

# The Army Family Readiness Group



## Leader's Handbook



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# Chapter 1

## Family Readiness Group Overview

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### 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

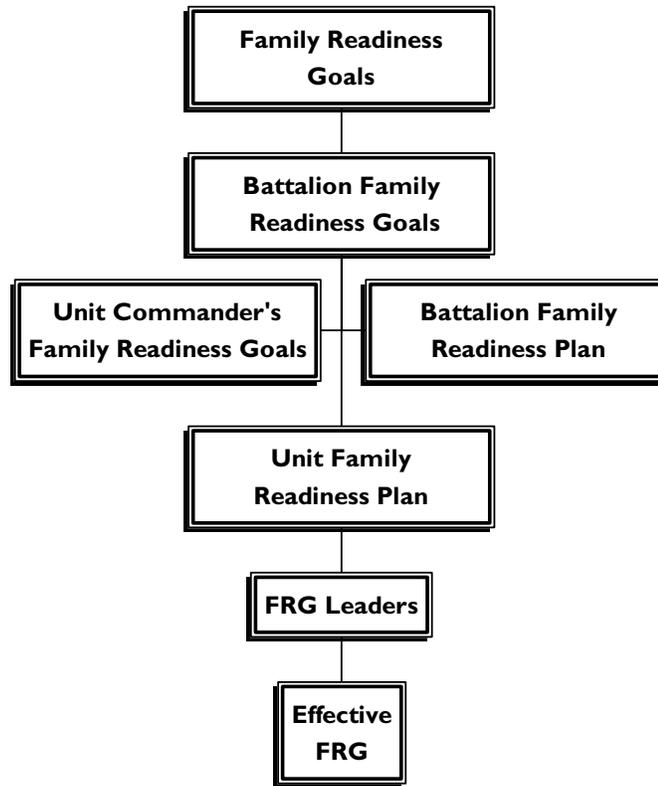
- Rear Detachment Officer (RDO)—a unit officer who acts as unit commander in the rear when the unit is deployed.
- Army Community Service (ACS) and other service organizations, on and off post, which assist soldiers and families.
- Unit Chaplain—provides counseling on personal, family, and spiritual 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**

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



## Chain of Concern Responsibilities

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

## 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**

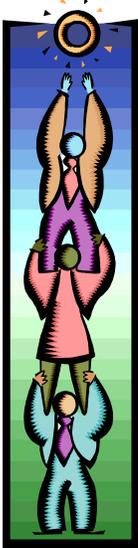
What happens if leaders do not have a substantial share of the positive leader traits that have been described? Some examples of poor leadership and its consequences may include:

- 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:

