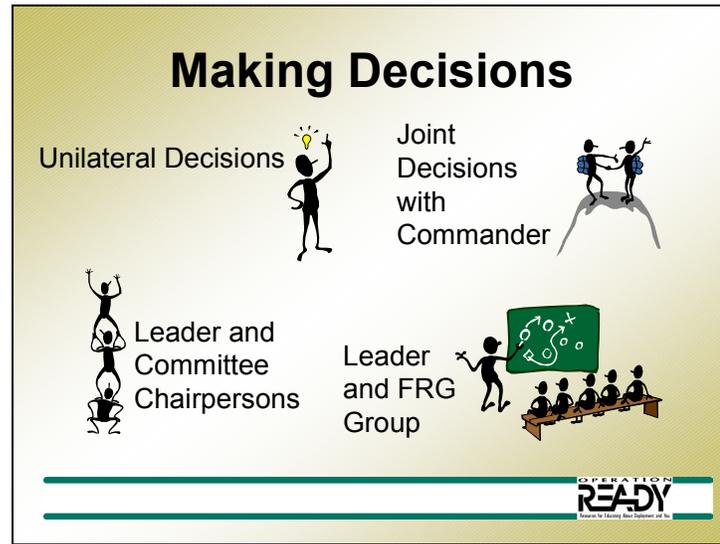
- Include
- Value
- Treat fairly
- Allow sharing
- Appreciate differences
- Encourage contributions



**OPERATION
READY**
Readiness Training and Support for the Army

A truly effective leader promotes diversity. Inclusion and fair treatment of all people is essential—not just to the FRG, but to the entire Army. Every group contains a variety of skills, abilities, interests, and motivations in addition to rank, gender, cultural background, race, religion, and age. Put all of this to work in the group. The result is a strong team where each person is valued. Prejudice and unfairness exist, but the leader can act to minimize and correct these behaviors. The leader sets the tone and models the role. Plan activities that bring people together rather than setting them apart. The result is a stronger team. Your FRG Handbook lists actions you can take if you observe unacceptable behavior.

[Distribute Handout #5, “Strength from Diversity.” Participants should answer on their own time to assess their own FRGs.]



The FRG leader is responsible for making decisions that keep a group or a project running well. These decisions are made at a number of different levels, and it is necessary for the leader to use good judgment in selecting the proper level. Sometimes the leader must make the decision on her own, without input from anyone in the group. At other times, the leader and the commander decide upon a course of action. One or more chairpersons may be involved in the decision-making process. And there are those situations that must be decided upon by the entire FRG.

Some typical situations that an FRG leader might encounter can be found in Handout #6.

[Distribute Handout #6. Divide into groups of 4–6 people. Have each group take one situation, discuss it, and decide: Who should make the decision in each of these cases?]

Making Good Decisions

- Research and understand the situation
- Have good judgment
- Understand when to share decision-making
- Be flexible
- Share credit and accept blame



**OPERATION
READY**
Ready to Change Your Organization

Whether the leader makes the decision or the entire group makes the decision under the leader's direction, some key steps apply to all:

- Do all the background work before coming to a decision. Know all the facts, and understand what is actually going on.
- Good judgment should be applied. Don't rush into a solution or allow yourself to be pushed in a direction you aren't sure about. Know when each of the choices already discussed is the appropriate one to use.
- Be flexible when others are involved in the process. You may not always see things the same way.
- Once the decision is made, be sure to share the credit and accept the blame if it doesn't work.

Speaking before Your FRG

- Keep it:
 - informal
 - friendly
 - brief
 - focused
 - relevant
 - helpful



**OPERATION
READY**
Readiness Training and Support for the Army

Standing up and talking to a group of people can be an unnerving prospect for some people. Remember that it is not necessary to be tied to formality when leading your FRG. There are times when formality and procedure are important, such as briefing a dignitary or a senior spouse. However, in this class we are speaking of the normal, everyday speaking to your FRG committee chairs and your FRG membership.

[Distribute copies of Handout #7: Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking.]

Keep in mind the things you see listed here when talking to your FRG. Relating well to others and getting the job done are the focus. People need to see you as friendly, caring, informative, and helpful. Keep it simple, brief, and to the point. Invite input, but don't let another person dominate. Individual concerns that do not apply to the entire group should be dealt with after the meeting. Make sure everyone understands the important points by summarizing them, and end on a positive note.

You will find an FRG Leadership Checklist in your handbook (page 33). Take some time to check yourself, and be as objective as possible. Follow the instructions for scoring at the bottom of the page. Identify your strong points, and vow to work on those areas where you need to improve.

Group Discussion

These items can be discussed by the entire class, or the class can be divided into two groups, with each group discussing the situation and reports.

- a. Your soldier has just been appointed the commander of a company. You are well trained and very interested in having a good FRG. When you arrive at the new duty station, you discover that the unit has a strong and effective FRG being led by a sergeant's wife. How do you get involved without creating dissention or being looked at as "trying to take over"?

- b. You are a spouse arriving at a new unit. You have always been involved in an FRG and have been part of effective groups in the past. This unit is different. There has been a history of infighting, mistrust, gossip, and division. The commander is totally against having an FRG except on paper, even though the unit deploys regularly. Soldiers in the unit have only negative things to say about the FRG. How do you go about changing their minds and building an effective FRG?

Strength from Diversity

Identify the strengths in your FRG that come from the diversity of your members. List the diverse needs, interests, talents, etc. in your FRG for each of the questions below.

1. List at least three different types of members. Beside each type, write key words that express how these differences strengthen the group.
2. What types of communication are needed in your FRG for all members to feel involved and informed?
3. Describe a conflict in your FRG. Tell how diversity contributed to the conflict and how your group resolved or managed the conflict.
4. List three products of your FRG. Beside each product, tell how it meets members' different needs.

Product 1:

Product 2:

Product 3:

5. How have you changed from when you first began leading your FRG? How has this change strengthened your group?

Strength from diversity—in individuals and the group—will continue to grow. Watch for signs of stagnation from a lack of diversity—in committees, in products, or in other areas. Stimulate your FRG by creating diversity.

Decision-Making Exercises

Consider these example situations, and determine the level(s) of decision making each requires—entire FRG, FRG leaders, commander, or unilateral.

1. The FRG leader needs to know what fun events the members would like to schedule for the year.
2. A scheduled FRG meeting is coming up, and the FRG leader wants to include reports by the treasurer and committee chairpersons.
3. A group decision was made at the last FRG meeting to have a welcome-home party for the soldiers. How will that be done?
4. One of the committee chairpersons has a history of mistreating other FRG members, and the FRG leader believes it is time to replace this chairperson.
5. The FRG picnic at the lake is tomorrow, but the special events chairperson calls to inform the FRG leader that the weather report indicates a high probability of thunderstorms. The chairperson wants to know if the leader wants to activate Plan B, which is an indoor potluck dinner.

Solutions to the Decision-Making Exercises

These possible solutions are keyed to the front page of this handout.

1. Obviously, the entire FRG should have an opportunity to consider what events to plan for the year.
2. Calls to each committee chairperson and the commander are in order. While such reports should be SOP for the business part of FRG meetings, the FRG leader needs to have a planned agenda. Contact with other leaders is the way to get it resolved and make sure they are prepared to give their reports.
3. Sounds like a good time to get the committee chiefs together and work out the major details and assignments.
4. Does the FRG leader have a record of reports or observations of the errant person's conduct? Has the leader discussed the problem with the commander? If the person has not responded well after counseling and continues to do harm, it is time for the FRG leader to act.
5. Again, the FRG leader is the decision maker. Notify the commander, and get the word out, through the FRG phonetree (see Chapter 6 of the FRG Handbook) that Plan A is off and Plan B has been put into motion.

Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking

- **Breathe.** Take a few deep breaths before you begin speaking; stop and breathe between sentences.
- **Self Talk.** Tell yourself you are not going to die; others have done this and lived. You know your material. You are good.
- **Visualize.** Imagine yourself talking to the group. Imagine the time, place, how you will feel, and what you will say. Imagine how confident you are.
- **Solid Stance.** Don't sway back and forth or side to side. Don't lock your knees. Relax!
- **Arrive Early.** Allow time to be sure everything is ready and get acquainted with the room—how it feels, smells, looks.
- **Greet Your Audience.** Before you begin, say hello to a few people. Then you will know a few people by name and will know what interests your audience.
- **Food.** Eat nutritional food, and avoid sugar and caffeine.
- **Pace Yourself.** Pace yourself so your energy stays constant.
- **Practice.** Practice your material and your non-verbal messages, such as hand movements, eye contact, and stance.
- **Find an Amen Corner.** Find a friendly face that you can look to for confidence, but don't lock onto that face.
- **Water.** Have a glass of water handy; it helps with dry mouth. If you forget where you are or what you were going to say, take a quick sip to clear the cobwebs.
- **Don't Read Your Presentation.** This will make you more nervous. Practice, practice, practice so you will need your notes only for numbers and to assist you in remembering your key points.
- **Practice.** Practice in front of a friend; use a video camera, a tape recorder, or a mirror.

Lesson Three

Building Your FRG—Getting Started

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #40: Getting Started]

Now we are ready to start building the FRG, or perhaps you need to energize or improve upon an existing one. In this class, we will take a look at the tasks involved in starting or jump-starting your FRG.

[Visual #41: Preparation]

Planning and preparation are important in setting up the FRG. Meeting with the commander is absolutely essential. Without his/her support, the FRG will not function effectively. Get all the information available. Attend training. Even if you have done this at another location, things change from place to place. If the leader you are replacing is still around, meet and get her input and insight. If not, arrange to meet with other FRG leaders for information and ideas. Arrange to meet with battalion FRG leadership.

As you meet and talk with other spouses in the unit, recruit help. Specific titles and tasks can come later. Just get them involved in the planning process for now.

Get together with the spouses you have recruited and the unit leadership, and brainstorm issues and ideas. Plan the FRG around the key tasks that are listed in the FRG Handbook. We will be discussing these in more detail shortly.

THE FRG LEADER AND UNIT COMMANDER

[Visual #42: You and Your Unit Commander]

For an FRG to work efficiently and to the benefit of soldiers and family members, the leader and commander must establish a good working relationship. The commander is ultimately responsible for the FRG and answerable to his/her chain of command on family readiness issues.

When you have been elected or appointed to the FRG leader position, you are ready to take the first step—meet with the unit commander. Find out the commander's goals for family readiness and support and how he/she plans to involve you and the FRG. Get a copy of the commander's readiness plan. Ideas and examples are available to you and the commander in the *Army Family Readiness Handbook* (Operation READY materials).

Share expectations—both yours and the commander’s. Mutual support and good communications are essential expectations of both of you.

Then take a look at operating issues. How often do you plan to meet? What kind of meetings do you want and need? When soldiers are in garrison, general membership meetings probably will not be well attended. But regular meetings with the commander and key volunteers need to take place regularly.

Knowing the unit’s training schedule is necessary for the success of activities and fundraising events. What kind of resources do you need? What can the unit make available to you? You will need a current copy of the roster so you can establish your telephone tree. You may need access to a copy machine, telephone, computer, etc.

Make plans for a newsletter. Is there a unit newsletter, or does the commander wish to make the newsletter an FRG function? The commander’s support and encouragement are essential to a successful, effective FRG.

KEY TASKS

[Visual #43: Key Tasks]

We are looking now at the key tasks of an effective FRG. All members of the unit, their family members—both immediate and extended, and civilian employees and retirees who are interested in the well being of the unit should be invited to participate. These are all members of the FRG, whether or not they become involved.

We talked about diversity in the previous class. Military people come from many different backgrounds, countries, and experiences. These things enrich and benefit the FRG and its members. Respect for everyone’s beliefs and practices is necessary. Be sensitive to these as you plan events and activities.

Having goals for the FRG saves a great deal of anxiety and frustration. Once you and the commander have decided upon these, make sure that all members know and understand these goals. Goals and objectives (what you want the FRG to do and how you plan for it to be done) should be written down and kept in front of you as you plan. Some typical goals would be social support, communications, activities, and events.

Once you and the commander have established the main goals, begin recruiting volunteers to take on positions in the FRG. This is not a one-person job. A truly effective FRG will involve as many people as possible. Remember, people will support what they help to create. We will be looking at volunteer issues in a later class.

Welcoming new arrivals is an important task of the FRG. Soldiers arriving in a new unit walk into a support network. Family members do not. Making families feel welcome and part of the unit is essential to the well being of soldiers, as well.

[Visual #44: Key Tasks]

Communicating with family members is one of the main goals. There are several tasks listed here that pertain to this goal of communicating current, reliable information. The first is the FRG phonetree, or Chain of Concern. Those of you who have taken AFTB Level 1 classes know the difference between Chain of Concern and Chain of Command. *[Ask someone to explain the two.]*

This chain can be divided by platoon, geographically according to where people live, alphabetically, or by whatever system works for you. This is one of the most important functions of the FRG, so it is necessary that you, as the leader, find willing and reliable volunteers to serve as callers. The leader can act as the head of the chain, or a chairperson can head this committee of callers.

Another way to keep families informed is with a newsletter. We will spend more time on establishing and publishing a newsletter in a later class. Those of you who have a newsletter and would like to share yours with the class may bring a copy to the newsletter portion of this training.

Meetings should also be informational in nature. Provide handouts of information that will educate families about the unit and its mission, installation services, and military life in general. Invite guest speakers from the installation and the local community. Arrange training for family members, or arrange for them to attend training, such as AFTB classes and Family Academy courses.

If you plan to do any fundraising, you will need to have a bank account and volunteer treasurer to maintain it. More details are forthcoming about this procedure. Never keep FRG funds in a shoe box under your bed or in the commander's desk drawer. A bank account is the smart way to go. Your installation or unit may even require it.

[Visual #45: Key Tasks]

All volunteers who participate in running the FRG need to be trained to do the job well. It speaks to your caring and consideration for volunteers. Accurate records need to be kept for each volunteer, to include a job description, a record of time contributed, training attended, and a record of recognitions awarded.

Work with the commander and the family readiness liaison (FRL) to schedule Operation READY training when the unit is getting ready to deploy. Remember the meaning of the word "deploy." This term simply means that the soldiers pack up and go somewhere, and the families stay behind. Family members need to be informed and prepared any time this happens, whether the separation is for one month, six months, or a year. Class lessons and handouts for deployment preparation are available in the Operation READY materials. These can be accessed from the www.goacs.org website.

Once the soldiers leave, the FRG goes into action. It is very important to maintain contact with family members who stay in the area and with those who leave the area. This is done by phone calls made by key callers in the Chain of Concern, meetings and events to get the family members out of the house, and in contact with each other. Again, good training for your telephone callers on passing on information and identifying problems and resources is extremely important. The FRG will be very busy during a deployment, so good preparation before a deployment occurs is vital. One of the events to be planned is a welcome home party—welcome back from training, exercises, deployments, or annual training. There are many ways to do this. We will have time to share ideas later.

PLANNING THE FIRST MEETING

[Visual #46: Planning the First Meeting]

Now that you have met with unit leadership and talked with resources in the community such as ACS and the State Family Program Coordinator for Guard and Reserve, set a date for your first meeting and begin working on the “three R’s.”

First of all, **reach** as many spouses as possible. Call them and introduce yourself. Your FRG Handbook has a sample script (page 45) for you to use as a guide.

As you are talking to the spouses, **research** the issues and concerns each spouse may have with regard to the unit, the FRG, and anything related to these areas. This is not a time for solving their problems or giving solutions. You are looking for common concerns that a majority of members have. Don’t be discouraged at negative responses or expressed disinterest. Not everyone in the unit will want to be involved in the FRG.

Finally, **recruit**. This is your opportunity to identify those who are willing and interested in helping the FRG. Review completed Family Readiness Group Information Surveys (Handout #8) to identify potential volunteers.

[Distribute Handout #8.]

Keep the first meeting brief and fun. Provide food and childcare. Give people time to get to know each other. Explain as simply as possible what the FRG is for and what you and the command team hope to accomplish. Address the top concerns you gathered when making phone calls, but keep them fairly general. Don’t single out individuals. If any response you got seems controversial, talk it over with the commander before the meeting.

This is your opportunity to sell the FRG and its benefits—make it a profitable and successful opportunity. Your FRG Handbook has a helpful outline (pages 39–40) for planning your first meeting. Use this as you plan your meeting.

[Visual #47: Planning a Meeting]

When planning a meeting, whether it is the first or the tenth, following this “NEATER” method is a good way to be sure you have prepared adequately.

“N” is for Nature. Why are you meeting? What do you plan to accomplish? It could be one of several reasons: to provide information, to begin or continue some task, to recruit volunteers for a project, to chat, or some combination of these. Most FRG meetings are a combination.

“E” is for Expectations. Who will be attending? What do you expect the attendees to do? Do they need to prepare anything in advance? If so, what? In what form? For example, do you want your committee chairs to provide written reports? Do you plan to vote? How will that vote be taken—by ballot or show of hands?

“A” is for Agenda. Always have a meeting agenda. It keeps everything on track. Make the agenda available to everyone who attends. It can be copied and handed out, projected on a screen, or printed on large paper and place on an easel. If you have time, it can even be published in advance in your newsletter. Your agenda lists the topics to be covered, the order you plan to discuss them, and even how much time you plan to spend on each topic.

“T” is for Time. How long do you want the meeting to last? How much time do you want to spend on a topic?

“ER” stands for Extra Resources. What might be needed during the meeting? Handouts? A guest speaker and any equipment they need? Note paper and pencils? Chairs and tables? Refreshments?

Good advance preparation makes for a smooth, successful meeting.

[Visual #48: Tips for a Successful Meeting]

Here are some other things to consider as you plan and conduct FRG meetings:

- Smile and be friendly; make people feel welcome.
- Speak clearly and distinctly. Use a PA system, if necessary.
- Have the prepared agenda, and stick to it.
- You are the leader; maintain control—but gently!
- Don’t put people down or cut them off quickly.
- Allow input, but keep it pertinent.
- When time allows, use brainstorming to make decisions. Always record the results of votes. You will have a record if someone questions a plan later on.
- Be sure the information you provide is timely and accurate. Know your source.

- Build in a time, before or after the meeting, for people to mingle and get to know each other. Be sure to introduce newcomers.
- If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer, say so! Promise to find out and follow up. Don't guess or make something up. People are relying on you to tell them what they need to know.
- Find a way to provide childcare for those attending.
- Connect those spouses who live near each other for transportation. Some spouses do not drive. Find out who they are, and hook them up with a neighbor.
- Finally, end on time. Finish when you promised to finish.

THE FRG—A SUPPORT NETWORK

[Visual #49: FRG—A Support Network]

To overcome the pitfalls and allow the FRG to fulfill its mission as a support network, it is necessary for the leadership to recognize these factors as impacting the FRG: personalities, gender, age, health, values, attitude, race, rank/income, and religion.

Each spouse and soldier brings these characteristics to the FRG. Personality clashes are to be expected. Gossip, stress, and negative attitudes will be encountered, but this does not mean we allow these things to control the FRG. The challenge to leaders and commanders is to find ways to make people of differing backgrounds and attitudes feel welcome and comfortable with each other. You set the example.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

[Visual #50: Resolving Conflict]

Different opinions and ideas are a fact of life, and disagreement among FRG members is to be expected. Keep in mind that issues should be resolved at the lowest level. Don't take all disputes to the commander. Allow members to work things out among themselves whenever possible.

If the leader must intervene, then he/she must be seen as impartial and fair to be successful. Try to work for a win-win solution. This means everyone walks away with something they wanted.

