



## NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU DACOWITS QBM December 2024 RFI #7

In 2019, the Committee identified challenges, impacts, and issues military mothers experience returning from deployment as they reintegrate to family and work life, and subsequently recommended that the Secretary of Defense commission a foundational research study to identify and assess these potentially unique impacts on military mothers and identify measures to help ease their transition back to “normal” family and home life. The Committee seeks information on the progress of research and initiatives to address these reintegration concerns.

### **RFI #7 - Impact on Military Mothers Reintegrating into Family/Home Life After Deployment**

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **National Guard Bureau** on the following questions:

**a.** What research or studies have been undertaken or is ongoing to identify the issues unique to returning mothers and reintegration? Provide links to or copies to findings and reports. What actions have been taken to address issues identified by the research or studies, if applicable?

**Response:** At this time, NGB-J1 has neither conducted research nor knows of any research studies conducted specifically addressing returning mothers and reintegration.

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**b.** Section 555 of the FY21 NDAA directed the Secretary of Defense to develop policy that, among other issues, outlined “[r]esponses to the effects specific to covered members who reintegrate into home life after deployment.” What policy, initiatives, or resources have been developed to assist returning military mothers with the challenges they face on return from deployment. Provide copies of relevant policies, training, and other documents,

**Response:** NGB provides pre-deployment and re-deployment Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) events in accordance with DoDI 1342.28 for all deploying Service members and interested family members. Pre-deployment, during-deployment, and post-deployment events are required for Service members deployed for 90 days or longer. During these events Service members receive information, briefings and counseling from various resources to include Chaplains, Military Family Life Counselors (MFLCs), Personal Financial Counselors (PFCs), and Veterans Affairs. Deployment and Reintegration challenges are highlighted during each event. Counselors are on site to provide one on one counseling to any Service member who requests it. Counseling and parent-bonding activities are provided to children in attendance at the events as well. In addition, Military and Family Readiness (MFR) Staff Training Team has developed and implemented curriculum to train more than 700 MFR staff train-the-trainer topics for new parents, those returning from deployment, anger management, and financial literacy.

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**c.** What are the issues and challenges that have been identified, including the restoration of the parent-child bond, and resumption of prior family roles and responsibilities?

**Response:** Returning Service members often report struggles returning to the role of parent and spouse. Service members often state that they have increased irritability and low patience when dealing with family members and household issues. They often state that ordinary or mundane tasks can seem overwhelming or daunting. They struggle with feelings of guilt if they cannot relate to their children in the manner they once had, or when they would prefer to be alone rather than with their children. It can be a source of tension between spouses when the redeploying parent does not take over the chores and activities of the house immediately upon return. Service members report their expectations of return to be far different than their actual experience and that expectation management for all involved is paramount to a successful reintegration. Support groups for returning spouses and/or parents is reported to be beneficial, as well as resources and support for the non-deploying parent or spouse to learn reintegration skills and tools.

d. What policies and procedures does each Service have to support reintegration. Are there any programs specific to mothers and being a woman?

**Response:** The NGB does not have any specific programs for mothers and women supporting reintegration. The Active Duty Army and Air Force both have Family Advocacy Programs which include New Parent Support Program, and Family Team Building Program. Family Advocacy-like training to National Guard MFR staff exists through train-the-trainer curriculum.

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e. Are there any resources or programs geared to military mothers prior to deployment to help them plan for and more successfully reintegrate post-deployment? If so, describe these efforts and provide links to policies, programs, etc.

**Response:** At this time, there are no NGB level programs or resources specific to deploying military mothers. MFLCs and PFCs may be available at the unit to provide specific support. If leadership identifies certain concerns within their unit, they can request classes or services specific to a population, including mothers. Curriculum specific to military mothers can be provided at YRRP events but is not a requirement.

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f. DACOWITS' 2019 focus group participants expressed that post-deployment reintegration/assistance efforts were male-centric and lacked resources to assist the unique challenges returning military mothers faced. What efforts have been made to address this important subset of re-integration assistance?

**Response:** During YRRP events, the Chaplains and MFLCs provide reintegration and relationship tools and resources, to include parent support. But at this time nothing specific has been created for deploying mothers.

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g. What kind of mentorship and support are specifically provided to deploying mothers?

**Response:** NGB does not have a formal mentorship program established and aligns to the respective Service (Army and Air Force) guidance. There may be formal or informal mentorship programs at the local unit level.

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h. What efforts have the Women's Initiatives Teams (WITs) initiated, if any, and how are the Services supporting those recommendations?

**Response:** At this time NGB support WITs through ARC Athena (ANG) and Total Force Women's GO Quarterly Forums (ARNG), and many states have stand-alone councils or teams committed to identifying and resolving barriers however there is not a centralized repository of WIT efforts.

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i. What type of mental health screening/care is provided?

**Response:** The ANG Psychological Health Program (PHP) provides embedded mental health support in the 90/54, with at least 1 Director of Psychological Health (DPH) (a credentialed and privileged Licensed Clinical Social Worker) located at each unit. While there have been no specific metrics tracked for "Impact on Military Mothers Reintegrating into Family/Home Life After Deployment," DPHs routinely provide mental health screenings pre and post deployment. Within 30 days of a service member (SM) returning from deployment, the DPH screens them for any mental health issues with a series of questions and risk assessment tools. If the SM screens positive for a mental health issue the DPH follows through with a full Diagnostic Mental Health Assessment and full set of screening instruments such as the PHQ-9 (depression inventory), C-SSRS (suicide risk assessment) and PCL-5 (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder screener). The DPH will follow-up with the SM regularly for any positive screens and make a referral either to the MTF (if eligible) or a community-based provider if not eligible for care in the MTF. The DPH screenings/assessments are in addition to the Deployment Related Health Assessments (DRHA) required by DoDi 6490.03, Deployment Health.

j. What kind of follow up is provided and at what intervals?

**Response:** While DPH services are voluntary, if a SM screens positive on the DMHA for any issues related to deployment the DPH will follow up at regular intervals, depending on the severity of the issue and availability of follow-up care by a treating provider, but not less than monthly. If the SM screens positive for a mental health disorder and the SM does not wish to follow-up with the DPH, the DPH will notify the Guard Medical Unit (GMU). The post-DRHA is conducted in theatre and then at 30 days post deployment and again twice between 90-180 days post deployment. Other than in theatre, the post DRHA does not need to be conducted in person by a mental health provider.

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k. Is leadership training provided to military leaders about the challenges and difficulties of reintegration that military mothers may encounter, the range of impacts of those challenges, in order to increase knowledge and understanding? Provide links to or copies of such training.

**Response:** At this time MFR does not provide this training to leadership.

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l. What second and third order effects of reintegration difficulties have been identified (e.g., on military readiness, work productivity, psychological and physical health, attrition rates)?

**Response:** Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW) is working on identifying risk factors related to reintegration difficulties but does not have specific data available at this time.

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m. Do exit surveys have questions related to whether reintegration/post-deployment challenges are a reason for separation?

**Response:** YRRP exit surveys address this topic.