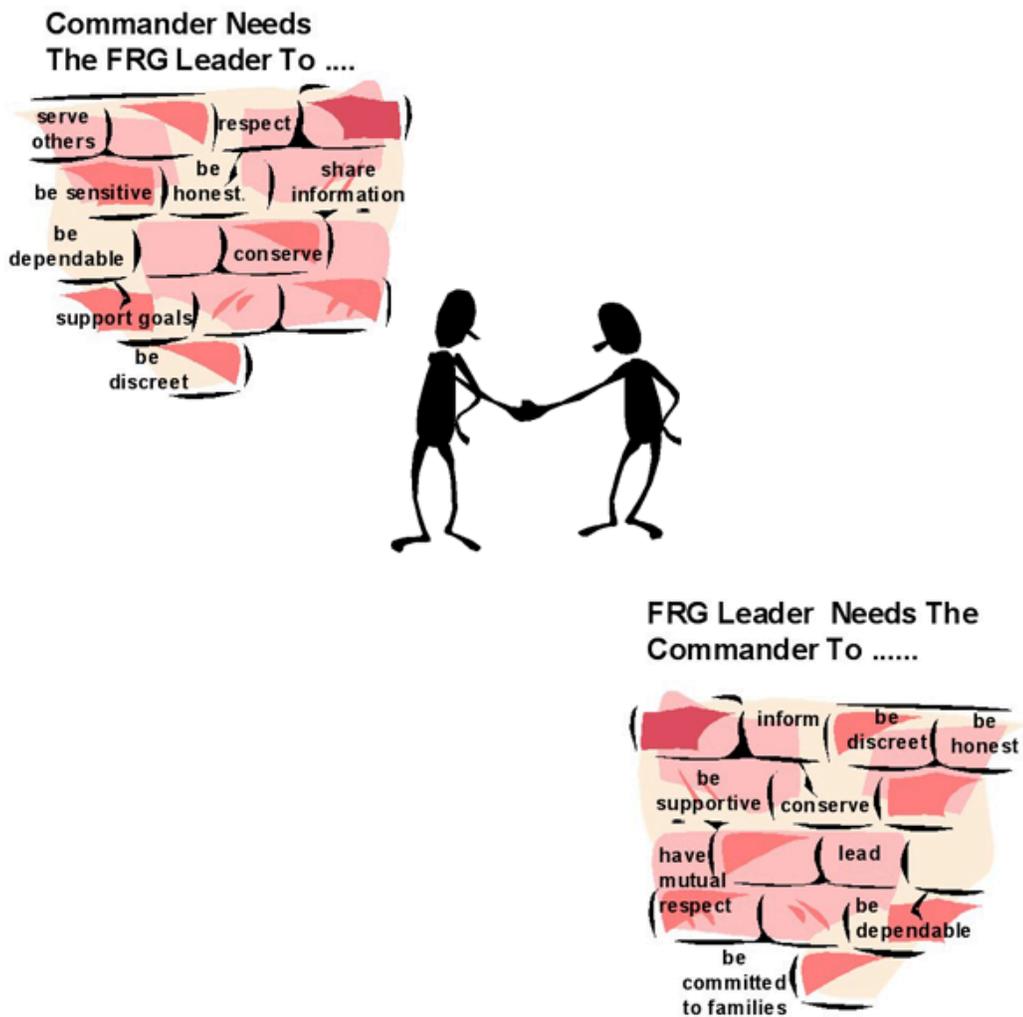
- positive, friendly, informal environment;
- no rank or cliques;
- clear goals;
- meaningful, fun activities to participate in as a unit family;
- decentralized decisions;
- everyone included;
- timely, accurate information flow; and
- no gossip.



## 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:

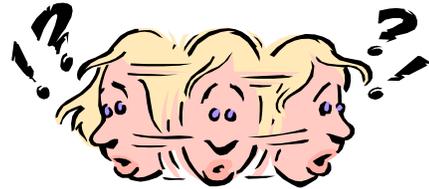


Additional aspects of leading people will be covered later. For more information on the subject, consult Operation READY *The Army Family Readiness Handbook*, which has an excellent chapter on leadership.

## 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.

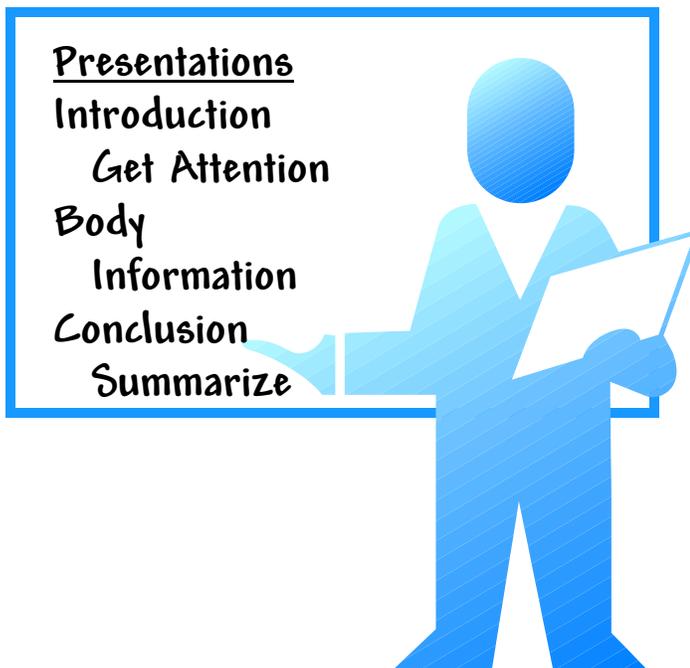
The keys to good decision making are:

- 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

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### 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.