If all else fails, an impartial third party can be brought in to mediate. Again, impartiality is key. Mediation will not work if one side feels the other is favored.

CHILDCARE ISSUES

[Visual #51: Childcare Issues]

VCCUS uses volunteers from the unit or another unit to provide childcare for an FRG event. Parents must remain on-site. Check with your installation or State Family Program Coordinator for guidance in setting up a VCCUS. Training may be required for those who volunteer.

STACC involves paid caregivers at an hourly rate based upon the ages and number of children. On an installation, STACC is usually provided by CYS. Parents may be located in another place.

It is helpful if the FRG names a childcare coordinator and has a plan in place so members can depend upon it.



Now we are ready to start building the FRG, or perhaps you need to energize or improve upon an existing one. In this class, we will take a look at the tasks involved in starting or jump-starting your FRG.

Preparation

- Meet with commander and FRL
- Obtain materials
- Attend training
- Meet with current or past leaders
- Meet with battalion leadership
- Recruit help
- Brainstorm issues
- Plan key tasks



Planning and preparation are important in setting up the FRG. Meeting with the commander is absolutely essential. Without his/her support, the FRG will not function effectively. Get all the information available. Attend training. Even if you have done this at another location, things change from place to place. If the leader you are replacing is still around, meet and get her input and insight. If not, arrange to meet with other FRG leaders for information and ideas. Arrange to meet with battalion FRG leadership. As you meet and talk with other spouses in the unit, recruit help. Specific titles and tasks can come later. Just get them involved in the planning process for now.

Get together with the spouses you have recruited and the unit leadership, and brainstorm issues and ideas. Plan the FRG around the key tasks that are listed in the FRG Handbook. We will be discussing these in more detail shortly.

You and Your Unit Commander

- Must work together
- Know the commander's plan
- Expectations
- Operating issues
 - Meeting schedules
 - Training schedules
 - Resources available



For an FRG to work efficiently and to the benefit of soldiers and family members, the leader and commander must establish a good working relationship. The commander is ultimately responsible for the FRG and answerable to his/her chain of command on family readiness issues.

When you have been elected or appointed to the FRG leader position, you are ready to take the first step—meet with the unit commander. Find out the commander's goals for family readiness and support and how he/she plans to involve you and the FRG. Get a copy of the commander's readiness plan. Ideas and examples are available to you and the commander in the *Army Family Readiness Handbook* (Operation READY materials). Share expectations—both yours and the commander's. Mutual support and good communications are essential expectations of both of you.

Then take a look at operating issues. How often do you plan to meet? What kind of meetings do you want and need? When soldiers are in garrison, general membership meetings probably will not be well attended. But regular meetings with the commander and key volunteers need to take place regularly.

Knowing the unit's training schedule is necessary for the success of activities and fundraising events. What kind of resources do you need? What can the unit make available to you? You will need a current copy of the roster so you can establish your telephone tree. You may need access to a copy machine, telephone, computer, etc. Make plans for a newsletter. Is there a unit newsletter, or does the commander wish to make the newsletter an FRG function? The commander's support and encouragement are essential to a successful, effective FRG.

Key Tasks

- Invite all members to participate
- Foster diversity
- Establish goals
- Recruit volunteers
- Organize
- Welcome newcomers



We are looking now at the key tasks of an effective FRG. All members of the unit, their family members—both immediate and extended, and civilian employees and retirees who are interested in the well being of the unit should be invited to participate. These are all members of the FRG, whether or not they become involved.

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Welcoming new arrivals is an important task of the FRG. Soldiers arriving in a new unit walk into a support network. Family members do not. Making families feel welcome and part of the unit is essential to the well being of soldiers, as well.

Key Tasks

- Set up a telephone tree
- Plan and conduct meetings
- Design and publish a newsletter
- Establish a bank account
- Conduct fundraisers
- Educate families



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Key Tasks

- Train volunteers
- Maintain volunteer records
- Recognize volunteers
- Schedule predeployment training
- Maintain contact during deployment
- Plan welcome home parties



All volunteers who participate in running the FRG need to be trained to do the job well. It speaks to your caring and consideration for volunteers. Accurate records need to be kept for each volunteer, to include a job description, a record of time contributed, training attended, and a record of recognitions awarded.

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Finally, **recruit**. This is your opportunity to identify those who are willing and interested in helping the FRG. Review completed Family Readiness Group Information Surveys (Handout #8) to identify potential volunteers. *[Distribute Handout #8.]*

Keep the first meeting brief and fun. Provide food and childcare. Give people time to get to know each other. Explain as simply as possible what the FRG is for and what you and the command team hope to accomplish. Address the top concerns you gathered when making phone calls, but keep them fairly general. Don’t single out individuals. If any response you got seems controversial, talk it over with the commander before the meeting.

This is your opportunity to sell the FRG and its benefits—make it a profitable and successful opportunity. Your FRG Handbook has a helpful outline (pages 39–40) for planning your first meeting. Use this as you plan your meeting.

Planning a Meeting

- The “NEATER” Method
 - N** Nature
 - E** Expectations
 - A** Agenda
 - T** Time
 - ER** Extra Resources



When planning a meeting, whether it is the first or the tenth, following this “NEATER” method is a good way to be sure you have prepared adequately.

“N” is for Nature. Why are you meeting? What do you plan to accomplish? It could be one of several reasons: to provide information, to begin or continue some task, to recruit volunteers for a project, to chat, or some combination of these. Most FRG meetings are a combination.

“E” is for Expectations. Who will be attending? What do you expect the attendees to do? Do they need to prepare anything in advance? If so, what? In what form? For example, do you want your committee chairs to provide written reports? Do you plan to vote? How will that vote be taken—by ballot or show of hands?

“A” is for Agenda. Always have a meeting agenda. It keeps everything on track. Make the agenda available to everyone who attends. It can be copied and handed out, projected on a screen, or printed on large paper and place on an easel. If you have time, it can even be published in advance in your newsletter. Your agenda lists the topics to be covered, the order you plan to discuss them, and even how much time you plan to spend on each topic.

“T” is for Time. How long do you want the meeting to last? How much time do you want to spend on a topic?

“ER” stands for Extra Resources. What might be needed during the meeting? Handouts? A guest speaker and any equipment they need? Note paper and pencils? Chairs and tables? Refreshments?

Good advance preparation makes for a smooth, successful meeting.

Tips for a Successful Meeting

- Smile
- Speak clearly
- Stay on schedule
- Maintain control
- Use brainstorming
- Record votes
- Encourage participation
- Provide accurate, timely information
- Build in social time
- If you don't know the answer, find out
- Arrange for childcare, transportation
- End on time



Here are some other things to consider as you plan and conduct FRG meetings:

- Smile and be friendly; make people feel welcome.
- Speak clearly and distinctly. Use a PA system, if necessary.
- Have the prepared agenda, and stick to it.
- You are the leader; maintain control—but gently!
- Don't put people down or cut them off quickly.
- Allow input, but keep it pertinent.
- When time allows, use brainstorming to make decisions. Always record the results of votes. You will have a record if someone questions a plan later on.
- Be sure the information you provide is timely and accurate. Know your source.
- Build in a time, before or after the meeting, for people to mingle and get to know each other. Be sure to introduce newcomers.
- If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer, say so! Promise to find out and follow up. Don't guess or make something up. People are relying on you to tell them what they need to know.
- Find a way to provide childcare for those attending.
- Connect those spouses who live near each other for transportation. Some spouses do not drive. Find out who they are, and hook them up with a neighbor.
- Finally, end on time. Finish when you promised to finish.

FRG—A Support Network

- **Background Factors:**
 - Personalities
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Health
 - Values
 - Attitude
 - Race
 - Rank/Income
 - Religion



OPERATION
READY
Be Ready to Do What Matters Most

To overcome the pitfalls and allow the FRG to fulfill its mission as a support network, it is necessary for the leadership to recognize these factors as impacting the FRG: personalities, gender, age, health, values, attitude, race, rank/income, and religion.

Each spouse and soldier brings these characteristics to the FRG. Personality clashes are to be expected. Gossip, stress, and negative attitudes will be encountered, but this does not mean we allow these things to control the FRG. The challenge to leaders and commanders is to find ways to make people of differing backgrounds and attitudes feel welcome and comfortable with each other. You set the example.

Resolving Conflict



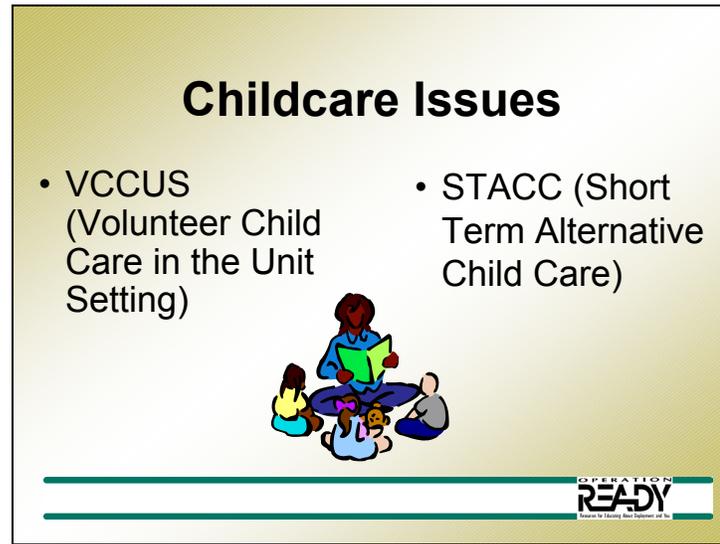
- Disagreement is normal
- Solve at the lowest level
- Win-win solutions
- Third party intervention

OPERATION
READY
Member to Training 1001 Supplement 10-11

Different opinions and ideas are a fact of life, and disagreement among FRG members is to be expected. Keep in mind that issues should be resolved at the lowest level. Don't take all disputes to the commander. Allow members to work things out among themselves whenever possible.

If the leader must intervene, then he/she must be seen as impartial and fair to be successful. Try to work for a win-win solution. This means everyone walks away with something they wanted.

If all else fails, an impartial third party can be brought in to mediate. Again, impartiality is key. Mediation will not work if one side feels the other is favored.



VCCUS uses volunteers from the unit or another unit to provide childcare for an FRG event. Parents must remain on-site. Check with your installation or State Family Program Coordinator for guidance in setting up a VCCUS. Training may be required for those who volunteer.

STACC involves paid caregivers at an hourly rate based upon the ages and number of children. On an installation, STACC is usually provided by CYS. Parents may be located in another place.

It is helpful if the FRG names a childcare coordinator and has a plan in place so members can depend upon it.

Family Readiness Group Information Survey

(Please fill in the applicable areas)

1. Sponsor's name _____ Unit _____ Rank _____
2. Home address _____
3. Home phone _____ Work phone _____
4. E-mail address: _____
5. Your name _____ Birthday _____ Anniversary _____
6. Place of employment _____ Work phone _____
7. Children:
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____
8. Location of children's schools: _____

9. Are you and your spouse expecting a baby? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, when is the due date? _____
10. Please list any family members with special needs _____
11. Do you have a driver's license? Yes ____ No ____ Access to a car? Yes ____ No ____
12. What foreign languages do you speak? _____
13. Does your spouse speak English? Yes _____ No _____
What other languages does your spouse speak? _____

14. Other than your spouse, who would you notify in an emergency? (Friend/neighbor)

Name _____ Relationship _____

Phone _____ Address _____

15. What are your hobbies and special interests? _____

16. When is the best time to call you? _____

17. What topics would you like to discuss or hear about at a Family Readiness Group meeting? _____

18. Could you help with any of the following? (Check any that apply.)

FRG Activities _____ Telephoning _____ Fundraising _____

Newsletter _____ Baking _____ Planning _____

Other (Specify) _____

19. I give my permission for my phone number to be published in the Family Readiness Group Contact Roster. _____ Yes _____ No

Your signature _____ Date _____

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority: 10 U.S.C. Section 3010, 5 U.S.C. 522a

Principle Purpose Information will be used to provide support, outreach and information to family members.

Routine Uses: Primary Use of this information is to facilitate volunteers in providing command information to family members concerning unit events and in emergencies.

Mandatory or Voluntary Disclosure: Voluntary

Lesson Four

Building Your FRG—Volunteers

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #52: Building Your FRG—Volunteers]

Volunteers are the heart of the FRG. There would be no FRG without volunteers. Membership and participation in the FRG are purely voluntary.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #53: Objectives]

In this lesson, we will be looking at the roles volunteers play in the FRG, their rights and responsibilities, how to plan for volunteers by writing job descriptions, how to discipline volunteers when an incident requires it, how to track volunteer contributions, and how to thank volunteers.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER?

[Visual #54: What is a Volunteer?]

“A person who performs a service of his or her own free will.” The definition comes to us from the *American Heritage Dictionary*.

Too many times, people refer to themselves as “just a volunteer.” No one is ever “just a volunteer.” Volunteers are an important part of American society and of military life, in particular. Official recognition of Army volunteers began with Army Community Service in 1965.

(See the Operation READY video, “Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Army Life, Think ACS.” Information about the value of volunteers can be found in your FRG Handbook, Chapter 4.)

VOLUNTEERS

[Visual #55: Volunteers]

Volunteers should be:

- given the opportunity to make valuable contributions,
- recognized and thanked,
- given guidance, and
- encouraged.

These things are true for volunteers in any program. They should do more than make copies and carry coffee cups. Each volunteer comes with unique talents and abilities, and they should be given the chance to use those to benefit the organization.

Although volunteers give out of the goodness of their hearts, they should never be taken for granted. Thank and reward them often.

Volunteers need guidance—an idea of what is expected of them, and they need the opportunity to express ideas. They should not be micromanaged.

Above all, encourage volunteers—don't criticize them.

[Visual #56: FRG Volunteers]

FRG volunteers:

- are a necessary component of the Army Family,
- are interested in improving quality of life,
- are those who add real value to the organization, and
- are those who see possibilities.

(Ask for comments from class participants on how volunteers do each of these.)

TYPICAL FRG VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

[Visual #57: Typical FRG Volunteer Positions]

Chapter 4 in your FRG Handbook contains a list of the typical FRG volunteer positions and a sample job description for each one. You may change the job descriptions to suit your FRG, and some of the responsibilities may be combined. Keep in mind, however, that the greater the number of people involved, the more support and success the FRG will have. Regardless of the position chosen, all volunteers should complete DA Form

4712, Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities, which is then filed with the FRG's records. See your installation volunteer coordinator for a copy of this form.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

[Visual #58: Volunteer Responsibilities]

Volunteers have certain responsibilities when they come forward to help. Obviously, dependability is essential. Being there and being on time contribute to a successful event. Be creative, and contribute new ideas and ways of doing the job. Be friendly and courteous to everyone. Be flexible—things change and change quickly at times. Focus on the problem and help to solve it—not on the symptoms and the people involved. Dress appropriately for the occasion. And above all, don't gossip—it hurts everyone and helps nothing.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

[Visual #59: Volunteer Rights]

In addition to responsibilities, volunteers also have rights. Volunteers can decide for themselves whether or not to participate; they cannot be ordered to do something. They are entitled to sound, considerate leadership. They should be able to decide their own working hours. They should be treated with respect and be given meaningful assignments—not busywork. They have a right to information and training, and to be free to express ideas and opinions. Above all, they should be recognized for their contributions. Volunteers who are treated well will return again and again to your program.

PLANNING FOR VOLUNTEERS

[Visual #60: Planning for Volunteers]

For the FRG to function well, a plan must be in place for the volunteers. The leader and the command have discussed goals for the FRG. Now, accomplishing those goals involves volunteers. Your job as leader is to find the best possible people to do the job.

Begin by writing job service descriptions. Once you have decided what the job involves, you can begin to look around for the best candidate. The job description now becomes a recruiting tool. It answers the two big questions people ask: "What do I have to do?" and "How long will it take?" They will also know who supervises them.

Your plan should also include how you plan to reward your volunteers.

And should problems arise, you will know how discipline or even remove a volunteer from a job.

[Activity (Handout #9: “Favorite Shapes,” to be distributed at the end of this exercise): Place a drawing of the four shapes described in the handout at the top of a piece of newsprint. Place newsprint pages around the room, allowing enough space for participants to gather and write on the paper. Have each participant select the shape they feel best suits them; then gather with others who have selected the same shape. Have them write on the newsprint words that describe their actions, personal characteristics, and working styles. Have participants list the FRG position they are best suited for and the one they think they are least suited for. Distribute Handout #9 and discuss the meaning of the shapes.]

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

[Visual #61: Volunteer Training]

All volunteers deserve the opportunity to receive training. Training is, in a way, a form of reward. It is also encouragement and an opportunity for growth. Listed here are some of the places you can find training for your FRG volunteers:

- Army Community Service,
- Army Family Team Building,
- Installation Volunteer Program,
- Guard and Reserve Regional Family Program Academies, and the local community. The YWCA, Cooperative Extension, and community college in your community may offer free or reasonably priced classes. A bank or credit union can train the treasurer, for example.

Well-trained volunteers are a great asset to any volunteer organization.

VOLUNTEER PORTFOLIOS

[Visual #62: Volunteer Portfolio]

Keeping records of volunteer service is essential. Just as a soldier has a 201 file, a volunteer needs a portfolio. Volunteer service can be recorded in a resume for a paying job as long as it is documented. A volunteer portfolio should contain these items:

- job description,
- hours contributed,
- training attended, and

- recognition received.

A more detailed list can be found in your FRG Handbook.

DISCIPLINING A VOLUNTEER

[Visual #63: Disciplining a Volunteer]

Occasionally, it becomes necessary for the leader or the commander to discipline a volunteer. This should be a last resort. The volunteer's action should be a clear violation, such as making off with the FRG money. Careful records should be kept of actions taken, meetings held, and instructions given. Other ways of handling a situation are available, such as reassigning or retraining the volunteer. You must have a very good reason for disciplining or firing a volunteer, or you will do irreparable damage to the entire FRG.

THANKING VOLUNTEERS

[Visual #64: Thanking Your Volunteers]

How often should you thank a volunteer? As often as possible! When they agree to take on a certain position, write a note thanking them for agreeing to help. As you talk to them on the phone, always remember to thank them for their work. Recognize them at meetings for the contributions they make.

Feature a volunteer in the monthly newsletter, or put their picture on the unit bulletin board. Write an article for the post or community newspaper, either for a special contribution or just for being there and working hard on a regular basis. Always thank everyone involved in organizing and carrying out a special event, fundraiser, or party. Plan a more formal recognition on an annual basis, such as during National Volunteer Week. Handout #10 features the kinds of recognition available for this type of occasion.

[Distribute Handout #10, Volunteer Award Nominations.]

When volunteers are ready to depart, you or the commander can write a letter of recommendation, detailing the volunteer's service and value to the FRG and the unit.



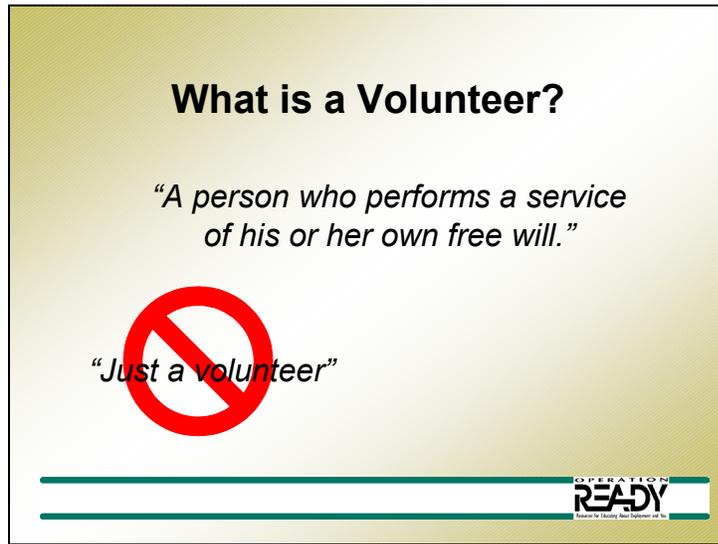
Volunteers are the heart of the FRG. There would be no FRG without volunteers. Membership and participation in the FRG are purely voluntary.

Objectives

- Understand volunteer roles in the FRG
- Understand volunteer rights and responsibilities
- Learn how to plan for volunteers
- Understand the importance of recognition

OPERATION
READY
Be Ready to Do Your Best

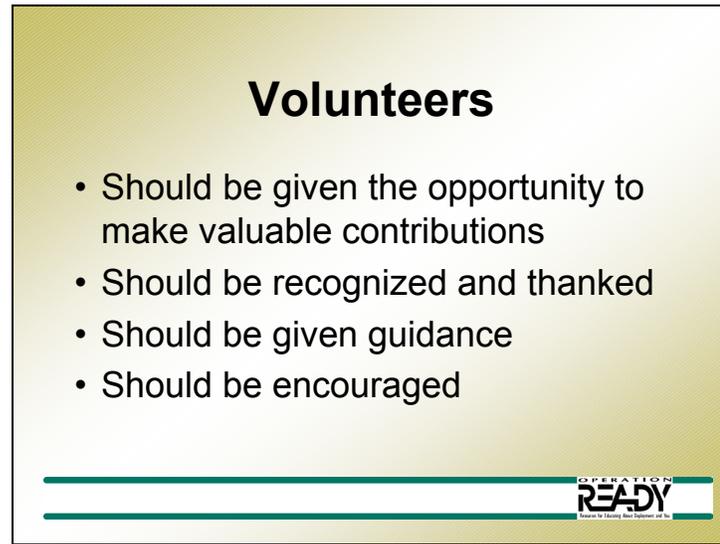
In this lesson, we will be looking at the roles volunteers play in the FRG, their rights and responsibilities, how to plan for volunteers by writing job descriptions, how to discipline volunteers when an incident requires it, how to track volunteer contributions, and how to thank volunteers.



“A person who performs a service of his or her own free will.” The definition comes to us from the *American Heritage Dictionary*.

Too many times, people refer to themselves as “just a volunteer.” No one is ever “just a volunteer.” Volunteers are an important part of American society and of military life, in particular. Official recognition of Army volunteers began with Army Community Service in 1965.

(See the Operation READY video, “Army Community Service: To Get the Most Out of Army Life, Think ACS.” Information about the value of volunteers can be found in your FRG Handbook, Chapter 4.)



Volunteers should be:

- given the opportunity to make valuable contributions,
- recognized and thanked,
- given guidance, and
- encouraged.

These things are true for volunteers in any program. They should do more than make copies and carry coffee cups. Each volunteer comes with unique talents and abilities, and they should be given the chance to use those to benefit the organization.

Although volunteers give out of the goodness of their hearts, they should never be taken for granted. Thank and reward them often.

Volunteers need guidance—an idea of what is expected of them, and they need the opportunity to express ideas. They should not be micromanaged.

Above all, encourage volunteers—don't criticize them.

FRG Volunteers

- Are a necessary component of the Army Family
- Are interested in improving quality of life
- Are those who add real value to the organization
- Are those who see possibilities

OPERATION READY
Readiness Training and Support for the Army

FRG volunteers:

- are a necessary component of the Army Family,
- are interested in improving quality of life,
- are those who add real value to the organization, and
- are those who see possibilities.

(Ask for comments from class participants on how volunteers do each of these.)



Chapter 4 in your FRG Handbook contains a list of the typical FRG volunteer positions and a sample job description for each one. You may change the job descriptions to suit your FRG, and some of the responsibilities may be combined. Keep in mind, however, that the greater the number of people involved, the more support and success the FRG will have. Regardless of the position chosen, all volunteers should complete DA Form 4712, Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities, which is then filed with the FRG's records. See your installation volunteer coordinator for a copy of this form.

Volunteer Responsibilities

- Be dependable
- Be resourceful
- Be friendly & courteous
- Be flexible
- Be a part of the solution
- Dress appropriately
- Maintain confidentiality



OPERATION
READY
Be Ready to Help Others

Volunteers have certain responsibilities when they come forward to help. Obviously, dependability is essential. Being there and being on time contribute to a successful event. Be creative, and contribute new ideas and ways of doing the job. Be friendly and courteous to everyone. Be flexible—things change and change quickly at times. Focus on the problem and help to solve it—not on the symptoms and the people involved. Dress appropriately for the occasion. And above all, don't gossip—it hurts everyone and helps nothing.

Volunteer Rights

Volunteers
have a right to:

- good leadership
- decide to participate
- decide work time
- be treated with respect
- be informed
- have meaningful work
- be trained
- express opinions
- be recognized





In addition to responsibilities, volunteers also have rights. Volunteers can decide for themselves whether or not to participate; they cannot be ordered to do something. They are entitled to sound, considerate leadership. They should be able to decide their own working hours. They should be treated with respect and be given meaningful assignments—not busywork. They have a right to information and training, and to be free to express ideas and opinions. Above all, they should be recognized for their contributions. Volunteers who are treated well will return again and again to your program.

Planning for Volunteers

- What needs to be done?
- Who can do it?
- How will you find them?
- Who do they answer to?
- How will you train them?
- How do you thank them?
- When do you discipline them?



**OPERATION
READY**
Preparedness Training and Exercises

For the FRG to function well, a plan must be in place for the volunteers. The leader and the command have discussed goals for the FRG. Now, accomplishing those goals involves volunteers. Your job as leader is to find the best possible people to do the job. Begin by writing job service descriptions. Once you have decided what the job involves, you can begin to look around for the best candidate. The job description now becomes a recruiting tool. It answers the two big questions people ask: “What do I have to do?” and “How long will it take?” They will also know who supervises them.

Your plan should also include how you plan to reward your volunteers.

And should problems arise, you will know how discipline or even remove a volunteer from a job.

[Activity (Handout #9: “Favorite Shapes,” to be distributed at the end of this exercise): Place a drawing of the four shapes described in the handout at the top of a piece of newsprint. Place newsprint pages around the room, allowing enough space for participants to gather and write on the paper. Have each participant select the shape they feel best suits them; then gather with others who have selected the same shape. Have them write on the newsprint words that describe their actions, personal characteristics, and working styles. Have participants list the FRG position they are best suited for and the one they think they are least suited for. Distribute Handout #9 and discuss the meaning of the shapes.]



All volunteers deserve the opportunity to receive training. Training is, in a way, a form of reward. It is also encouragement and an opportunity for growth. Listed here are some of the places you can find training for your FRG volunteers:

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- the local community. The YWCA, Cooperative Extension, and community college in your community may offer free or reasonably priced classes. A bank or credit union can train the treasurer, for example.

Well-trained volunteers are a great asset to any volunteer organization.



Keeping records of volunteer service is essential. Just as a soldier has a 201 file, a volunteer needs a portfolio. Volunteer service can be recorded in a resume for a paying job as long as it is documented. A volunteer portfolio should contain these items:

- job description,
- hours contributed,
- training attended, and
- recognition received.

A more detailed list can be found in your FRG Handbook.

Disciplining a Volunteer

- Violation of rules or regulations
- Failure to perform assignment
- Blatant mistreatment of others
- Disregard for privacy or confidentiality



OPERATION
READY
Be Ready to Do What It Takes

Occasionally, it becomes necessary for the leader or the commander to discipline a volunteer. This should be a last resort. The volunteer's action should be a clear violation, such as making off with the FRG money. Careful records should be kept of actions taken, meetings held, and instructions given. Other ways of handling a situation are available, such as reassigning or retraining the volunteer. You must have a very good reason for disciplining or firing a volunteer, or you will do irreparable damage to the entire FRG.

Thanking Your Volunteers

- When they sign up
- Daily
- Monthly
- Special events
- Annually
- When they depart



OPERATION
READY
Member of the Ready Campaign

How often should you thank a volunteer? As often as possible! When they agree to take on a certain position, write a note thanking them for agreeing to help. As you talk to them on the phone, always remember to thank them for their work. Recognize them at meetings for the contributions they make.

Feature a volunteer in the monthly newsletter, or put their picture on the unit bulletin board. Write an article for the post or community newspaper, either for a special contribution or just for being there and working hard on a regular basis. Always thank everyone involved in organizing and carrying out a special event, fundraiser, or party. Plan a more formal recognition on an annual basis, such as during National Volunteer Week. Handout #10 features the kinds of recognition available for this type of occasion.

[Distribute Handout #10, Volunteer Award Nominations.]

When volunteers are ready to depart, you or the commander can write a letter of recommendation, detailing the volunteer's service and value to the FRG and the unit.

Favorite Shapes

Which of the following shapes best describes your actions, personal characteristics, and working style? For which FRG position are you best suited? Least suited?

Triangles: These are the broad-based, intellectual persons in society—the deep thinkers. They are the ones who send out surveys—the organizational people. “Prove it, “ they say, “Please put it in writing” and “Is it in the budget?” These are the foundation people—the pillars of the organization.

Squares: These are the solid citizens—the reliable people. They always vote. They carry the responsibilities of the organization and do the work of society. They always say, “ It’s a tough job, but it has to be done,” and “If it’s going to be, it’s up to me.”

Z’s: The Z’s are the creative ones—the idea people. Z’s love change. They are dreamers. “Why not?” they say. Z’s come up with new ideas and new ways of doing things, but they usually let the squares carry out the ideas. They dream more than the triangles think is practical.

Circles: A circle stands for peace, harmony, and security. There are no rough spots on a circle. Circles keep things running smoothly. They don’t rock the boat. They are like calm days and quiet waters.

No matter what you choose for your favorite shape, you can see that we need all the personalities to make a healthy group. What a disaster it would be if we were all the same shape or form. Can you imagine what it would be like if everyone in the group was a CIRCLE? You can’t sail very far in calm waters. You need a bit of wind to change the course and head out to sea.

If we were all shaped like a Z, we would move, but we would probably have a hard time staying on course. We would sail so far so fast that we might never touch base with anyone.

If we were all TRIANGLES, we most likely would be so busy charting the course that we might never get around to leaving port.

A group made up of workhorse SQUARES sounds ideal, but with a crew that is continually loading cargo, who will chart the course and set the sails and dream the dreams?

When the Z’s say, “If we can dream it...it can be done” and the TRIANGLES say, “But it’s not in the budget, “ who will resolve the conflict and quiet the waves? We need the CIRCLES.

Every shape is important—whether it’s four-sided, three-sided, or no sides at all.
Whether it’s dreaming the dreams, keeping the peace, thinking the thoughts, or doing the
job...we need everyone!

Volunteer Award Nominations

Where do you find out about the various volunteer awards that are available?

Check with your Installation Volunteer Coordinator, Army Community Service Director, Volunteer Supervisor, Reserve Component Family Program Coordinator, local Voluntary Action Center (VAC), Directors Of Volunteers In Agencies (DOVIA), the Governor's Office of Volunteerism, or civilian organizations that utilize the talents of volunteers.

Ask for volunteer award nomination forms and due dates.

For any given award, there are many nominations. Some organizations have "readers" to evaluate nominations. The following checkpoints can be used to evaluate any award nomination before it is submitted:

- Often a point system is developed to "score" each category on the nomination form. Points are often deducted if the directions on the form are not followed correctly. Thus, it is very important that all forms are completed in the space provided and in the exact manner specified in the directions.
- Always type the nomination and supporting documentation. Allow "white" or "clear" space on the forms. If the nomination form or supporting documents look "too full" or "too cluttered," they may not be accepted. Don't try to be fancy with various typefaces or unique formats. Keep it simple, clear, and easy to read.
- Be sure the individual who is being nominated meets all eligibility requirements before completing the nomination forms. Many organizations will disqualify the nominee immediately if the requirements are not met.
- Many nomination forms require information about the program in which the nominee works. Give information about the unique features of the program, its history, how many people are involved, how many hours are volunteered, and the relevance to the award category.
- Family Readiness Groups have many unique features: how they interface with other organizations—military and civilian; their ability to work with a diverse group of people; their fundraising abilities—in kind and cash; their unique mission during times of deployment; their volunteer strength; and their ability to cope with stressful situations.
- The nominator must demonstrate that the nominee has made a significant contribution to the organization. Use active phrases such as: "organized from scratch," "a viable FRG for the 33d Infantry Battalion," "arranged Red Cross training in CPR for 54 soldiers and family members," "served as Assistant Director

of the 93rd MP Battalion FRG Center during annual training, providing services to over 150 families.”

- Describe how the nominee’s activities affected others or the program in general. Include quantitative data. For example, “the Family Readiness Group’s membership increased 75 percent under ‘X’s’ leadership,” or “‘X’ planned a reunion celebration attended by 1,500 people and had local support of over \$8,000.”
- Include information about how long the program has been in existence, the growth of the program, changes or obstacles that have been overcome, and any other relevant information that proves the worthiness of the nomination.
- If other references are required, make sure they are accurate and pertain to the individual nomination. When inviting others to support the nomination, include a description of the award criteria and objectives.

How To’s

Begin with an outline. List the individual’s regular duties, extra duties, special projects initiated and completed, and responses from satisfied group members, unit command, and community liaison contacts.

As you begin, ask these questions:

1. Does this information show a definite action or activity?
2. Does it contain quantitative information?
3. Is it specific?
4. If acronyms are used, are they defined (ACS, FRG, DA, etc.)?
5. Are thoughts well organized?
6. Did you use “knockout” words and phrases? For example: “Through close working relationships with both high-level military and civilian officials, she planned and executed the community picnic on July 4, serving over 10,000 military and civilian family members. She was directly responsible for a dramatic increase in goodwill between Ft. Young and the surrounding community,” instead of, “She worked well with others.”
7. Will someone who knows nothing about the person being nominated or about Family Readiness Groups have a clear vision of what the nominee has done, why the nominee’s work is exceptional, and how others have benefited from the nominee’s work?

Lesson Five

Building Your FRG—Making Contact

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #65: Building Your FRG—Making Contact]

One of the essential ingredients for an FRG is communication. We will be discussing one aspect of communication—contacting soldiers and family members. This is done in a variety of ways. This class covers the phonetree, or Chain of Concern.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #66: Objectives]

These are the things we will focus on in this class:

- the importance of welcoming new soldiers and families,
- how to maintain rosters,
- how to set up and run a phonetree,
- how to handle and track phone calls, and
- what to do in the event of a crisis.

WELCOMING NEW ARRIVALS

[Visual #67: Welcoming New Arrivals]

The hospitality/welcome committee chairperson should be in regular communication with the appropriate unit staff member who has current information on arrivals to the unit. This is most likely the S1 section. Get the names, phone numbers, and addresses of all newly arrived personnel and their families.

The FRG leader or the hospitality/welcome committee chairperson makes the first phone call to the new spouse. Welcome this person to the unit and the FRG; inform them about the FRG and its activities; make an appointment to visit. During the visit, provide the new family with community and unit information, an invitation to the next FRG event, a copy of the most recent newsletter, and a small gift—such as a plant or a plate of cookies. Have the spouse complete the FRG Information Survey (Handout #8) while you are there. This welcome should take place within the first month of the family's arrival. Be sure to introduce the new arrivals at the next meeting.

Some families may not be receptive to a visit, ask you not to call them, or may tell you they are not interested. This is their choice. Do not take this as a personal rejection. Note their wishes on your roster, and date it. Continue to send newsletters to these spouses. They can choose not to read them, but at least they cannot say they were given no information.

THE FRG MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

[Visual #68: FRG Membership Roster]

The unit roster is used to make the initial contact with the new family. After everyone in the unit has been contacted, a membership roster can be compiled for the use of the FRG. This list is not made available to the entire unit, but it is distributed to those volunteers who will serve as POCs for the telephone tree. Participation is voluntary. Families may choose not to be listed on the membership roster and to not have their telephone number listed. For emergency contact purposes, however, the FRG leader needs to have a complete list of all families in the unit or connected to it. The complete list is maintained only by the leader. Be sure the FRG Information Survey has a Privacy Act Statement on it. The membership roster is to be used for official FRG business only. Do not ask for or print Social Security numbers or any other sensitive personal information.

FRG PHONETREE

[Visual #69: FRG Phonetree]

The FRG telephone tree, or Chain of Concern, is a very important function of the FRG. It is a means of getting accurate, timely information to all family members. The phonetree is a two-way street. Families in the calling circle can call their POCs for information or referrals. Therefore, it is important that POCs be well-trained and understand all aspects of their job.

There are many ways to divide up the list for calling—by platoon, alphabetically, geographically, or any way that works for the FRG. As long as everyone is contacted, the organization of the tree is up to the leader. Families need to believe that the information they receive from the POC is accurate, current, and not rumor or gossip. The credibility of the FRG and its value are highly dependent upon the phonetree POCs.

Your FRG Handbook contains a sample script (page 96) to follow if you are a POC. It also gives guidelines for setting up the POC's Smart Book (page 97)—the kind of information you should keep close to the phone. POCs must understand and practice confidentiality. Members of the FRG must believe that the things they tell the POC will go only to the people who need to know and not become a subject of gossip and speculation around the FRG.

Benefits of the FRG Phonetree

[Visual #70: Benefits of the Phonetree]

A well-run FRG telephone tree has many benefits for soldiers and their family members. If people know they can rely on the phonetree POC to hear their concerns, convey those concerns to the appropriate services, and can count on the accuracy of the information, they have a sense of belonging to the unit. They are reassured that someone is there for them whenever needed. Soldiers gain peace of mind knowing their families are “in the loop” and not alone during a separation. Quality of life improves for everyone.

TYPES OF PHONE CALLS

[Visual #71: Types of Phone Calls]

POCs will make and receive many types of calls. They tend to fall into these six categories:

- information,
- problems,
- social,
- gossip and rumor,
- chronic, and
- crisis.

The POC may be calling members of his/her circle to pass on **information**. Be sure to write down anything you are asked to pass on so that accuracy is maintained. Members may also call their POC seeking information; having the Smart Book close at hand will make this part of the job easier. However, if you don't know the answer, say so. Promise to research and call back, and be sure to do so. Never make up an answer.

Problem calls are similar to information calls but require the POC to be a good listener, to record the situation accurately, and to suggest ways to solve the problem. Don't give advice or tell people what to do. Give alternatives and referrals.

Social calls can be made to check on a new spouse or a family when the soldier is away. Limit the time spent on these; they can fast become the next category.

Gossip or rumor calls—stick to the facts; do not pass anything on unless you have investigated thoroughly. Even true stories can be hurtful to someone. Actively discourage gossip. Leadership, including all volunteers, must set the tone here. The reputation of the FRG is seriously tarnished, sometimes beyond redemption, if the phonetree becomes a means of spreading gossip.

Chronic calls can be very disruptive. Be tactful, but don't let these callers control your life. Screen your calls, if necessary.

A real **crisis** can be upsetting and unnerving. Remain calm and reassuring; get the information you need, and make the necessary referrals. Keep accurate records, and follow up.