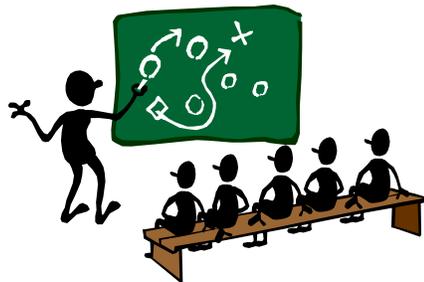
If leaders in the FRG or the unit are not ready, what can be done to get ready? Start over with Chapters 1 and 2. Arrange for some special training. Remember: everything you do from here on—and the success or failure of the FRG—will be determined largely by what you do and how you do it.

### 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).**

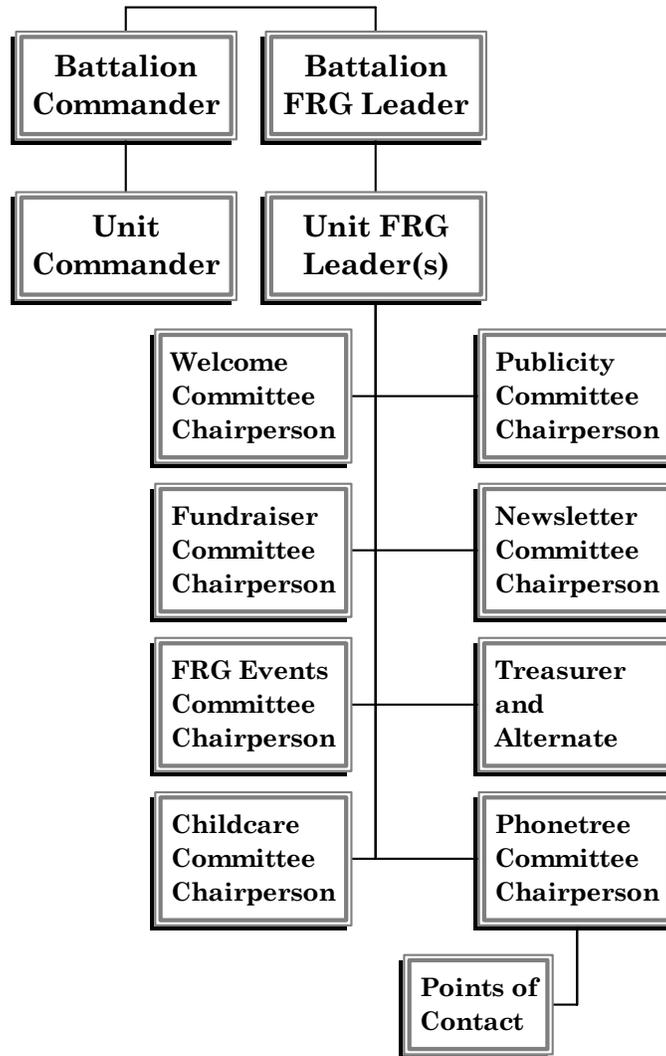
## FRG VOLUNTEERS



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.