BASIC RULES FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION

[Visual #72: Basic Rules for Crisis Intervention]

When dealing with a person in crisis, it is important to remember that the crisis belongs to the person who is having it. To you, it may be no big deal, but they have no idea how to handle the situation. Avoid being judgmental. Don't tell the caller to calm down or "get a grip." If they could do this, they would have, and you wouldn't have been called. Listen; let them tell you what is going on. Try to get them to express feelings. Don't tell them what you think they are feeling—let them tell you. Try to get all the information so you can give accurate, specific referrals. Find out what they've already tried, if they have done so. Nothing is worse than being sent around the block again. Keep them talking about the current issue; keep them from going off on a tangent or raking up old hurts and problems—these you cannot help. Unless there is imminent danger (they have threatened to harm themselves or someone else), do not call anyone else without their permission. Get them to come up with a plan for fixing the situation, and review with them what they are going to do. Follow up the next day to see if they have done so. Maintain confidentiality. Telling everyone the story makes the situation worse and could have tragic consequences.

Your FRG Handbook has a sample POC Problem Resolution form (page 102) for recording crisis calls and the actions you took. It also contains a list of referral sources for your Smart Book (page 104). Get to know someone in these agencies on a face-to-face basis. When you make a referral, you can give them a specific person to talk to.



One of the essential ingredients for an FRG is communication. We will be discussing one aspect of communication—contacting soldiers and family members. This is done in a variety of ways. This class covers the phonetree, or Chain of Concern.

Objectives

Participants will learn:

- the importance of welcoming new soldiers and families
- how to maintain rosters
- how to set up and run a phonetree
- how to handle and track phone calls
- what to do in the event of a crisis

The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word "OPERATION" in small letters above "READY" in large, bold letters, with a tagline below it.

These are the things we will focus on in this class:

- the importance of welcoming new soldiers and families,
- how to maintain rosters,
- how to set up and run a phonetree,
- how to handle and track phone calls, and
- what to do in the event of a crisis.



The hospitality/welcome committee chairperson should be in regular communication with the appropriate unit staff member who has current information on arrivals to the unit. This is most likely the S1 section. Get the names, phone numbers, and addresses of all newly arrived personnel and their families.

The FRG leader or the hospitality/welcome committee chairperson makes the first phone call to the new spouse. Welcome this person to the unit and the FRG; inform them about the FRG and its activities; make an appointment to visit. During the visit, provide the new family with community and unit information, an invitation to the next FRG event, a copy of the most recent newsletter, and a small gift—such as a plant or a plate of cookies. Have the spouse complete the FRG Information Survey (Handout #8) while you are there. This welcome should take place within the first month of the family's arrival. Be sure to introduce the new arrivals at the next meeting.

Some families may not be receptive to a visit, ask you not to call them, or may tell you they are not interested. This is their choice. Do not take this as a personal rejection. Note their wishes on your roster, and date it. Continue to send newsletters to these spouses. They can choose not to read them, but at least they cannot say they were given no information.

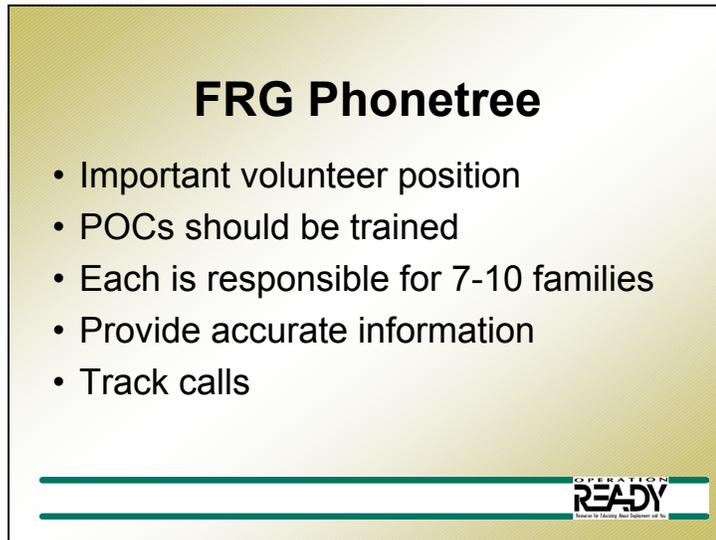
FRG Membership Roster

- Compiled from questionnaires
- Voluntary participation
- Must contain Privacy Act Statement





The unit roster is used to make the initial contact with the new family. After everyone in the unit has been contacted, a membership roster can be compiled for the use of the FRG. This list is not made available to the entire unit, but it is distributed to those volunteers who will serve as POCs for the telephone tree. Participation is voluntary. Families may choose not to be listed on the membership roster and to not have their telephone number listed. For emergency contact purposes, however, the FRG leader needs to have a complete list of all families in the unit or connected to it. The complete list is maintained only by the leader. Be sure the FRG Information Survey has a Privacy Act Statement on it. The membership roster is to be used for official FRG business only. Do not ask for or print Social Security numbers or any other sensitive personal information.



The FRG telephone tree, or Chain of Concern, is a very important function of the FRG. It is a means of getting accurate, timely information to all family members. The phonetree is a two-way street. Families in the calling circle can call their POCs for information or referrals. Therefore, it is important that POCs be well-trained and understand all aspects of their job.

There are many ways to divide up the list for calling—by platoon, alphabetically, geographically, or any way that works for the FRG. As long as everyone is contacted, the organization of the tree is up to the leader. Families need to believe that the information they receive from the POC is accurate, current, and not rumor or gossip. The credibility of the FRG and its value are highly dependent upon the phonetree POCs.

Your FRG Handbook contains a sample script (page 96) to follow if you are a POC. It also gives guidelines for setting up the POC's Smart Book (page 97)—the kind of information you should keep close to the phone. POCs must understand and practice confidentiality. Members of the FRG must believe that the things they tell the POC will go only to the people who need to know and not become a subject of gossip and speculation around the FRG.

Benefits of the Phonetree

- Security
- Reassurance
- Timely information
- Effective assistance
- Peace of mind
- Improved quality of life

OPERATION READY
Supporting the Warfighter

A well-run FRG telephone tree has many benefits for soldiers and their family members. If people know they can rely on the phonetree POC to hear their concerns, convey those concerns to the appropriate services, and can count on the accuracy of the information, they have a sense of belonging to the unit. They are reassured that someone is there for them whenever needed. Soldiers gain peace of mind knowing their families are “in the loop” and not alone during a separation. Quality of life improves for everyone.



POCs will make and receive many types of calls. They tend to fall into these six categories: information, problems, social, gossip and rumor, chronic, and crisis. The POC may be calling members of his/her circle to pass on **information**. Be sure to write down anything you are asked to pass on so that accuracy is maintained. Members may also call their POC seeking information; having the Smart Book close at hand will make this part of the job easier. However, if you don't know the answer, say so. Promise to research and call back, and be sure to do so. Never make up an answer.

Problem calls are similar to information calls but require the POC to be a good listener, to record the situation accurately, and to suggest ways to solve the problem. Don't give advice or tell people what to do. Give alternatives and referrals.

Social calls can be made to check on a new spouse or a family when the soldier is away. Limit the time spent on these; they can fast become the next category.

Gossip or rumor calls—stick to the facts; do not pass anything on unless you have investigated thoroughly. Even true stories can be hurtful to someone. Actively discourage gossip. Leadership, including all volunteers, must set the tone here. The reputation of the FRG is seriously tarnished, sometimes beyond redemption, if the phonetree becomes a means of spreading gossip.

Chronic calls can be very disruptive. Be tactful, but don't let these callers control your life. Screen your calls, if necessary.

A real **crisis** can be upsetting and unnerving. Remain calm and reassuring; get the information you need, and make the necessary referrals. Keep accurate records, and follow up.

Basic Rules for Crisis Intervention

- Listen; let the person talk
- Be empathetic
- Work toward clarification
- Stick to the current issues
- Give specific referrals
- Tell them who will be contacted
- Maintain trust




When dealing with a person in crisis, it is important to remember that the crisis belongs to the person who is having it. To you, it may be no big deal, but they have no idea how to handle the situation. Avoid being judgmental. Don't tell the caller to calm down or "get a grip." If they could do this, they would have, and you wouldn't have been called. Listen; let them tell you what is going on. Try to get them to express feelings. Don't tell them what you think they are feeling—let them tell you. Try to get all the information so you can give accurate, specific referrals. Find out what they've already tried, if they have done so. Nothing is worse than being sent around the block again. Keep them talking about the current issue; keep them from going off on a tangent or raking up old hurts and problems—these you cannot help. Unless there is imminent danger (they have threatened to harm themselves or someone else), do not call anyone else without their permission. Get them to come up with a plan for fixing the situation, and review with them what they are going to do. Follow up the next day to see if they have done so. Maintain confidentiality. Telling everyone the story makes the situation worse and could have tragic consequences.

Your FRG Handbook has a sample POC Problem Resolution form (page 102) for recording crisis calls and the actions you took. It also contains a list of referral sources for your Smart Book (page 104). Get to know someone in these agencies on a face-to-face basis. When you make a referral, you can give them a specific person to talk to.

FRG Training Workshop Lesson Plans

Part Two

Running Your Family Readiness Group

Part Two—Workshop Overview
(Estimated Time: 3½ hours)

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual = V Handout = H
5 Minutes	Workshop Welcome and Agenda	V #73–74
50 Minutes	Lesson Six: Running the FRG— Communications	V #75–84 H #11 Activity 1: Guest Speaker—Newsletter Editor Activity 2: Guest Speaker—PAO
45 Minutes	Lesson Seven: Running the FRG— Special Events	V #85–90 Activity: Planning Event H #12–14
30 Minutes	Lesson Eight: Running the FRG— Money Matters	V #91–101 H #15–16
30 Minutes	Lesson Nine: The FRG—Bringing It All Together	V #102–113
50 Minutes	Workshop Wrap-up: Your FRG— “Braggin’ Rights”	V #114–116 Material Sharing or Panel Discussion Activity H #17–19

Part Two: Workshop Introduction

WELCOME

[Visual #73: Family Readiness Group Training Workshop—Part Two]

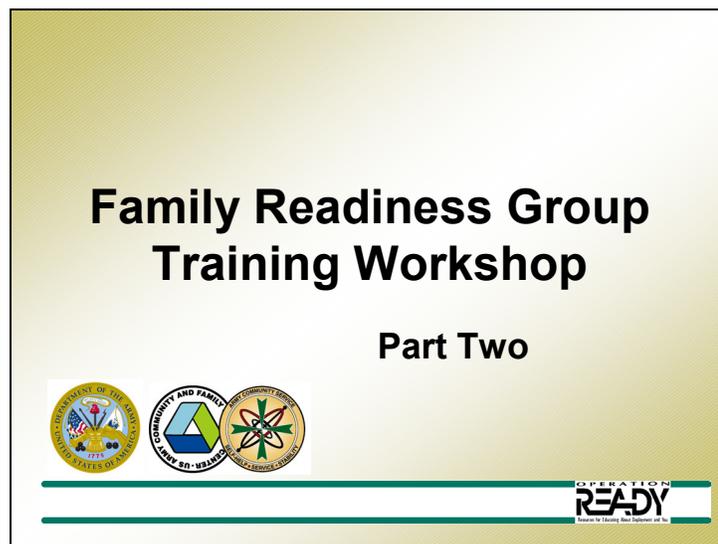
The second part of our training workshop deals with operating the FRG. In Part One, we laid the groundwork for building an effective FRG. Now that we have a good foundation, we are ready to run the FRG.

AGENDA

[Visual #74: Agenda]

[Review the agenda.]

Operating an effective FRG requires these essential tasks to be performed. We will be looking at each one of these in this workshop.



The second part of our training workshop deals with operating the FRG. In Part One, we laid the groundwork for building an effective FRG. Now that we have a good foundation, we are ready to run the FRG.

Agenda

Part Two

- Communications
- Special Events
- Money Management
- Putting it All Together
- “Braggin’ Rights”



[Review the agenda.]

Operating an effective FRG requires these essential tasks to be performed. We will be looking at each one of these in this workshop.

Lesson Six

Running the FRG—Communications

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #75: Running the FRG—Communications]

In addition to the phonetree, or Chain of Concern, the FRG has several other ways to communicate with family members. We will look at those ways in this class.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #76: Objectives]

These are the objectives of our communications class:

- learn how to establish and distribute a newsletter,
- learn other means of communicating, and
- learn how to deal with media.

NEWSLETTERS

[Visual #77: Purposes of a Newsletter]

Again, you will need to have your copy of the FRG Leader's Handbook, Chapter 6.

[Provide copies of Handout #11 (10 pages), Establishing the FRG Newsletter.]

A well-researched, well-written newsletter can do all these things—and do them in an entertaining, attractive way—so that everyone will look forward to its arrival in the mail each month.

[Visual #78: Types of Newsletters]

Official newsletters can be printed and distributed using government funds, but its contents are limited by regulation. All information must be official information, and the commander is the final authority. Your FRG Handbook contains a list of the kinds of things that can and cannot be published in an official newsletter (pages 106–107). An official newsletter may not exceed eight pages, printed front and back, and it must be on white paper with black ink only.

Other FRG newsletters are less restrictive but must be in good taste. They can contain advertisements, recipes, treasurer's reports, children's coloring pages, and the like. No appropriated fund money can be used to publish or distribute these newsletters. It is paid for out of FRG-generated money. Although the commander does not have to approve the contents, it is still a good idea to send it to him/her to review it. In these very dangerous times, it is important that no sensitive or secure information go out in any kind of newsletter.

[Visual #79: Types of Newsletters]

Newsletters can be created at battalion or unit level, as well. Some units, at either level, publish a newsletter and set aside several pages for FRG information. This is one of those issues that must be discussed by leadership at all levels. It is also possible to publish unit-level FRG newsletters while soldiers are in garrison, then band together to publish a battalion-level newsletter when soldiers are deployed. This can then be shared with the soldiers; it helps them to know what is going on at home while they are away.

Producing a Newsletter

[Visual #80: Steps for Producing a Newsletter]

Chapter 6 of your FRG Handbook contains good information about these steps. You also have Handout #11 to guide you.

[Activity 1: Invite an FRG newsletter editor to share his/her experiences and ideas with the group. This person could also teach this lesson if the facilitator has no personal knowledge of newsletter publishing.]

Get organized. What type of newsletter do you want? How often will it be published? Who will be in charge? Where will it be printed? All these things need to be decided before you begin. The commander will need to be included in the planning stages.

Choose a design. For recognition purposes, the design should remain the same once you have selected it. See your FRG Handbook for ideas on design.

Edit the materials for timeliness, correctness, substance, and readability. Be aware of copyright laws. Again, refer to Handout #11 for more information. Copyrighted material may not be reprinted without the written consent of the author, who will then expect to receive a copy of your newsletter.

Layout. Desktop publishing software is designed to help you with layout.

[Visual #81: Steps for Producing a Newsletter]

Now that you have chosen the layout, you are ready to finalize the newsletter for publication.

Proofread for spelling errors, captions on pictures, correct names, etc. Have at least two other people proofread, besides the editor. Be certain that pictures scanned into the document are clear and will copy well. Send a copy to the FRG leader and the commander for a final look. If this is an official newsletter, the commander must sign the last page of the original.

Publish. Requirements vary from installation to installation, so be sure to know what these are before you begin. Reserve FRGs have guidance to follow in USARC Regulation 608-1, 4-9.

Distribute. There are many ways to send out your newsletter. An FRG-published newsletter requires first class postage. Put newsletters into envelopes so that staples do not get caught in the post office machines. Use computer-generated labels. You may also be able to use bulk mail if you have at least 200 copies to mail. Mailing the newsletter is the best way to see that it reaches family members. Do not rely on soldiers to take them home.

Check the publishing software you are using to see if it allows you to convert your files to PDF format. If so, this provides you with a way to distribute your newsletter electronically to families who have access to e-mail. The person receiving a PDF file needs to have the free, downloadable Adobe Acrobat Reader software installed on their computer (available from Adobe's website at www.adobe.com) in order to read and/or print the newsletter. Sending the newsletter via e-mail can save on postage and time. Be sure to ask for members' e-mail addresses on the FRG Information Survey (Handout #8).

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO REACH FRG MEMBERS

[Visual #82: Getting Information Out]

In addition to the newsletter and the telephone tree, there are several other ways to reach your members. Information and articles can be published in your local newspaper, on post or off. Check with both of these for their policy and format.

Most installations have a cable TV network that reaches quarters on post. You should be able to post announcements of upcoming events and meetings on their public service segment. You may even be able to arrange for a live interview!

Many local cable TV networks have a community calendar channel as well. Placing announcements here can reach those who do not live on post. It is also a way for Reserve and Guard units to contact their family members.

Some FRGs have considered creating their own web page, but this is a new area, and most installation DOIM (Directorates of Information Management) are not open to the idea. There are costs involved, legal issues, security concerns, etc. However, since units

usually at brigade level have their own websites, consider adding information about the FRG here. Just be sure that you update the webmaster regularly.

MEDIA

[Visual #83: Dealing with the Media]

Reporters usually want to interview people just before or during a deployment. The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) generally makes those arrangements, and you may choose whether or not to speak to the media. You have a right to do so and to state your opinion. Media may, however, contact you individually. They may even approach you on the street. Again, the choice is yours. Do not feel obligated to talk if you don't want to be interviewed. You may also agree to talk but request that the PAO be present. Ask the reporter to provide you with their questions in advance so you will feel prepared and comfortable.

[Visual #84: Media Interviews]

[Activity 2: If time permits, invite someone from the Public Affairs Office to present this portion of the class or answer questions. They may even be willing to bring a camera and do a mock interview. This might be very helpful if a major deployment is imminent.]

If you choose to speak with a reporter, keep these things in mind:

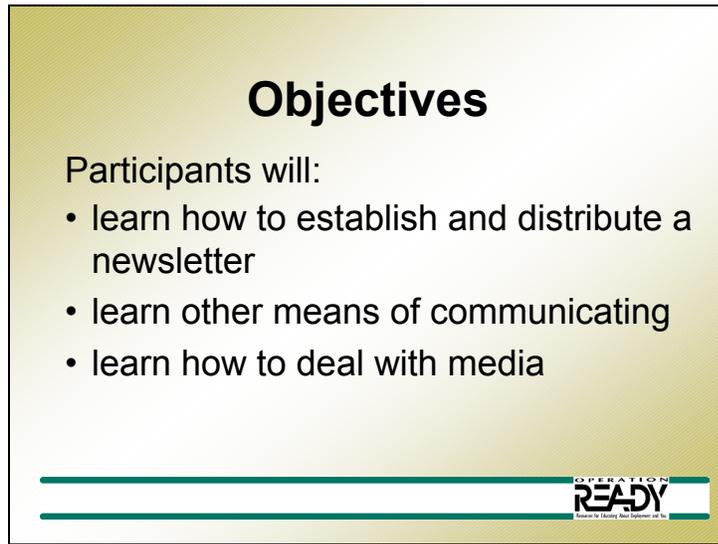
- Think about what you are going to say. Speaking your mind is your privilege as an American citizen, but be careful not to reveal anything that could endanger our soldiers or could in anyway be used against them. Nowadays, the enemy has access to everything printed or said.
- Know with whom you are speaking. What TV station or newspaper does the reporter represent? How will your remarks be used? What you say can be edited and cut to change the meaning. If you have advance notice of the interview, plan to record the interview with a tape recorder so you have a record of the event.
- Stick to the subject; be as positive as you can, and above all, be yourself.

On the other hand:

- If you don't know the answer, don't guess or say, "I think."
- Don't use acronyms.
- Don't say, "No comment." It will be assumed that you are hiding something.
- Don't ever agree to "off the record." There is no such thing.
- Above all, don't get into an argument. If the reporter becomes aggressive, end the interview and walk away.



In addition to the phonetree, or Chain of Concern, the FRG has several other ways to communicate with family members. We will look at those ways in this class.



Objectives

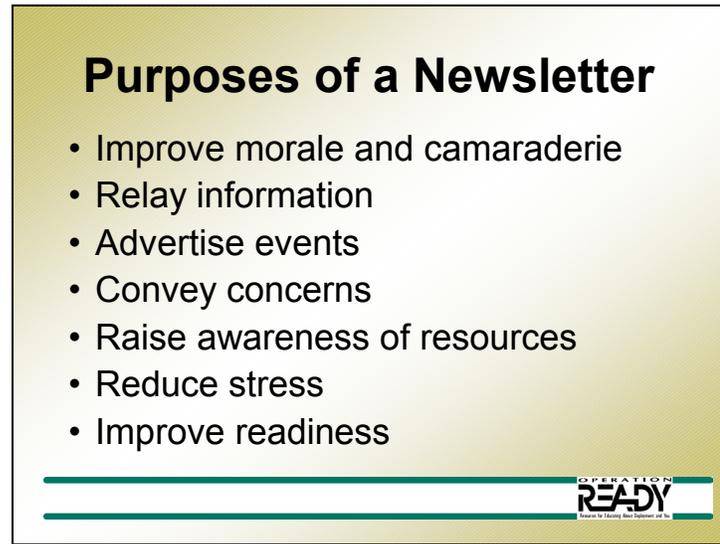
Participants will:

- learn how to establish and distribute a newsletter
- learn other means of communicating
- learn how to deal with media

**OPERATION
READY**
Ready to Change the World

These are the objectives of our communications class:

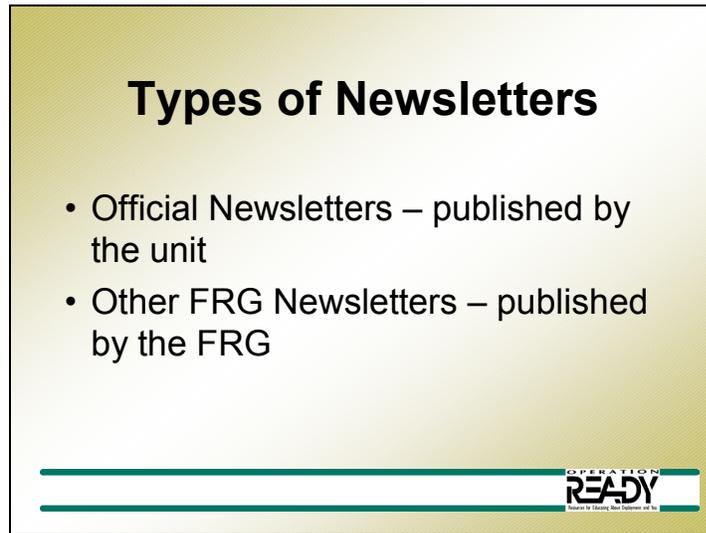
- learn how to establish and distribute a newsletter,
- learn other means of communicating, and
- learn how to deal with media.



Again, you will need to have your copy of the FRG Leader's Handbook, Chapter 6.

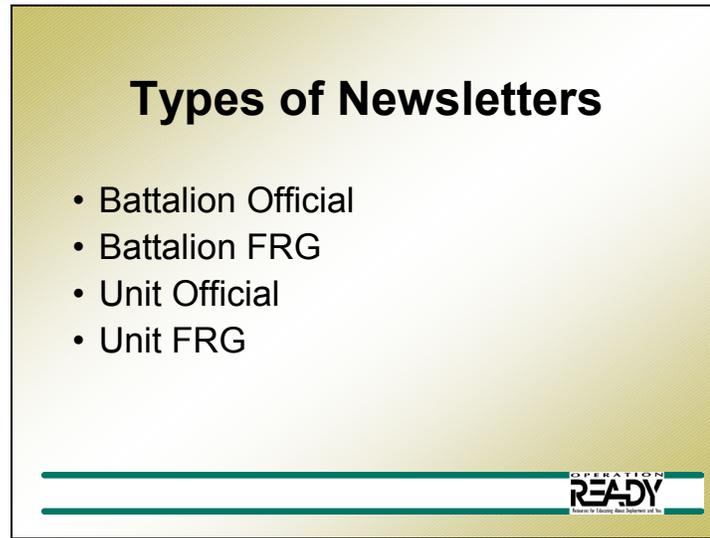
[Provide copies of Handout # 11 (10 pages), Establishing the FRG Newsletter.]

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Steps for Producing a Newsletter

- Get organized
- Choose a design
- Edit information
- Decide on layout



OPERATION
READY
Ready to Change the World

Chapter 6 of your FRG Handbook contains good information about these steps. You also have Handout #11 to guide you.

[Activity 1: Invite an FRG newsletter editor to share his/her experiences and ideas with the group. This person could also teach this lesson if the facilitator has no personal knowledge of newsletter publishing.]

Get organized. What type of newsletter do you want? How often will it be published? Who will be in charge? Where will it be printed? All these things need to be decided before you begin. The commander will need to be included in the planning stages.

Choose a design. For recognition purposes, the design should remain the same once you have selected it. See your FRG Handbook for ideas on design.

Edit the materials for timeliness, correctness, substance, and readability. Be aware of copyright laws. Again, refer to Handout #11 for more information. Copyrighted material may not be reprinted without the written consent of the author, who will then expect to receive a copy of your newsletter.

Layout. Desktop publishing software is designed to help you with this. Your FRG handbook has a sample of a typical layout.



Now that you have chosen the layout, you are ready to finalize the newsletter for publication.

Proofread for spelling errors, captions on pictures, correct names, etc. Have at least two other people proofread, besides the editor. Be certain that pictures scanned into the document are clear and will copy well. Send a copy to the FRG leader and the commander for a final look. If this is an official newsletter, the commander must sign the last page of the original.

Publish. Requirements vary from installation to installation, so be sure to know what these are before you begin. Reserve FRGs have guidance to follow in USARC Regulation 608-1, 4-9.

Distribute. There are many ways to send out your newsletter. An FRG-published newsletter requires first class postage. Put newsletters into envelopes so that staples do not get caught in the post office machines. Use computer-generated labels. You may also be able to use bulk mail if you have at least 200 copies to mail. Mailing the newsletter is the best way to see that it reaches family members. Do not rely on soldiers to take them home.

Check the publishing software you are using to see if it allows you to convert your files to PDF format. If so, this provides you with a way to distribute your newsletter electronically to families who have access to e-mail. The person receiving a PDF file needs to have the free, downloadable Adobe Acrobat Reader software installed on their computer (available from Adobe's website at www.adobe.com) in order to read and/or print the newsletter. Sending the newsletter via e-mail can save on postage and time. Be sure to ask for members' e-mail addresses on the FRG Information Survey (Handout #8).

Getting Information Out



- Local and installation newspapers
- Installation cable TV
- Local TV
- Unit Web page



In addition to the newsletter and the telephone tree, there are several other ways to reach your members. Information and articles can be published in your local newspaper, on post or off. Check with both of these for their policy and format.

Most installations have a cable TV network that reaches quarters on post. You should be able to post announcements of upcoming events and meetings on their public service segment. You may even be able to arrange for a live interview!

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Dealing with the Media

- Usually related to deployment
- PAO involved
- “Off the cuff” interview



The image is a slide titled "Dealing with the Media" with a light green background. It features a bulleted list of three points: "Usually related to deployment", "PAO involved", and "Off the cuff" interview. To the left of the list is an illustration of a hand holding a microphone. At the bottom right, there is a logo for "OPERATION READY" with the tagline "Beating the Odds" below it.

Reporters usually want to interview people just before or during a deployment. The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) generally makes those arrangements, and you may choose whether or not to speak to the media. You have a right to do so and to state your opinion. Media may, however, contact you individually. They may even approach you on the street. Again, the choice is yours. Do not feel obligated to talk if you don't want to be interviewed. You may also agree to talk but request that the PAO be present. Ask the reporter to provide you with their questions in advance so you will feel prepared and comfortable.

Media Interviews

<p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think before speaking • Know your interviewer • Stay on subject • Be positive • Be yourself 	<p><u>Don't</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speculate or guess • Mislead • Say “no comment” • Say “off the record” • Argue
--	---



[Activity 2: If time permits, invite someone from the Public Affairs Office to present this portion of the class or answer questions. They may even be willing to bring a camera and do a mock interview. This might be very helpful if a major deployment is imminent.]

If you choose to speak with a reporter, keep these things in mind:

- Think about what you are going to say. Speaking your mind is your privilege as an American citizen, but be careful not to reveal anything that could endanger our soldiers or could in anyway be used against them. Nowadays, the enemy has access to everything printed or said.
- Know with whom you are speaking. What TV station or newspaper does the reporter represent? How will your remarks be used? What you say can be edited and cut to change the meaning. If you have advance notice of the interview, plan to record the interview with a tape recorder so you have a record of the event.
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On the other hand:

- If you don't know the answer, don't guess or say, “I think.”
- Don't use acronyms.
- Don't say, “No comment.” It will be assumed that you are hiding something.
- Don't ever agree to “off the record.” There is no such thing.
- Above all, don't get into an argument. If the reporter becomes aggressive, end the interview and walk away.

Establishing the FRG Newsletter

Reasons for Using a Newsletter

- Reach a small audience
- Communicate to a specific group with common interests
- Save meeting time
- Provide recognition
- Introduce new ideas
- Introduce yourself

Steps in Producing a Newsletter

1. Define your audience and its needs.
2. Name your objective.
3. Set up a mailing list.
4. Choose the messages, and locate sources of information.
5. Write the copy.
6. Design the layout.
7. Plan the reproduction.
8. Set up distribution.
9. Evaluate your product.

Planning Your Newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is:

This newsletter will be sent to:

Describe audience needs:

The name of this newsletter is:

The requirements are:

The newsletter will be published: ___ Monthly ___ Bimonthly ___ Quarterly

It will be mailed: ___ First of month ___ Middle of month

Newsletter Guidelines

Purpose

What is your newsletter's purpose? What do you hope to achieve? You want to communicate accurate, unbiased, and current information. It sounds simple, but effective communication requires planning. Begin by getting to know your audience.

Audience

What do you know about the people you are writing to? Why do they need to know what you have to say? What are the most important things in their lives? The better you know them, the better your chances of giving them useful information.

Content

What are you telling your readers? Is it about their lifestyles and needs? Is it timely? Are you the best source of information on this topic, or do you need some assistance? If you use someone else's research or information, do you give them credit?

How much are you telling your audience at one time? Can they use all the information you provide, or is it overwhelming and confusing?

Newsletters should be short and to the point. Some studies indicate that you have about 20 seconds to grab your reader's attention, and if you accomplish that, you have about 10–20 minutes to tell them everything. The audience will affect this, of course.

Expect to share one to three major points. A four-page newsletter is a good length. A newsletter that looks interesting but is too long to be read now gets put aside for later—a time that never comes.

Writing Style

The most important news should appear in the first two or three words of the sentence, if possible. Begin with a strong lead. In a paragraph, put the most important sentence first. Give the major story “prime time” space in the newsletter, too.

Keep the sentences simple and short. Special events may call for added flavor and style, but keep in mind that most readers want you to get to the point quickly. The following writing tips may be beneficial to you:

- Use the active voice when writing the newsletter. Research shows that readers process and understand information more quickly when it is written in the active voice. Active voice attributes an action to a person or thing; passive voice focuses on what was done rather than who did it. Example of active voice: “The FRG held a fundraiser.” Example of passive voice: “A fundraiser was held by the FRG.”
- Check noun and verb agreement. Some sentences are tricky.
- Certain words are used excessively and do not contribute to the message. Leave them out. Examples: very, nearly, only, almost, quite, really.
- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks; colons and semicolons normally go outside quotation marks. Placement of question marks and exclamation points depends on their use in the sentence.
- Misspelled words stand out, so check the dictionary often since spell checkers don’t catch everything. Maintain a professional look by proofreading carefully for errors.
- Check to see that words are divided correctly. Hyphenation programs can make mistakes.
- Titles of books, magazines, publications, songs, etc., should be italicized.
- Use boldface and italics (but not at the same time) for emphasis instead of underlining (an outdated form of emphasis, in most cases, now that computer software is used to prepare newsletters and other documents instead of typewriters).
- Use a grammar reference book and a style guide.

Newsletter Design

Good newsletter design involves certain principles, which are described below.

Paper Size and Format

Your laser printer will determine the size of paper you can use. Most desktop publishing computer programs allow printing on 8 ½ x 11 inch or 11 x 17 inch paper. Refer to Chapter 6 of the FRG Handbook for specifications regarding FRG newsletters.

White Space

Choose the margin widths when setting up your page layout. Margins on top, bottom, left, and right of each page should never be less than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and generally never more than 1 inch.

Another decision to make is how much white space to leave between columns. This should be $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and should remain consistent with each issue.

Columns

Laying out your newsletter in columns makes it easier to read. Your choices are one, two, or three columns, and the widths may vary. Once you decide, be consistent with each issue. Your readers will appreciate your consistency, and you will have eliminated another decision-making dilemma each time you send out a newsletter.

Margins

Another decision is whether to fully justify the text (have straight right and left margins) or to have a ragged-right margin (left-hand justification). You'll find it easier, less formal, and generally more reader friendly to use a ragged-right edge.

Layout

The layout of your newsletter should be attractive and should help your readers to understand your message. Good layouts include:

- **Balance**—Place elements on the page to achieve optical interest and balance. If a page looks top-heavy, bottom-heavy, or leans to one side or the other, rearrange elements until the page looks balanced. This does not mean all columns and elements have to be of equal size.
- **Emphasis**—Plan one dominant element per page. This helps your reader know where to begin reading or what is most important. It also simplifies the look of your page.
- **Proportion**—The type, graphics, margins, and other elements of each page should fit together proportionally. For instance, don't use heavy bars or graphics with a lightweight type.
- **Flow**—Good page layout directs the reader across or down the page and helps to keep their interest. Simple design helps readability.
- **Unity**—Tie everything together with white space to the outside for alignment and consistency.

If you choose to use a desktop publishing program for your newsletter, many of these elements will be available to you on templates. Choose the one that best suits your purpose.

Copyright Laws

Printed Materials

The role of the FRG is to disseminate information. This responsibility allows the freedom to use information released by government agencies but not individual or institutional sources, unless permission is granted and the source is referenced.

Ethically, a person should always reference sources; *legally*, if a document is copyrighted, it must be referenced. The copyright owner has the power to prosecute when their work is used and permission was not granted.

Attributing the person who produced a piece of work is courteous. Asking permission, whether verbal or written (written, if possible), is professional. Most producers are glad for you to use their work. Do not use copyrighted cartoons without permission.

Plagiarism is theft that is accomplished by using a created product as one's own work. It can occur whether the publication is copyrighted or not.

Libel (injuring a person's or institution's reputation) is not likely to occur, but keep in mind that the chief causes of libel are carelessness, misunderstanding of libel laws, and the limitations of the privilege defense (First Amendment). Text, photos, artwork, broadcast, and computer software are all potential media for libel. Check every detail two or three times! Good judgment is essential.

The **fair use** of a copyrighted work, including reproduction of copies for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is usually not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use of a work in any particular instance is fair use, consider the following:

- the purpose and character of the use (commercial or nonprofit),
- the nature of the copyrighted work,
- the amount of material used in relation to the whole copyrighted piece,
- the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the piece.

These principles should apply to presentations as well.

Computer Software

Software piracy is common among computer users and often by people who do not realize they are doing anything wrong. Copying a copyrighted software program onto a blank CD or disk is the same as stealing any other item. Making a copy "for educational purposes" is not legal with software, unless a site license has been purchased from the software company, which allows a specific number of additional copies to be made of the software. Any time you reproduce any material in multiple copies, seek permission.

The most common violations against computer software license agreements are:

- making an illegal copy of a program CD or diskette,
- copying all or part of a computer manual,
- loading several computers simultaneously with one program CD or diskette, and
- copying and distributing multiple copies of software not licensed for such use.

Newsletter Headlines

Headlines are important elements because they help your readers comprehend and enjoy reading your newsletter. Write your headlines with this specific function in mind—not just for decoration or to fill space.

Headlines lead your readers through your newsletter and help them to see at a glance what an article is about. Be sure they are specific and accurate.

Type Size

Make the type size for headlines large enough to stand out. This calls for at least a 12-point type, with a 14–18 point type preferable in most situations. Always use boldface type for headlines so they will show up well.

Placement

Place the headline above the beginning of the story. If necessary, place the headline first, then the story, followed by the picture or artwork at the end.

Try to include a subject and verb in each headline. Often, an object should be added. Omit minor words, such as articles like “a” or “the.” Sometimes you can use a comma in place of the word to save space.

Allow plenty of white space around headlines to give an open, easy-to-read look. As a rule, leave more white space above the heading than below.

Acronyms

Use only the most familiar abbreviations and acronyms. For example: ERA could mean “earned run average” or “equal rights amendment.” Know your readers, and write for them.

Caps and Lower Case

Set headings in capital and lower case letters—never all capital letters, because they are harder to read.

You can capitalize the first letter of the first word and all proper nouns. Or, you can capitalize the first letter of all words except articles and prepositions. Be consistent with all headlines from issue to issue, whatever the style used.

Headline Writing Guides

- Make the head an accurate guide to the story. Avoid sensationalism or misleading headlines.
- Make the head a complete sentence, if possible. Try to include a subject and a verb. Active verbs tell more about a story.
- Use present or present perfect tense for current happenings, and future or infinite tense for announcing future events. Use past tense for past events.
- Avoid repeating the wording of the lead sentence, although the heading should reflect the lead.
- Avoid repetition of key words.
- Omit minor words, such as articles, unless they add to the meaning.
- Make each line as complete a thought as possible (if more than one line is used).
- Avoid negative, tentative, or question heads.
- Keep numbers to a minimum, and round off when possible.
- Punctuate correctly. A comma can replace “and.”
- Use only the most familiar abbreviations and acronyms. Avoid jargon.
- Be specific and literal.

Writing Style and Grammar Usage

A newsletter is a type of newspaper. When you write for a newspaper, you learn to follow certain conventions of style and usage. These help make the writing consistent and more direct. Reporters and editors use *The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook* as their major reference. You can find a copy of this book in most libraries. It’s also sold or can be ordered from a bookstore.

Newsletters are often prepared with inconsistencies in style and grammar usage. The following are some common problems and the “rules” for handling them.

Time

Use figures, except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, such as 10 a.m., 3 p.m., 4:30 p.m.

Use periods and lowercase letters with a.m. and p.m. (not A.M. or P.M.). State the exact time, and don't add redundancies, such as "9 a.m. in the morning."

Months and Years

Capitalize the names of months. When a month is used with a specific date, you can abbreviate it: Jan. 1, Feb. 14. Spell the month out when using it alone: "The crafts fair is set for March." When a phrase lists only a month and year, don't separate the month and year with a comma, but if there is a month, day, and year, use the comma. Examples:

January 15, 2002, is the filing deadline for benefits.

December 2001 records the biggest Family Day attendance ever.

Capitalization

Avoid unnecessary capitals. Proper nouns and proper names are, of course, capitalized.

One problem is what to do with titles. The rule is to capitalize formal titles when used immediately before a name (President John Doe). A title should be in lowercase when it is used alone or is set off from a name by commas. Examples:

President Mary Smith attended the national board meeting.

Mary Smith, president, attended the national board meeting.

Acronyms

Avoid overuse of acronyms. Spell out the proper name on its first usage, with the acronym in parentheses after it. Example: National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS). On second and later references, you can use the acronym.