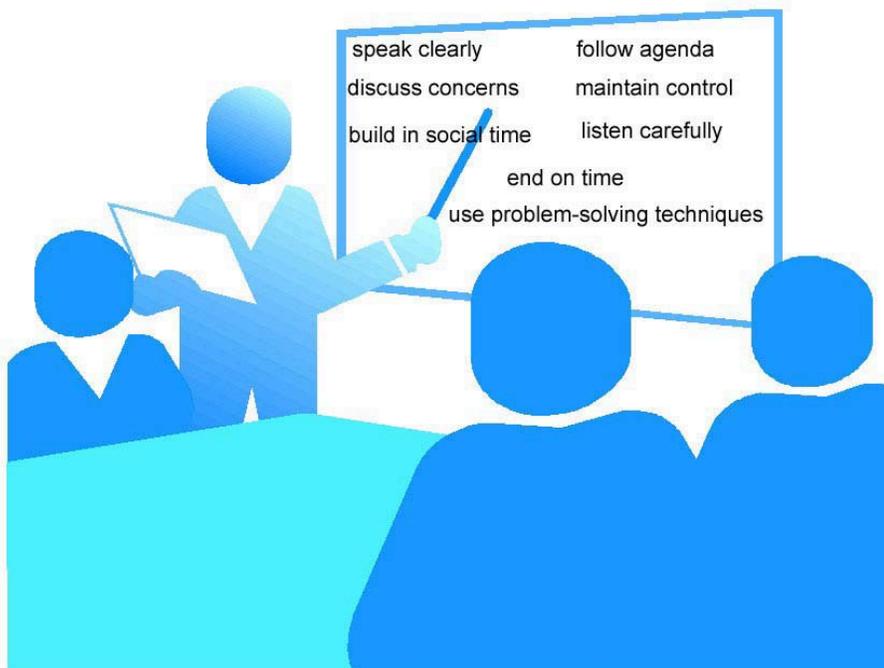
- Listen carefully to make sure you understand what the person says.
- Don't take rudeness personally; not everyone will welcome your call.
- Don't gossip; if the other party brings up gossip, either don't respond or let the person know you can't discuss it.
- Honor confidentiality. Don't make the mistake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



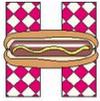
Conflict is a natural part of living; it will happen in the FRG now and then, too. J. Stewart, author of *Bridges, Not Walls*, reminds us that “for a conflict to arise, the behavior of one or both parties must have consequences for the other.” It’s a fact of life that people are going to have different 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><b>Army Community Service (ACS)</b></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><b>Reserve Family Program Academies and National Guard State Training Conferences</b></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><b>Army Family Team Building (AFTB) Program</b></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><b>Installation Volunteer Program</b></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.**

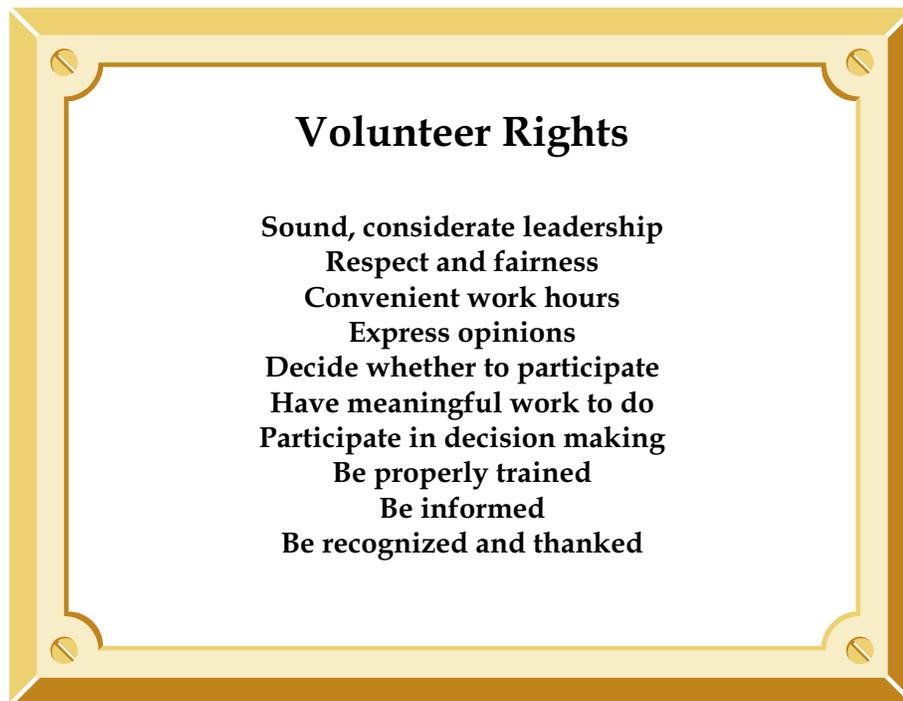
Problems of a highly personal nature sometimes occur among members of the FRG. FRG leaders and other volunteers should always act with understanding, compassion, and concern. Realize that some situations will require referral to service agencies with personnel trained to handle those specific kinds of 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**

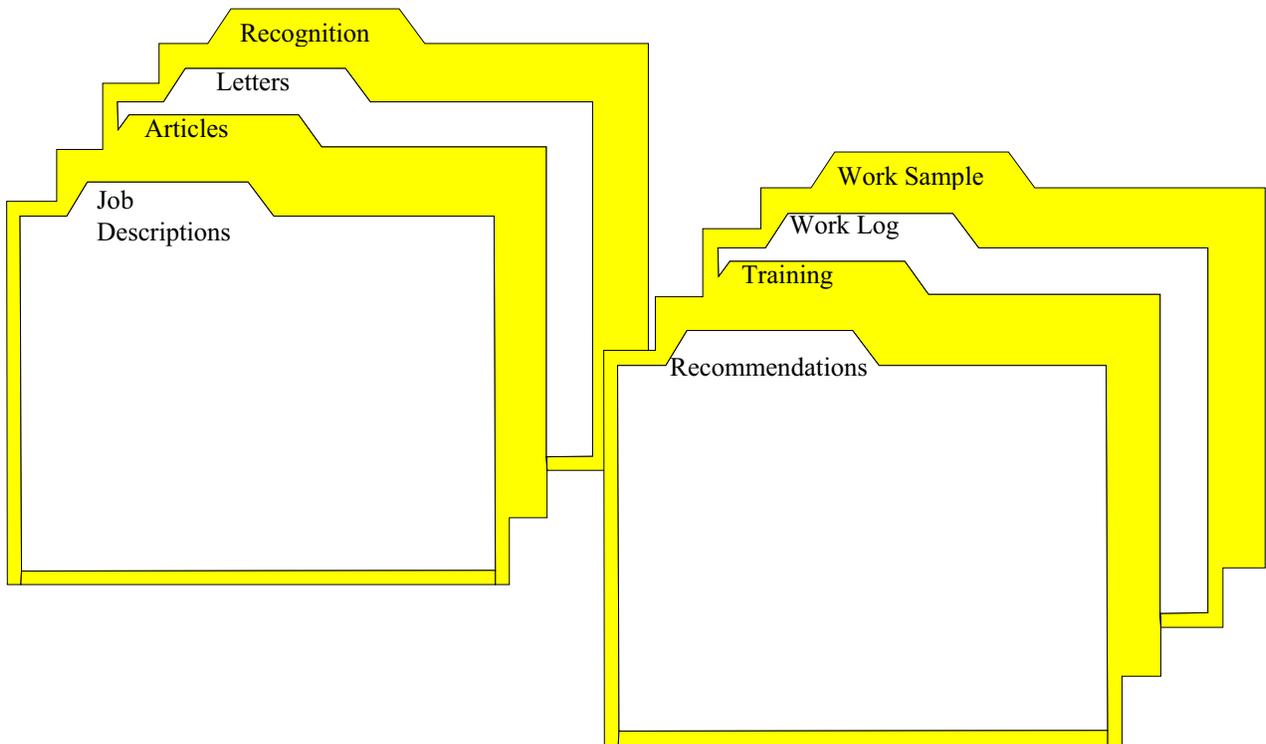
FRG volunteers have rights similar to paid civilian workers on post, except they are more flexible. They have a right to:



## **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](http://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.