Also, if it won't create confusion in meaning, you can also use a shortened version of a person's name after they have been identified by their full name. (Example: The association awarded Jones its highest honor.)

Newsletter Font Types

Having a choice of font families and sizes is probably the biggest difference between a newsletter prepared on a typewriter and one prepared on your computer and printer.

Not only will your readers notice—and appreciate—when you use type and sizes to improve readability and attractiveness of your publication, but you will also have more flexibility in fitting text into a limited space.

Speaking of Fonts

You usually have at least two fonts available to you. For example, **Times Roman** is what printers call a serif typeface; **Arial** is a sans serif typeface.

Serif typefaces have lines extending from the upper and lower ends of strokes on each letter. Sans serif typefaces do not have serifs or decorative “tails,” thus the name, sans (without) serif.

Typefaces

A general rule is to never mix more than two typefaces (fonts) on a page or in a newsletter.

Newspaper or newsletter style will often use bold sans serif type for headlines. Serif type is often used for text because it is easier to read in larger quantities.

Use boldface sparingly, however; too much boldface on a page makes copy look weaker instead of adding impact. Boldface and italics should not be combined—one catches the reader’s attention; two or more (such as bold, italics, and underline) may cause the reader to notice the type rather than concentrate on the words you have written.

You can use different sizes of these type styles to add emphasis and interest to your publication, but always use the same type styles in each issue of your newsletter. Remember, your readers like consistency and simplicity, and so will you.

What is a Point Size?

Point sizes are no mystery at all if you can remember that 72 points equal 1 inch. That is probably the largest size type you will ever need in your newsletter. The smallest type you will use is 8- or 9-point type, and then only sparingly in tables and footnotes.

Your readers will feel most comfortable with text printed in 10- to 12-point type. You can decide which of the three sizes of type is best depending on the importance of the article and the amount of space you have to fill.

Newsletter Analysis Checklist

Here is a quick, easy way to analyze your own newsletters and discover any chronic faults they may have. Apply the following checklist to all outgoing newsletters.

Can you answer **Yes** to these questions?

- Is the newsletter clear and easy to read, assuring quick understanding with a minimum of effort on the reader's part?
- If your message is intended to induce action, does it stress the reader's interests and point out benefits to the reader?
- Is the tone of your newsletter courteous and friendly, suggesting that you enjoyed writing it?
- Is your message well organized, containing all the necessary facts or information, without irrelevant details?
- Does your newsletter show consideration for the reader by revealing a genuine desire to be helpful?
- Is your newsletter neat and attractive because of proper layout on the sheet, clean typing, and short paragraphs?

Can you answer **No** to these questions?

- Does the newsletter contain trite, outmoded expressions, such as "contents duly noted," "kindly be advised," "pursuant to," etc.?
- Are the words "I," "we," "us," and "our" used too often, indicating too much emphasis on your own interests and point of view?
- Does your newsletter contain any superfluous words that contribute nothing to the sentences in which they appear?
- Are any of your statements vague or ambiguous and, therefore, liable to confuse the reader?
- Does your newsletter contain any tactless words that carry connotations unpleasant to the reader?
- Is there anything about your message that gives it the tone or appearance of a form letter?

Lesson Seven

Running the FRG—Special Events

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #85: Running the FRG—Special Events]

Fun events are a must in any FRG, and they're one of the essential tasks of the FRG. Fun events help families form friendships, build unit cohesion, and break the isolation felt by some families. There is no limit to the kind of events the FRG sponsors, as long as they are safe, clean, open to all, and there are enough volunteers to carry them out.

CHOOSING AND PLANNING FUN EVENTS

[Visual #86: Choosing Events]

The entire membership should have input into the events sponsored by the FRG. This should be done early on in the formation of the group, preferably at one of the earliest meetings. Small FRGs can brainstorm ideas as a group. If the membership is large, form an event committee of representatives from across the FRG, and develop a list of ideas to be presented to the entire FRG for a vote. Be sure interested single soldiers are included. Come up with three to six ideas. To get you started, see Handout #12, Event Ideas.

[Distribute Handout #12.]

[Visual #87: Scheduling Events]

Once you have collected three to six ideas, schedule these on a 12-month calendar. The FRG should plan for a year at a time, which allows adequate time for planning the event, raising sufficient funds to pay for it, and planning around other events that could interfere with the plans.

[Visual #88: Planning Phase]

Once the group has decided what it wants to do, it's time to begin planning the actual events. These are the questions that must be answered in order to have a successful event: when, where, costs, who, and how. Your FRG Leader's Handbook has a sample of a planning worksheet. Starting with what you want the actual event to look like, plan the tasks that must be accomplished. Your sheet has a place for listing the task, who will do it, and when it has to be done. Once you are satisfied that all tasks are accounted for, provide a copy for each person on the list.

[Activity: Divide into groups of four to six. Give each group a copy of the event planning guide, Handout #13. Using Handout #12, have them select an event from the list and plan it out as if they were an actual planning committee for the FRG. Time limit: about 15 minutes. Have each group report out their plan. Ask for comments on the plan].

Get as many people as possible involved in carrying out the event, and make it fun.

[Visual #89: After Action Report]

Many FRGs end the process when the event is over, but there is actually one more step—the After Action Report. This is a brief evaluation of the event—its successes and concerns, individuals who need to be thanked for their contributions, and what the group recommends about the event. They may decide it was wonderful and should be made an annual event. However, if no record is kept, how will the event continue? If the group wants to continue having the same kind of event but wants a few things changed, who will remember what to change if it isn't written down? If the event doesn't do well and the group decides to never do it again, no one will remember this failure unless it's written down since the people involved will not be around.

The event planning guides and the After Action Reports should be kept in the files that are handed on to the next FRG leader.

[Activity: Have the same groups write an After Action Report, using Handout #14, on the event they just planned. Time: about 15 minutes.]

SAFETY AND HEALTH CONCERNS

[Visual #90: Safety and Health Concerns]

Your FRG Handbook contains suggestions and ideas for the items listed here (pages 122–124). Depending upon your location and climate, other things may be involved as well. Take time to review them as you plan for an event. A first aid kit should be available every time the group gets together. Know the location of fire extinguishers, fire exits in buildings, and emergency phone numbers.

Check with your installation or county health department on requirements for handling food.



Fun events are a must in any FRG, and they're one of the essential tasks of the FRG. Fun events help families form friendships, build unit cohesion, and break the isolation felt by some families. There is no limit to the kind of events the FRG sponsors, as long as they are safe, clean, open to all, and there are enough volunteers to carry them out.

Choosing Events

- Small group
 - use brainstorming
 - get ideas from family survey
- Large group
 - committee makes list
 - present to group for vote

OPERATION
READY
Home to Family and Community

The entire membership should have input into the events sponsored by the FRG. This should be done early on in the formation of the group, preferably at one of the earliest meetings. Small FRGs can brainstorm ideas as a group. If the membership is large, form an event committee of representatives from across the FRG, and develop a list of ideas to be presented to the entire FRG for a vote. Be sure interested single soldiers are included. Come up with three to six ideas. To get you started, see Handout # 12, Event Ideas.

[Distribute Handout #12.]

Scheduling Events

- Plan for one year
- Check training schedule
- Note holidays
- Know school vacations
- Avoid big local and installation events



**OPERATION
READY**
Preparedness Training and Support for All

Once you have collected three to six ideas, schedule these on a 12-month calendar. The FRG should plan for a year at a time, which allows adequate time for planning the event, raising sufficient funds to pay for it, and planning around other events that could interfere with the plans.

Planning Phase

- When
- Where
- Costs
- Who
- How

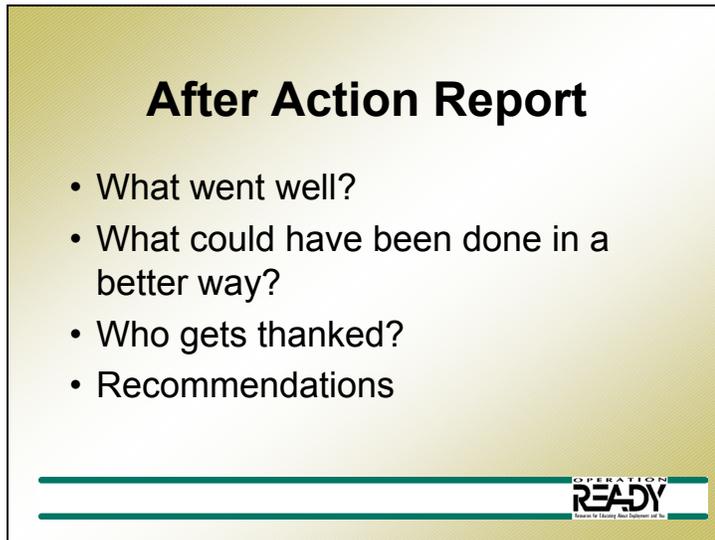


**OPERATION
READY**
Member of the Ready to Go System

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The event planning guides and the After Action Reports should be kept in the files that are handed on to the next FRG leader.

[Activity: Have the same groups write an After Action Report, using Handout #14, on the event they just planned. Time: about 15 minutes.]

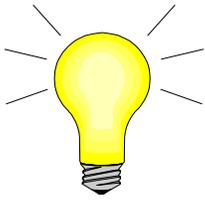
Safety and Health Concerns

- Food and water safety
- Insects
- Water safety
- Heat/sun
- Travel
- Others



Your FRG Handbook contains suggestions and ideas for the items listed here (pages 122–124). Depending upon your location and climate, other things may be involved as well. Take time to review them as you plan for an event. A first aid kit should be available every time the group gets together. Know the location of fire extinguishers, fire exits in buildings, and emergency phone numbers.

Check with your installation or county health department on requirements for handling food.



Event Ideas

Auctions

- Special auction: auction of “special” items such as jeans, celebrity donations, antiques, food, or picnic baskets
- Art auction: sell admission and receive percentage of sales; usually done through an outside company
- Regular auction: including silent auction (must have a great group of solicitors)
- Chinese auction: draw name/bid from basket placed by item

Audience Participation

- Craft and holiday shows, casino party
- Carnivals, games night, casino party, fair
- Beauty contest
- Clowns
- House tours, garden walks, art shows and exhibitions
- Card party, bridge tournament
- Haunted house
- Dances
- Face painting
- Petting zoo
- Dunking stand
- Decorate a cookie or cupcake
- “Pie-in-the-Face”

Black Tie Events (in a large place or large home)

- Dinner with or without auction
- Cocktail party/buffet
- Benefit featuring celebrity entertainers
- Theme dinner dance
- Dining in/dining out



Classes and Demonstrations

- Cooking: microwave, cuisinart, (crepe-making, bagel-making, bread-making, etc)
- Understanding wine
- Home entertainment ideas
- Children's party ideas
- Knitting, embroidery, macrame, pillows, plastic canvas, cross-stitch, needlepoint
- Drying flowers
- Origami
- Weaving, spinning
- Chair-caning, sand art, glass-blowing
- House plants, outdoor gardening
- Self-defense courses
- Cosmetic demonstrations
- Identifying genuine antiques
- Self-improvement classes
- Wardrobe selection—styles and colors



Contests

- Photography
- Special skills such as poetry writing
- Home videos (G rated only!)
- Cook-off
- Pet show
- Old-fashioned pictures
- Eating



Dances (held in unusual location, such as an empty building, skating rink, etc.)

- Street dances
- Disco
- Square dance
- Sock hop
- Costume for Halloween or Mardi Gras



Entertainment

- Amateur show
- Follies, revues
- “Theme” motion pictures
- Music—battle of the bands, gala premiere
- Professional shows
- Readings, story telling
- “Spoofs,” roasts
- Classic film premiere
- Drama—opening night group attendance
- Concerts
- Mystery dinner or weekend (solve mystery)

Fashion Shows

- Bridal
- Designer
- Historical
- Home sewn
- Old uniforms
- Seasonal
- Children's clothing



Food (can be used in combination with main event)

- Sale of soups, sweets
- World’s longest banana split
- Dessert buffet
- Refreshment stand at sporting event
- Old-fashioned ice cream social
- Homemade candy sale
- Pancake breakfast
- Dinner theater
- Barbecue
- Regional or international
- Wild game dinner
- Picnic
- Gourmet
- Homemade specialty items
- Sub sandwich sale
- Berry festival
- Box lunch sale or auction
- Hobo dinner in a park or railroad yard



- Late night supper
- Mythical meal tied in with legend or superstition
- Black tie picnic at a fancy hotel
- Bake sale, taco sale at motor pool

Parties

- “Childhood fantasies” party
- Hard times party
- Nostalgia party
- Magic, mystery party
- Wine tasting
- Heroes from fiction party
- Western night
- Science fiction theme party



Sales (garage or special)

- Black tie garage sale—resale of prom gowns, cocktail dresses, costumes, any “one-time only” clothing
- Holiday decorations, cards
- Special items—flowers, balloons, collectibles, coins, stamps, medallions
- Bulbs
- T-shirts
- Bazaars
- Books
- Antiques
- Garden items
- Pets, birdhouses, feeders
- T-shirts



Services

- Car washes
- Dog washes
- Clean-up squads
- Baby-sitting
- Gift wrap service
- Repair—handy-man service
- Shoeshine day
- Plant care service
- Pet sitting service
- Lawn care service (teens who will mow lawns)



- Catering, boxed dinners, meals-on-wheels

Sports and Recreation

- Aerobics dance marathon
- Parking lot slalom (obstacle course)
- Frisbee throwing
- Pet sports—frog jumping, turtle derby, owner look-a-like contest
- Sports clinic
- Bicycle rodeo, bicycle polo
- Rock-a-thon
- Walk-a-thon
- Game-a-thon
- Road rally
- Fun run
- Disco skating
- Softball tournament
- Volleyball



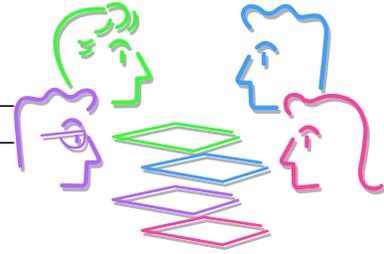
Money-making Tours

- Decorator home tours
- Spring walking tours
- Historical tour
- Christmas home tour
- Weekend bus tour
- Factory tour
- Sports special
- Ski weekend
- Local attractions tours



After Action Report

Event _____
Date _____



Successes:

What went well?

Concerns:

What could have been done better?

Thanks to:

Who helped?

Recommendations?

Lesson Eight

Running the FRG—Money Matters

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #91: Running the FRG—Money Matters]

Although the FRG has some support from both appropriated and non-appropriated funds, the everyday general funding of FRG events and activities will be the responsibility of the FRG. The FRG is permitted to raise funds in support of its activities and to purchase supplies for the running of the FRG. In this class, we will look at ways to fund the FRG and at what is required to manage those funds.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #92: Objectives]

At the completion of this class, you will have learned:

- Money raised for the FRG is the property of the FRG and must be tracked and accounted for.
- FRG funds have specific uses by regulation. The FRG fund is subject to investigation when allegations of wrong doing are raised.
- Fundraisers are also subject to post regulation and approval. When these are not followed, the privilege of holding fundraisers can be rescinded.

FUNDING THE FRG

[Visual #93: Funding the FRG]

The FRG has support—not necessarily always money—from these sources:

- Appropriated fund (AF),
- Non-appropriated funds (NAF),
- FRG-generated fund, and
- Donations.

AF dollars are defense dollars apportioned by Congress. NAF money is raised on the installation by MWR activities, and FRG-generated money is raised by authorized fundraisers. Donations may be solicited from area businesses if the installation permits

solicitation by volunteers. The installation may prevent solicitation if the surrounding community is too small to support it. We will now look at each source in more detail.

Appropriated Funds

[Visual #94: Appropriated Funds]

Do not count on actual cash in hand from appropriated funds. These belong to the unit and fund the mission of the unit. The commander can:

- authorize the mailing of the official newsletter;
- permit the FRG to meet in the dayroom or have an event or meeting in the unit area;
- provide equipment such as a desk, filing cabinet, or bulletin board for the FRG's use; and
- allow telephone calls from the unit's military line (known as DSN) for official FRG business.

AF money may also be used by National Guard and Reserve units to send FRG volunteers to Regional Academies and training conferences sponsored by the military.

Non-Appropriated Funds

[Visual #95: Non-Appropriated Funds]

The non-appropriated fund is the money raised on an installation by MWR facilities, such as the bowling alley, golf course, etc. This fund can be used to support volunteers in general for training, recognition, etc. This will most likely occur at the installation level and not for individual units. Some installations fund their Volunteer Resource Centers partially through NAF money. Check with your local MWR to see what is available, if anything, for your FRG.

FRG-Generated Funds

[Visual #96: FRG-Generated Funds]

The Regulation allows the FRG to raise money in support of its activities; however, the monthly balance may not exceed \$1000. Many installations will permit the FRG to go over the limit on a one-time basis for a special event. That permission must be obtained in advance and be supported by documentation.

An FRG fund is considered an "informal fund" and is maintained according to provisions in the Joint Ethics Regulation.

One person is responsible for managing the fund. This means the FRG must have a treasurer—preferably not the FRG leader and not a military person.

Funds may be spent only on FRG-sponsored events, and the expenditure must benefit all members of the FRG. It cannot be used to help individuals. It cannot be used to pay for unit-sponsored events.

Money should not duplicate post services. AER buys airline tickets—not the FRG. Food lockers are maintained by the installation—not the FRG.

FRG ACCOUNT GUIDELINES

[Visual #97: Guidelines]

FRG accounts are not subject to formal audit as a private organization is, but the treasurer's books should be reviewed annually or when there is a change of treasurers. The commander can perform this review, or someone can be designated as the reviewer. For this reason, a military person should not have any responsibility for the FRG account.

Although there is no requirement for a formal audit, FRG accounts can be investigated if there are allegations of misuse or loss. The treasurer and alternate are liable for the money.

FRG funds should never be mixed with or placed in the unit fund. Unit fund money can only be spent on soldiers, and the FRG will never get their money back if it's placed in the unit fund.

The FRG does not sell things—it asks for donations. For example, if you are having a bake sale, put a “suggested donation” amount on the item, instead of a price.

THE FRG BANK ACCOUNT

[Visual #98: FRG Bank Account]

FRG funds should be placed in a bank account for safe keeping. This makes it easier to track and report, relieves the treasurer of some liability, and reassures the membership that the money is in a safe place.

The treasurer should be appointed in writing by the commander and provided with a letter of authorization to open an account in the name of the FRG. Other volunteers may be on the signature card, but military members should not be on the account.

Be sure that the account is a non-interest-bearing account. FRGs are not in the business of making money—they are simply raising funds to support their activities.

FRG funds may be maintained at the battalion level or at the unit level. This is at the discretion of the battalion commander. If maintained at battalion level, each unit FRG has its own account page.

Opening an Account

[Visual #99: Opening an Account]

The FRG should select a bank that will provide the best service. Consider such things as monthly fees, per-check charges, etc.

Obtain a copy of the IRS SS-4 form, and apply for the Employee Identification Number (EIN). This number is used for the account so that personal Social Security numbers are not on the account, and the FRG is not subject to paying federal taxes. This is not a tax-exempt number for use on purchases. It is simply used to identify the FRG.

The bank account is set up in the name of the FRG. A letter from the commander authorizing the FRG to have an account is required. A sample letter is provided in your FRG Handbook (page 128). This letter should be typed on unit letterhead, and all signatories should be named. Each time there is a change of treasurers, such a letter should be provided to the bank, but the account number and name will not change.