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Volunteer's Signature and Date

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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:

<b>LEVELS OF AWARDS</b>	
	
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:**
- 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:**
- Editorial, spelling, grammar skills; ability to write articles
  - Managerial skills; knowledge of organization
  - Creativity, energy, artistic talent
- RECOMMENDED TRAINING:**
- 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**

<b>POSITION TITLE:</b>	<b>Chairperson</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	Unit Commander
<b>GENERAL STATEMENT:</b>	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.
<b>JOB DESCRIPTION:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Plans and conducts FRG activities that support family well being and preparedness of the unit, consistent with the goals of the State Family Program</li><li>■ Keeps the affiliated unit informed of FRG activities</li><li>■ Keeps information flowing between family members, the unit, and the State Family Program Office</li><li>■ Presides over FRG meetings, which are held as needed</li><li>■ Meets annually with other chairpersons throughout the state to share ideas</li><li>■ Helps identify volunteer spouses for local projects</li><li>■ Encourages family members to become active FRG participants</li></ul>
<b>TIME REQUIRED:</b>	Approximately 6 to 8 hours per month, depending on level of FRG activity; one-year duration (renewable)
<b>IN-SERVICE TRAINING:</b>	One annual training workshop at government expense
<b>COMPENSATION:</b>	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**

<b>POSITION TITLE:</b>	<b>State Volunteer Representative</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	State Family Program Coordinator
<b>GENERAL STATEMENT:</b>	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.
<b>JOB DESCRIPTION:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Assists State Family Program Coordinator</li><li>■ Coordinates family member volunteer efforts</li><li>■ Serves as point of contact for FRG and family members for information, referral, and follow-up</li><li>■ Serves as “Team Leader,” State Family Program Council (“The State Team”)</li><li>■ Assists in management and coordination of special projects</li><li>■ Participates as the Volunteer Representative of the Family Program at conferences and workshops at local, regional, and national levels</li><li>■ Assists in planning, preparation, and presentation of family-member briefings</li><li>■ Acts as liaison with the National Guard Association and the National Guard Association of the United States</li><li>■ Exchanges ideas with volunteers from other states</li><li>■ Maintains familiarity with both civilian and military family readiness services available throughout the state</li></ul>
<b>TIME REQUIRED:</b>	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
<b>IN-SERVICE TRAINING:</b>	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**

<b>POSITION TITLE:</b>	<b>Member, State Family Program Council</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	State Family Program Coordinator and “State Team” Leader
<b>GENERAL STATEMENT:</b>	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.
<b>JOB DESCRIPTION:</b>	<p><b>Advisory roles</b> (on behalf of constituency)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Brings family-member concerns to the state level for appropriate action</li><li>■ Reviews and comments on the effectiveness of the Family Program; makes recommendations for improvement</li><li>■ Takes an active role in the Family Program’s strategic planning process covering the next two to five years</li></ul> <p><b>Action roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Organizes and provides leadership for the accomplishment of approved Family Program objectives and approved special projects and events</li><li>■ Facilitates the regular flow of information among Family Program participants in leadership roles</li></ul>
<b>TIME REQUIRED:</b>	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
<b>IN-SERVICE TRAINING:</b>	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](http://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

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### 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

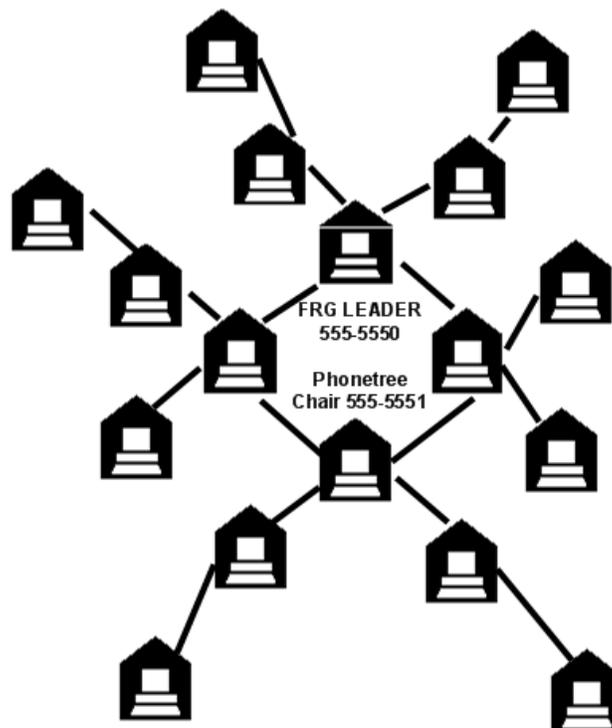
The FRG membership roster—compiled from the unit alert roster and completed FRG Information Surveys—consists of names, addresses, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information on unit soldiers and families. Participation must be on a voluntary basis. To achieve maximum participation, the FRG leader 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.