Order checks with the name of the FRG on them—not the treasurer’s name.

[The SS-4 form can be downloaded from the IRS website at www.irs.gov; type SS-4 in the Forms and Publications finder search box. This will take you to the form and the instructions for completing it.]

MANAGING THE FRG FUND

[Visual #100: Managing the Fund]

The treasurer and leader should write specific guidelines for the management of the fund. This should include such things as requiring receipts for all expenditures, frequency of deposits, spending limits, etc. Your FRG Handbook has some good suggestions.

Once you have set guidelines for management of the account, the leader and volunteer chairpersons should work together on a spending plan. What things have you planned that will require expenditure of funds? How many fundraisers will be required to maintain the plan?

Books should be reconciled monthly and a written report made. One copy should be provided to the leader, another to the commander, and the original filed in the treasurer’s

files. All members should be kept informed of the account's status. A treasurer's report should be part of every FRG meeting.

[Handouts #15 (Minutes of _____ Family Readiness Group Meeting) and #16 (Family Readiness Group Monthly Report) are samples of forms the FRG might use to report and track all activities, including FRG funds.]

FUNDRAISERS

[Visual #101: Fundraisers]

Fundraisers are obviously an important part of the spending plan. If you don't plan to spend any money, you don't need fundraisers.

Know local policies before planning a fundraiser. Who needs to approve the fundraiser? How do you get that approval? Generally, if the fundraiser is held in the unit area for members of the unit only, the commander is the only approving authority you need. If the event is taking place on the installation and your audience is the entire post, additional authorizations for the fundraiser are required.

The Army does not officially authorize off-post fundraisers. The FRG will bear sole responsibility.

Local businesses may be made aware of your fundraising event and its reason, but they should not be asked for specific items. Any written correspondence with businesses should be on FRG letterhead and signed by the FRG leader—**never** on official letterhead signed by the commander. This could be viewed as an endorsement by the Army and is strictly prohibited in the JER. Contributors should receive thank-you notes, again on FRG letterhead.

Soldiers can participate in fundraising events only while off duty and in civilian clothes.



Although the FRG has some support from both appropriated and non-appropriated funds, the everyday general funding of FRG events and activities will be the responsibility of the FRG. The FRG is permitted to raise funds in support of its activities and to purchase supplies for the running of the FRG. In this class, we will look at ways to fund the FRG and at what is required to manage those funds.

Objectives

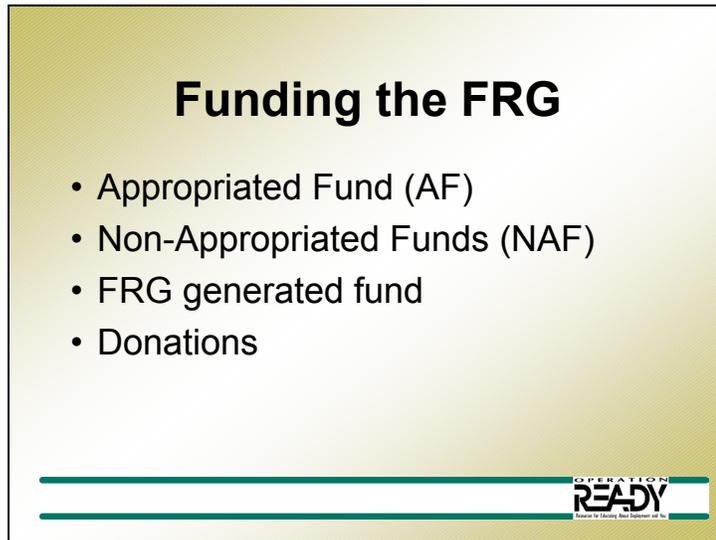
Participants will learn:

- How to establish and maintain an FRG account
- What FRG funds may and may not be used for
- How to conduct fundraisers

**OPERATION
READY**
Prepared to Respond

At the completion of this class, you will have learned:

- Money raised for the FRG is the property of the FRG and must be tracked and accounted for.
- FRG funds have specific uses by regulation. The FRG fund is subject to investigation when allegations of wrong doing are raised.
- Fundraisers are also subject to post regulation and approval. When these are not followed, the privilege of holding fundraisers can be rescinded.



The FRG has support—not necessarily always money—from these sources:

- Appropriated fund (AF),
- Non-appropriated funds (NAF),
- FRG-generated fund, and
- Donations.

AF dollars are defense dollars apportioned by Congress. NAF money is raised on the installation by MWR activities, and FRG-generated money is raised by authorized fundraisers. Donations may be solicited from area businesses if the installation permits solicitation by volunteers. The installation may prevent solicitation if the surrounding community is too small to support it. We will now look at each source in more detail.

Appropriated Funds

- Use of official mail for newsletters
- Use of unit telephone for FRG business
- Use of unit facilities
- Access to rosters
- Invitational travel orders and expenses Guard and Reserve FRGs



The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word "OPERATION" in small letters above "READY" in large, bold letters, with a tagline below it.

Do not count on actual cash in hand from appropriated funds. These belong to the unit and fund the mission of the unit. The commander can:

- authorize the mailing of the official newsletter;
- permit the FRG to meet in the dayroom or have an event or meeting in the unit area;
- provide equipment such as a desk, filing cabinet, or bulletin board for the FRG's use; and
- allow telephone calls from the unit's military line (known as DSN) for official FRG business.

AF money may also be used by National Guard and Reserve units to send FRG volunteers to Regional Academies and training conferences sponsored by the military.

Non-Appropriated Funds

- May support training and volunteer recognition
- Volunteer support
- Availability depends upon health of installation account

The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word "OPERATION" in small letters above "READY" in large, bold letters, with a small tagline below it.

The non-appropriated fund is the money raised on an installation by MWR facilities, such as the bowling alley, golf course, etc. This fund can be used to support volunteers in general for training, recognition, etc. This will most likely occur at the installation level and not for individual units. Some installations fund their Volunteer Resource Centers partially through NAF money. Check with your local MWR to see what is available, if anything, for your FRG.

FRG-Generated Funds

- May sponsor fundraising events
- Balance may not exceed \$1000
- One person maintains fund
- Use is limited to expenses that support mission and activities of FRG
- Should not duplicate services already available

The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word "OPERATION" in a small font above the word "READY" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below "READY" is a smaller line of text that is partially obscured but appears to read "Supporting the Warfighter".

The Regulation allows the FRG to raise money in support of its activities; however, the monthly balance may not exceed \$1000. Many installations will permit the FRG to go over the limit on a one-time basis for a special event. That permission must be obtained in advance and be supported by documentation.

An FRG fund is considered an “informal fund” and is maintained according to provisions in the Joint Ethics Regulation.

One person is responsible for managing the fund. This means the FRG must have a treasurer—preferably not the leader and not a military person.

Funds may be spent only on FRG-sponsored events, and the expenditure must benefit all members of the FRG. It cannot be used to help individuals. It cannot be used to pay for unit-sponsored events.

Money should not duplicate post services. AER buys airline tickets—not the FRG. Food lockers are maintained by the installation—not the FRG.

Guidelines

- Books reviewed annually
- Subject to investigation
- Do not put in unit fund
- Develop a spending plan

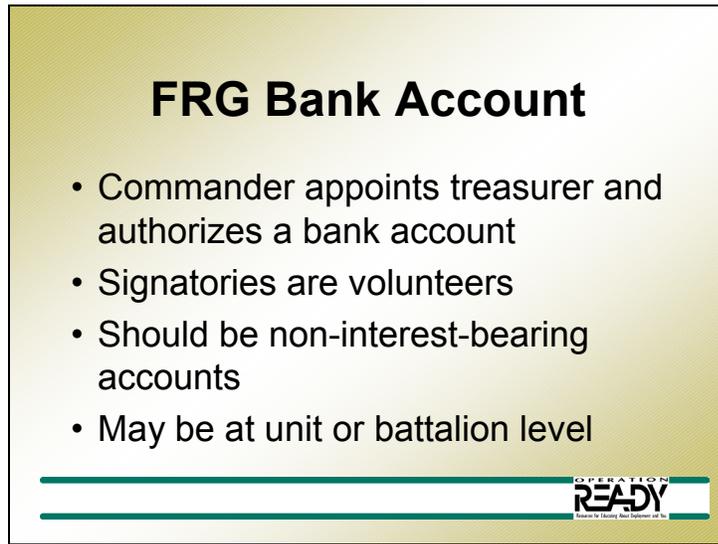




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The FRG does not sell things—it asks for donations. For example, if you are having a bake sale, put a “suggested donation” amount on the item, instead of a price.



FRG Bank Account

- Commander appoints treasurer and authorizes a bank account
- Signatories are volunteers
- Should be non-interest-bearing accounts
- May be at unit or battalion level

OPERATION READY
Return to Duty Support Act

FRG funds should be placed in a bank account for safe keeping. This makes it easier to track and report, relieves the treasurer of some liability, and reassures the membership that the money is in a safe place.

The treasurer should be appointed in writing by the commander and provided with a letter of authorization to open an account in the name of the FRG. Other volunteers may be on the signature card, but military members should not be on the account.

Be sure that the account is a non-interest-bearing account. FRGs are not in the business of making money—they are simply raising funds to support their activities.

FRG funds may be maintained at the battalion level or at the unit level. This is at the discretion of the battalion commander. If maintained at battalion level, each unit FRG has its own account page.

Opening an Account

- Select a bank
- Apply for an Employee Identification Number (EIN)
- Obtain an authorization letter from the unit
- Set up an account in the FRG's name
- Order checks




The FRG should select a bank that will provide the best service. Consider such things as monthly fees, per-check charges, etc.

Obtain a copy of the IRS SS-4 form, and apply for the Employee Identification Number (EIN). This number is used for the account so that personal Social Security numbers are not on the account, and the FRG is not subject to paying federal taxes. This is not a tax-exempt number for use on purchases. It is simply used to identify the FRG.

The bank account is set up in the name of the FRG. A letter from the commander authorizing the FRG to have an account is required. A sample letter is provided in your FRG Handbook (page 128). This letter should be typed on unit letterhead, and all signatories should be named. Each time there is a change of treasurers, such a letter should be provided to the bank, but the account number and name will not change.

Order checks with the name of the FRG on them—not the treasurer's name.

[The SS-4 form can be downloaded from the IRS website at www.irs.gov; type SS-4 in the Forms and Publications finder search box. This will take you to the form and the instructions for completing it.]

Managing the Fund

- Develop guidelines for managing the account
- Develop a spending plan
- Prepare monthly statement for FRG meetings
- Keep the FRG leader informed
- Money used only for FRG expenditures


 The logo for Operation READY, featuring the word "OPERATION" in a small font above the word "READY" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below "READY" is a small tagline: "Helping You Stay Ready".

The treasurer and leader should write specific guidelines for the management of the fund. This should include such things as requiring receipts for all expenditures, frequency of deposits, spending limits, etc. Your FRG Handbook has some good suggestions.

Once you have set guidelines for management of the account, the leader and volunteer chairpersons should work together on a spending plan. What things have you planned that will require expenditure of funds? How many fundraisers will be required to maintain the plan?

Books should be reconciled monthly and a written report made. One copy should be provided to the leader, another to the commander, and the original filed in the treasurer's files. All members should be kept informed of the account's status. A treasurer's report should be part of every FRG meeting.

[Handouts #15 (Minutes of _____ Family Readiness Group Meeting) and #16 (Family Readiness Group Monthly Report) are samples of forms the FRG might use to report and track all activities, including FRG funds.]

Fundraisers

- Know local policies
- Get permission/approval
- Solicit donations
- Soldiers may participate only when off-duty and in civilian clothes




Fundraisers are obviously an important part of the spending plan. If you don't plan to spend any money, you don't need fundraisers.

Know local policies before planning a fundraiser. Who needs to approve the fundraiser? How do you get that approval? Generally, if the fundraiser is held in the unit area for members of the unit only, the commander is the only approving authority you need. If the event is taking place on the installation and your audience is the entire post, additional authorizations for the fundraiser are required.

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Local businesses may be made aware of your fundraising event and its reason, but they should not be asked for specific items. Any written correspondence with businesses should be on FRG letterhead and signed by the FRG leader—**never** on official letterhead signed by the commander. This could be viewed as an endorsement by the Army and is strictly prohibited in the JER. Contributors should receive thank-you notes, again on FRG letterhead.

Soldiers can participate in fundraising events only while off duty and in civilian clothes.

**Minutes of _____ Family Readiness Group Meeting
(date)**

1. Meeting called to order at (time) by (name of presider).
(Everyone attending should have a copy of the agenda.)
2. Present were:
(list names of all attending)
3. Review minutes of the last meeting (these can be read by the secretary, or each person may be given a copy to read).

Ask for additions or corrections.

Minutes stand approved as read or corrected.

4. Read the treasurer's report (even if no action occurred).
(Copies should be given to leader and commander and one retained in treasurer's files.)
5. Committee reports.
6. Review unfinished business.
7. Introduce new business.
(The secretary should keep accurate notes of what is discussed and what votes are taken. Motions should be asked for on anything that requires a vote of the membership, after sufficient discussion.)
8. Announcements.
9. Adjournment (ask for motion and second, and vote for adjournment). There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at (time).

(Name)
FRG Secretary

Family Readiness Group Monthly Report (date)

Due at the end of each month

To: _____ Unit Commander Copy to _____ Battalion FRG Leader
 From: _____ Unit FRG

FRG Meeting Report

Meeting held: where _____ when: _____ No. present _____

Topics discussed:

Number of New Spouses Contacted: _____

Volunteers and Hours Reports

Total Number of Volunteers _____	Total Number of Hours _____
Family members _____	Family members _____
Active Duty _____	Active Duty _____
Youth _____	Youth _____

Activity	Type
Meeting	
Fundraiser	
Training	
Recreation	
Family Activity	
Single Soldier Activity	
Other	

Financial Report

Beginning balance	_____
Income sources & amounts	_____

Expense sources & amounts	_____

Ending balance	_____

FRG Leader Signature

Lesson Nine

The FRG—Bringing It All Together

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #102: The FRG—Bringing It All Together]

To be truly effective, the FRG needs to have genuine caring and regard for the well being of all soldiers and family members. In this class, we will look at ways of improving an existing FRG, some of the problems that make FRGs less than effective, and the FRG's role before, during, and after a deployment.

OBJECTIVES

[Visual #103: Objectives]

These are the objectives of this class:

- how to evaluate your FRG,
- how to improve upon an FRG that already exists but may not be considered an effective FRG, and
- what part the FRG plays in preparing soldiers and family members to handle deployments and reunions.

EVALUATING THE FRG

[Visual #104: Evaluating the FRG]

At the end of Chapter 9 in the FRG Handbook (pages 149–151), you will find a checklist for evaluating the effectiveness of your FRG. If you are just starting an FRG, it provides guidance and a review of all that we have discussed in these classes. Use it periodically to check on your progress. If you are part of or taking leadership of an FRG that already exists, use the checklist to find out where you stand and what needs to be done. This should not be used to criticize the previous leader, but it is designed as a guide for helping you make changes. Belittling or bad-mouthing your predecessor is not in keeping with the goals of an effective FRG. Focus on what can be done to fix things—not on what was wrong. This evaluation is an on-going process. Check your progress regularly.

PITFALLS

[Visual #105: Pitfalls]

If your FRG is in need of a jump start and things are not going well, take a look at the list of symptoms of weak FRGs listed here and in your FRG Handbook. These are the things that keep FRGs from being successful:

- An FRG that is run in a formal way, or seems to be conducted as a military operation, will not be enjoyable. Keep it friendly and informal.
- Making the FRG mandatory for soldiers will turn people off quickly. Spouses will see the FRG as something the soldier has to do, and the soldier will resent being made to participate. This attitude will carry over to the family, and the FRG will be viewed negatively. The best way to get people involved is through encouragement, invitations, a clear understanding of purpose, and fun activities.
- Rank has no place in the FRG, especially when it's worn by spouses. Teamwork and respect are the hallmarks of an effective FRG.
- The main purpose of an FRG is keeping family members informed and up to date. If this isn't happening, the FRG is not doing its job. If information is not getting to everyone, it's time to take a look at your plan. Are the POCs reliable? Does the leadership know resources and referrals? Are all key positions filled, or is the leader trying to do it all? Do you have a phonetree and an accurate list of family phone numbers? If the list is out of date, someone isn't being contacted.
- The leadership needs to attend training. No one is born knowing how to run an FRG. It has to be learned.

IMPROVING AN FRG

[Visual #106: Improving an FRG]

FRGs and their mission change and evolve constantly. New people arrive; good volunteers leave, and commanders change—improving and sustaining the FRG is a constant process.

When issues arise, use the problem-solving process. Many of you learned this in AFTB classes. Use what you learned to resolve the problems that arise in the FRG.

Survey your members for ideas and concerns they may have, and make a plan based upon the essential ingredients and key tasks you learned about in this workshop.

Problem Solving

[Visual #107: Problem Solving]

Your FRG Handbook contains a graphic of the problem-solving process (page 137) and a sample problem-solving table (page 140) for you to use when you need to solve a problem.

[Briefly review the process if participants have attended AFTB classes.]

Remember that the most important step—and sometimes the most difficult—is identifying the problem. Don't get caught up in the symptoms. Search for the cause of the problem. It may require getting all of your key volunteers together in a brainstorming session. A group can sometimes come up with better ideas than one person working alone. The brainstorming process is found in Chapter 7 of your FRG Handbook, and Chapter 9 has some good ideas for working the problem-solving process.

Once you have determined the best solution, put it into action. It is the leader's responsibility to see that it is carried out.

[Visual #108: Roadblocks]

There are some things that can get in the way of good problem solving.

- We have already mentioned failure to pinpoint the source of the problem. If you don't know what the problem is, you can't fix it. If we fail to analyze the problem—by not gathering enough information or by not looking for possible solutions—we will not make a sound choice, and the problem will continue.
- Fear of failure can hold us back. Asking too many “what if” questions can impede progress. If you find this happening in the problem-solving process, ask yourself or the group, “What's the worst that can happen if we do this?” Not taking any action can sometimes be worse than making the wrong choice.
- We sometimes fail to make a good choice because we want to avoid conflict and disagreement. Remember that you cannot please everyone all the time. Certainly we must try to work for a solution that everyone can live with, but understand that there may be those people who cannot accept any decision.
- Tension and adverse attitudes can affect how we decide something. Sometimes mediation by a neutral third party can help.
- Another roadblock—giving in to group pressure—can result in making the wrong choice or leaving the problem unresolved.
- Finally, there is the old, “but we've always done it that way!” If the way we've always done it is not solving the problem, then it's time to look for another way. Don't get bogged down in tradition. Things change, and we must be ready to change with them.

SOURCES OF FRG PROBLEMS

[Visual #109: Sources of FRG Problems]

Notice that the sources of problems in weak FRGs match the essential ingredients of effective FRGs. When one of those ingredients is missing, the FRG will not function well. Support from the families will be lacking, and other problems arise.

Leadership—or the lack of it—is the most common problem of all. Most situations can be traced back to it. Problems follow when good leadership is no where to be found. A lack of leadership may be traced to the commander, to the FRG leader, or to a committee chairperson. All must do some serious soul searching before pointing fingers at someone else. Your FRG Handbook contains some things to look for. The checklist is also a good source of evaluating your effectiveness.

THE FRG'S READINESS ROLE

[Visual #110: FRG Readiness Role]

The name of the group was changed from FSG, Family Support Group, to FRG, Family Readiness Group, to reflect the important role the FRG plays in preparing families for separation. This is the FRG's primary responsibility. There are some important tasks that the FRG should be planning or be involved in with the unit.

First of all, make sure that everyone is listed on the roster—even those who didn't want to be called. They may change their minds; plus the leader needs to know the names and whereabouts of all family members. Find out who is planning to leave the area during the separation and if they want to receive a newsletter. Get information on any special needs—pregnant spouses, those who do not drive, those who do not speak English—and be prepared to assist when needed.

Work with the unit to see that predeployment briefings are scheduled—both daytime and evening—to reach all families. If the unit is planning the briefing, be sure that FRGs are included in the plan. This is a good opportunity to catch those family members who somehow did not make it onto the roster.

Schedule readiness classes for soldiers and family members. The FRG can sponsor these classes, provide food, childcare, and lots of information. Operation READY has a predeployment preparation class and videos entitled *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles* and *Coping with Stress*, both designed to help soldiers and families prepare for separation.

If the unit permits, plan to be part of the farewell ceremony. Also, begin planning what the FRG will do during the separation period.

SUSTAINMENT

[Visual #111: Sustainment]

While the soldiers are gone, the FRG goes into the activated phase. This is the FRG's finest hour. Family members need emotional support and encouragement. Stay connected with them through the phonetree, the newsletter, meetings, and events. Be aware of issues and problems. Know your resources, and refer people to the appropriate source. As the leader, keep connected to the rear detachment and the ACS staff member, who can help you resolve problems and handle crises. Make sure accurate information is available to prevent rumors from spreading. Discourage gossip. Along with fun events, continue to provide training and classes to help people deal with stress and anxiety.

Begin to prepare for reunion by planning welcome home events. Arrange for the Operation READY class on Homecoming and Reunion.

MAINTAINING THE FRG

[Visual #112: Maintaining the FRG]

Once the soldiers return, life will slowly get back to normal, but don't let the FRG fade away. Just shift to a lower gear. You may not need as many general meetings, but keep meeting with your committee chairpersons. Continue getting information out through the newsletter. Welcome new soldiers and families to the unit, and maintain an up-to-date phonetree. It can still be used to contact people for special events. Above all, plan a recognition event to publicly thank all those who helped during the deployment. Use your FRG Checklist to evaluate your status. Don't let the FRG fade away. With today's optempo, missions can appear without advance warning. Starting the FRG from scratch at that point is very difficult.

AVOIDING BURNOUT

[Visual #113: Avoiding Burnout]

Leaders must take care of themselves and their own families first. Their soldiers deserve to come home to a healthy, happy spouse, too. Develop your own support network—even outside of your own FRG or unit. Use an answering machine to screen calls. If necessary, let someone else take over for a while, and leave town for a weekend.

Know your own limits; set priorities, and learn to say “no” nicely. You cannot do or be everything for everyone. Recruit good volunteers, and share the workload.

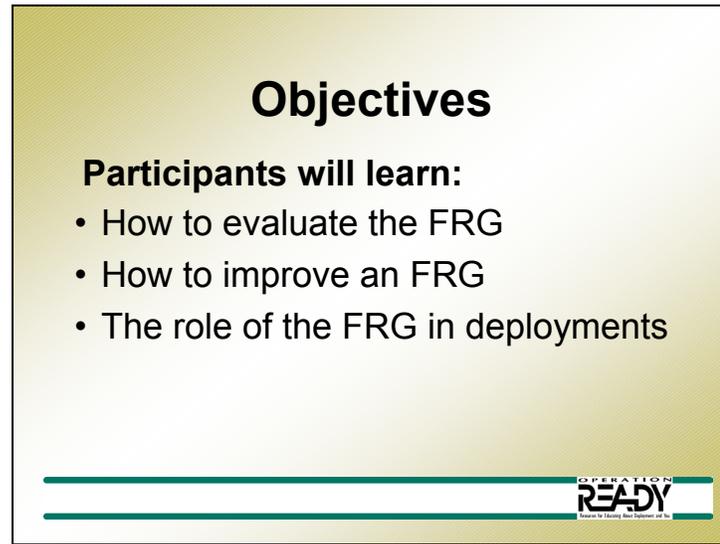
Know your community resources, and refer situations that are beyond your scope. Don't try to be a counselor, a psychologist, a lending service, a bank, or their mother! All these services exist in the community. Refer!

Help people to solve their own problems. Don't take them upon yourself.

Surround yourself with happy, upbeat people as much as possible, and limit the amount of time you spend with those who pull you down.



To be truly effective, the FRG needs to have genuine caring and regard for the well being of all soldiers and family members. In this class, we will look at ways of improving an existing FRG, some of the problems that make FRGs less than effective, and the FRG's role before, during, and after a deployment.



Objectives

Participants will learn:

- How to evaluate the FRG
- How to improve an FRG
- The role of the FRG in deployments

OPERATION READY
Army's Family Support Program

These are the objectives of this class:

- how to evaluate your FRG,
- how to improve upon an FRG that already exists but may not be considered an effective FRG, and
- what part the FRG plays in preparing soldiers and family members to handle deployments and reunions.

Evaluating the FRG

- Effective leadership
- Effective organization
- Effective communication
- Effective training
- Fun events



OPERATION
READY
Member of the Ready to Sustain Operations Series

At the end of Chapter 9 in the FRG Handbook (pages 149–151), you will find a checklist for evaluating the effectiveness of your FRG. If you are just starting an FRG, it provides guidance and a review of all that we have discussed in these classes. Use it periodically to check on your progress. If you are part of or taking leadership of an FRG that already exists, use the checklist to find out where you stand and what needs to be done. This should not be used to criticize the previous leader, but it is designed as a guide for helping you make changes. Belittling or bad-mouthing your predecessor is not in keeping with the goals of an effective FRG. Focus on what can be done to fix things—not on what was wrong. This evaluation is an on-going process. Check your progress regularly.



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Improving an FRG

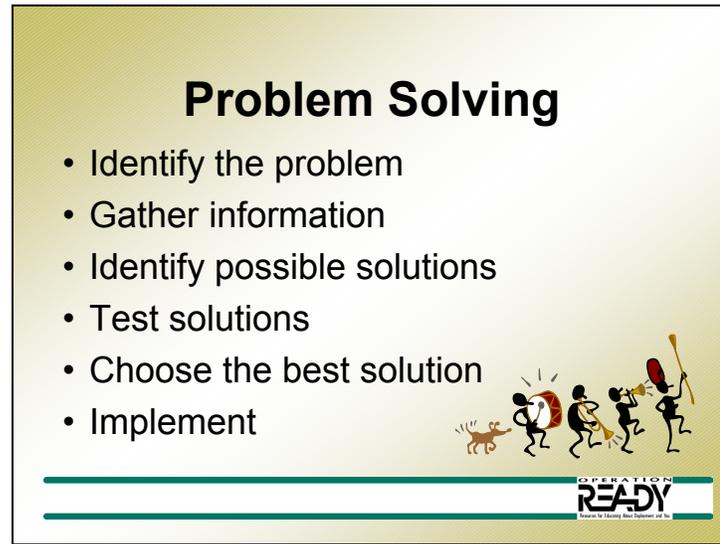
- On-going process
- Use problem-solving process
- Survey members
- Make a plan

OPERATION
READY
Mission to Inspire 100% Improvement

FRGs and their mission change and evolve constantly. New people arrive; good volunteers leave, and commanders change—improving and sustaining the FRG is a constant process.

When issues arise, use the problem-solving process. Many of you learned this in AFTB classes. Use what you learned to resolve the problems that arise in the FRG.

Survey your members for ideas and concerns they may have, and make a plan based upon the essential ingredients and key tasks you learned about in this workshop.



Your FRG Handbook contains a graphic of the problem-solving process (page 137) and a sample problem-solving table (page 140) for you to use when you need to solve a problem.

[Briefly review the process if participants have attended AFTB classes.]

Remember that the most important step—and sometimes the most difficult—is identifying the problem. Don't get caught up in the symptoms. Search for the cause of the problem. It may require getting all of your key volunteers together in a brainstorming session. A group can sometimes come up with better ideas than one person working alone. The brainstorming process is found in Chapter 7 of your FRG Handbook, and Chapter 9 has some good ideas for working the problem-solving process.

Once you have determined the best solution, put it into action. It is the leader's responsibility to see that it is carried out.

Roadblocks

- Failure to pinpoint the source
- Unsound analysis
- Fear of failure
- Conflict avoidance
- Adverse attitudes
- Group pressure
- Past custom



OPERATION
READY
Ready to Change Your Organization

There are some things that can get in the way of good problem solving.

- We have already mentioned failure to pinpoint the source of the problem. If you don't know what the problem is, you can't fix it. If we fail to analyze the problem—by not gathering enough information or by not looking for possible solutions—we will not make a sound choice, and the problem will continue.
- Fear of failure can hold us back. Asking too many “what if” questions can impede progress. If you find this happening in the problem-solving process, ask yourself or the group, “What’s the worst that can happen if we do this?” Not taking any action can sometimes be worse than making the wrong choice.
- We sometimes fail to make a good choice because we want to avoid conflict and disagreement. Remember that you cannot please everyone all the time. Certainly we must try to work for a solution that everyone can live with, but understand that there may be those people who cannot accept any decision.
- Tension and adverse attitudes can affect how we decide something. Sometimes mediation by a neutral third party can help.
- Another roadblock—giving in to group pressure—can result in making the wrong choice or leaving the problem unresolved.
- Finally, there is the old, “but we’ve always done it that way!” If the way we’ve always done it is not solving the problem, then it’s time to look for another way. Don’t get bogged down in tradition. Things change, and we must be ready to change with them.



Notice that the sources of problems in weak FRGs match the essential ingredients of effective FRGs. When one of those ingredients is missing, the FRG will not function well. Support from the families will be lacking, and other problems arise.

Leadership—or the lack of it—is the most common problem of all. Most situations can be traced back to it. Problems follow when good leadership is no where to be found. A lack of leadership may be traced to the commander, to the FRG leader, or to a committee chairperson. All must do some serious soul searching before pointing fingers at someone else. Your FRG Handbook contains some things to look for. The checklist is also a good source of evaluating your effectiveness.

FRG Readiness Role

- Current active phonetree
- Predeployment briefings scheduled
- Readiness training provided
- Information available
- Farewell events
- Plans for FRG activities




The name of the group was changed from FSG, Family Support Group, to FRG, Family Readiness Group, to reflect the important role the FRG plays in preparing families for separation. This is the FRG's primary responsibility. There are some important tasks that the FRG should be planning or be involved in with the unit.

First of all, make sure that everyone is listed on the roster—even those who didn't want to be called. They may change their minds; plus the leader needs to know the names and whereabouts of all family members. Find out who is planning to leave the area during the separation and if they want to receive a newsletter. Get information on any special needs—pregnant spouses, those who do not drive, those who do not speak English—and be prepared to assist when needed.

Work with the unit to see that predeployment briefings are scheduled—both daytime and evening—to reach all families. If the unit is planning the briefing, be sure that FRGs are included in the plan. This is a good opportunity to catch those family members who somehow did not make it onto the roster.

Schedule readiness classes for soldiers and family members. The FRG can sponsor these classes, provide food, childcare, and lots of information. Operation READY has a predeployment preparation class and videos entitled *Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles* and *Coping with Stress*, both designed to help soldiers and families prepare for separation.

If the unit permits, plan to be part of the farewell ceremony. Also, begin planning what the FRG will do during the separation period.

Sustainment

- Support, encourage, connect
- Do fun things
- Refer
- Control rumors
- Continue training
- Prepare for reunion



While the soldiers are gone, the FRG goes into the activated phase. This is the FRG's finest hour. Family members need emotional support and encouragement. Stay connected with them through the phonetree, the newsletter, meetings, and events. Be aware of issues and problems. Know your resources, and refer people to the appropriate source. As the leader, keep connected to the rear detachment and the ACS staff member, who can help you resolve problems and handle crises. Make sure accurate information is available to prevent rumors from spreading. Discourage gossip. Along with fun events, continue to provide training and classes to help people deal with stress and anxiety.

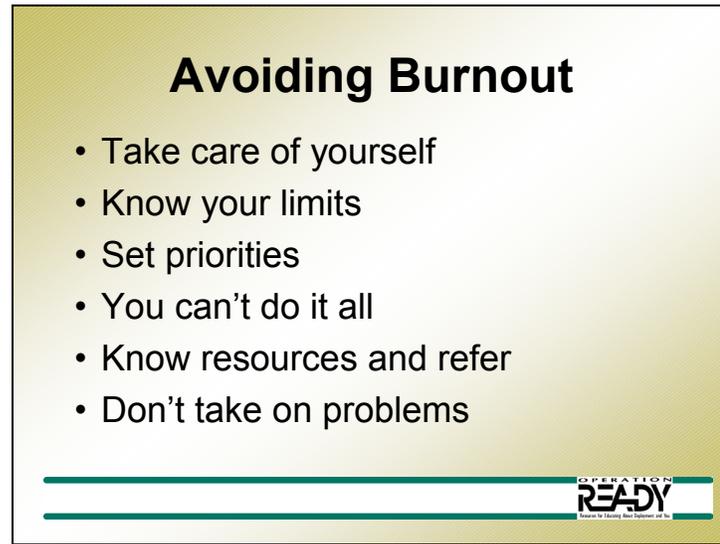
Begin to prepare for reunion by planning welcome home events. Arrange for the Operation READY class on Homecoming and Reunion.

Maintaining the FRG

- Shift gears
- Continue with key tasks
- Maintain phonetree
- Welcome new arrivals
- Recognize volunteers

OPERATION
READY
Return to Duty Support

Once the soldiers return, life will slowly get back to normal, but don't let the FRG fade away. Just shift to a lower gear. You may not need as many general meetings, but keep meeting with your committee chairpersons. Continue getting information out through the newsletter. Welcome new soldiers and families to the unit, and maintain an up-to-date phonetree. It can still be used to contact people for special events. Above all, plan a recognition event to publicly thank all those who helped during the deployment. Use your FRG Checklist to evaluate your status. Don't let the FRG fade away. With today's optempo, missions can appear without advance warning. Starting the FRG from scratch at that point is very difficult.



Leaders must take care of themselves and their own families first. Their soldiers deserve to come home to a healthy, happy spouse, too. Develop your own support network—even outside of your own FRG or unit. Use an answering machine to screen calls. If necessary, let someone else take over for a while, and leave town for a weekend.

Know your own limits; set priorities, and learn to say “no” nicely. You cannot do or be everything for everyone. Recruit good volunteers, and share the workload.

Know your community resources, and refer situations that are beyond your scope. Don't try to be a counselor, a psychologist, a lending service, a bank, or their mother! All these services exist in the community. Refer!

Help people to solve their own problems. Don't take them upon yourself.

Surround yourself with happy, upbeat people as much as possible, and limit the amount of time you spend with those who pull you down.

Workshop Wrap-up

Your FRG—“Braggin’ Rights”

INTRODUCTION

[Visual #114: Your FRG—“Braggin’ Rights”]

We’re going to conclude our workshop by giving you a chance to be in the spotlight. Here’s your chance to share the things that have worked for you—fundraising ideas, fun events, good party themes, newsletters, and anything else you would like others to know. For our new leaders, this is valuable knowledge; for those who have been around for a while, new ideas are always welcome.

[Give everyone an opportunity to share their materials. If possible, make copies of those things your participants would like to have.]

YOU KNOW . . .

[Visual #115: You Know You’re an FRG Leader...]

Over the years, FRG leaders have identified themselves in humorous ways. As a group, let’s add one more “you know” to the list.

[Distribute Handout #17.]

[Allow the group to come up with one more saying to add. As the list grows with each presentation of this workshop, post the list in the room you are using.]

EVALUATION

[Visual #116: Evaluation]

[Distribute the evaluation form, Handout #18, or a form of your own choosing. Have participants complete the form before leaving. Also, provide each participant with a completion of training certificate for their records; Handout #19 shows a sample certificate.]

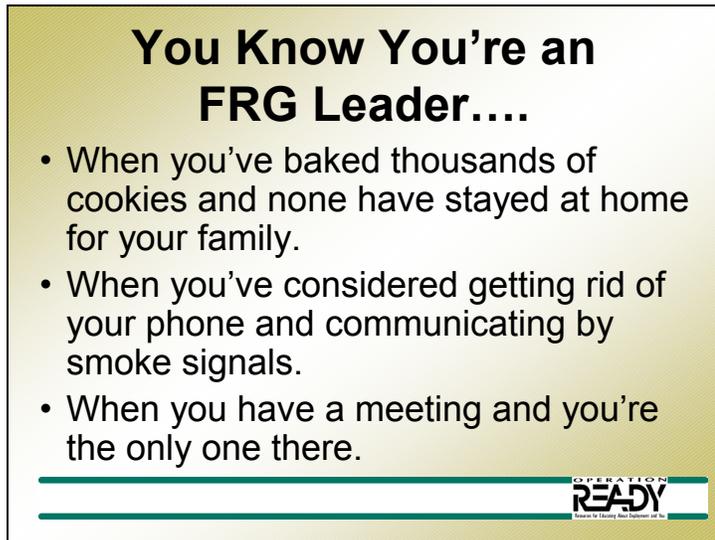
Please complete the evaluation form, and leave it at the back of the classroom.

[Conclude with any announcements you may have.]



We're going to conclude our workshop by giving you a chance to be in the spotlight. Here's your chance to share the things that have worked for you—fundraising ideas, fun events, good party themes, newsletters, and anything else you would like others to know. For our new leaders, this is valuable knowledge; for those who have been around for a while, new ideas are always welcome.

[Give everyone an opportunity to share their materials. If possible, make copies of those things your participants would like to have.]



Over the years, FRG leaders have identified themselves in humorous ways. As a group, let's add one more "you know" to the list.

[Distribute Handout # 17.]

[Allow the group to come up with one more saying to add. As the list grows with each presentation of this workshop, post the list in the room you are using.]



[Distribute the evaluation form, Handout #18, or a form of your own choosing. Have participants complete the form before leaving. Also, provide each participant with a completion of training certificate for their records; Handout #19 shows a sample certificate.]

Please complete the evaluation form, and leave it at the back of the classroom.

[Conclude with any announcements you may have.]

You Know You're an FRG Leader When...

You mail your Christmas cards right after Thanksgiving—last year's!

Your dining room table is a flat file cabinet, and you eat dinner standing at the sink.

You've baked thousands of cookies, and not one of them stayed at home for your family.

The calendar on your refrigerator is not only color-coded—it's divided into 15-minute segments.

You've seriously considered getting rid of your phone and communicating only by smoke signals.

Your children told their teachers that they are orphans.

Your husband calls the commander to set up a meeting with you.

You have a meeting, and you're the only one there.

Workshop Evaluation*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop? _____ Yes _____ No

2. Do you think these objectives were met? _____ Yes _____ No

3. If you answered **No** to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:

4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate Marginally Effective Effective Very Effective Outstanding

5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?

6. How did you benefit from this workshop?

7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants? _____ Yes _____ No

8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate Marginally Effective Effective Very Effective Outstanding

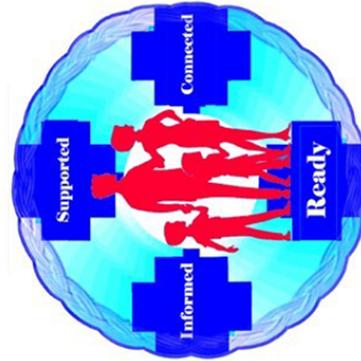
9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?

10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.

Certification of Training
is presented to

Completion of Family Readiness Group
Training Workshop



FRG Trainer