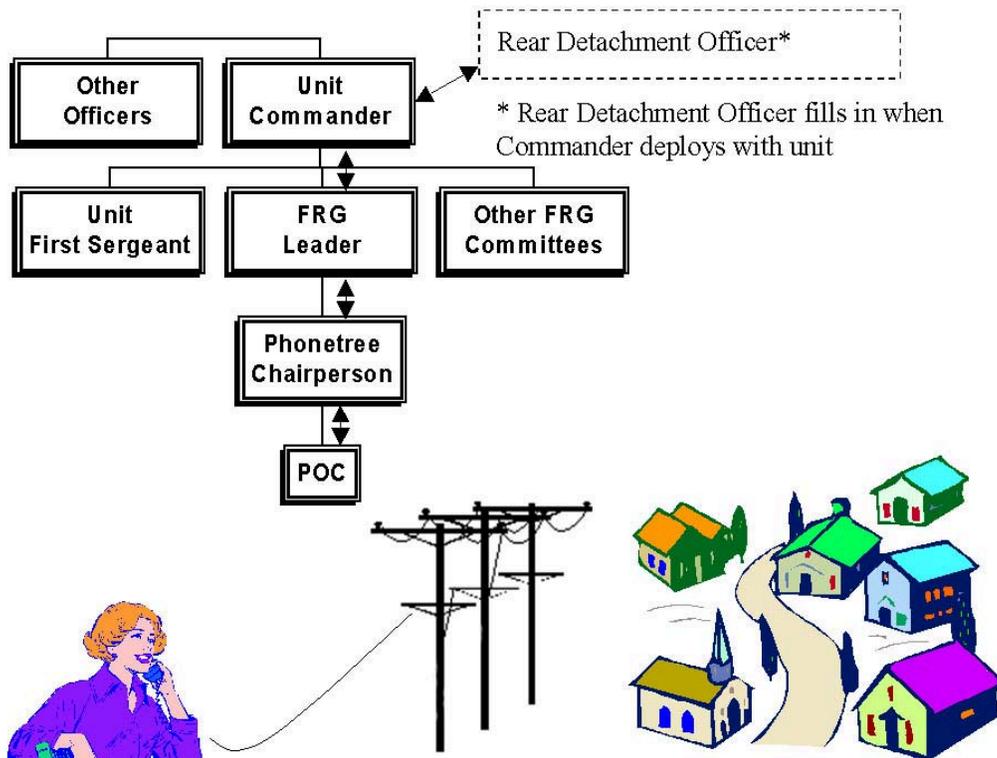


## How Does the Phonetree Work?

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



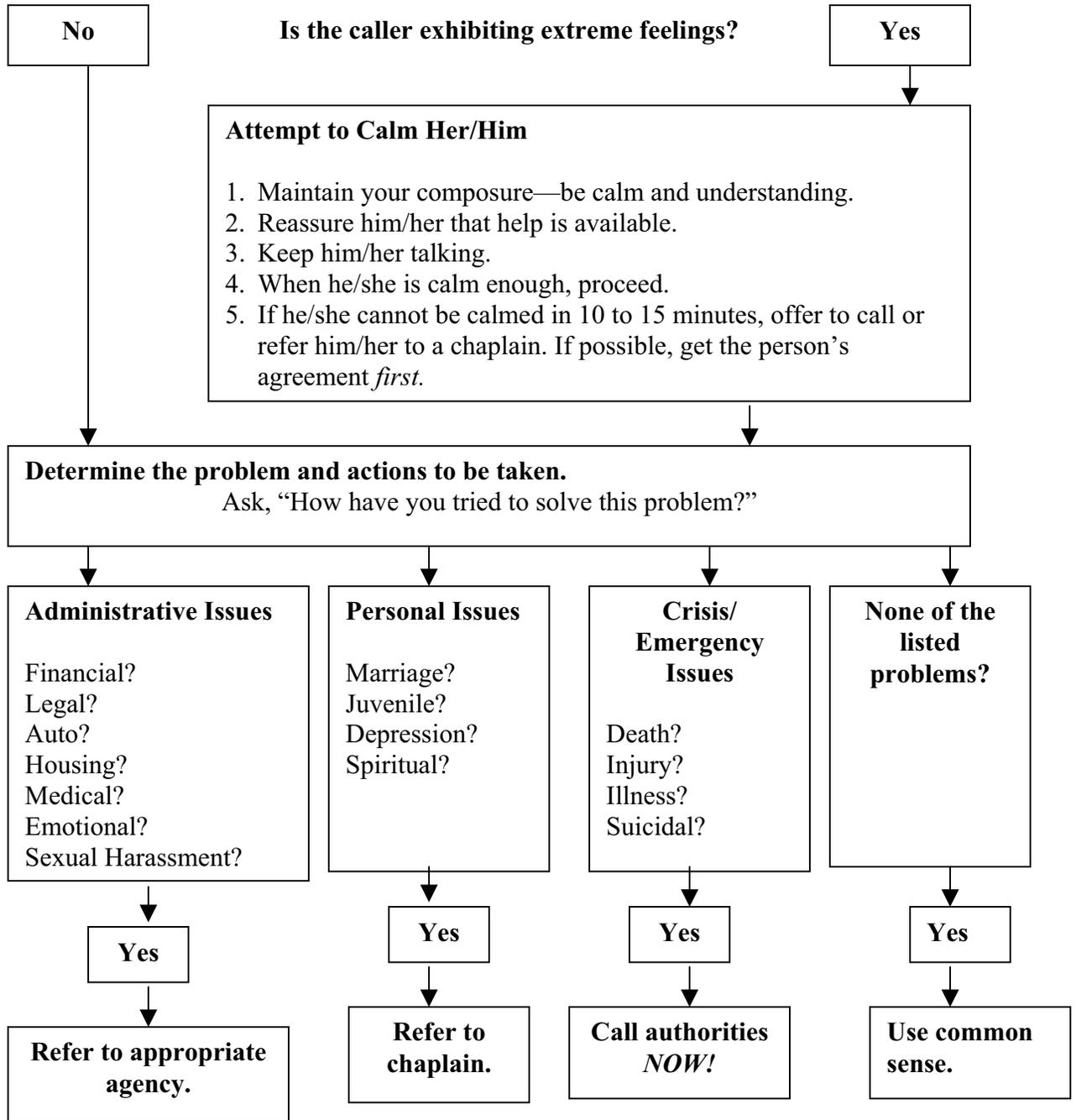
1. **Listen.** Let the people involved speak. Be sure you hear how they see the problem and what they expect from you. Descriptively verbalize what you hear and what you see happening; do not be critical.
2. Remember that the person who has sought your help is important, even if they are talking on behalf 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*.

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

**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.

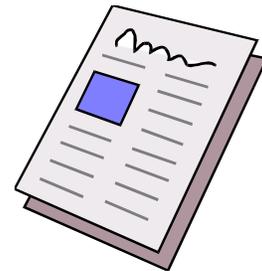
### NEWSLETTERS

#### 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.

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

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](http://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](http://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:

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

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.

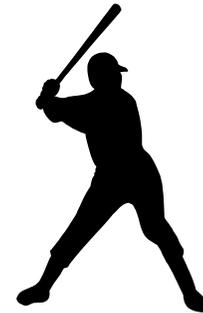
After brainstorming for fun ideas, the special events committee should convene to work out a proposed schedule for the year. Of course, they will check the training calendar to avoid conflicts. Next, the chairperson should visit with the FRG leader and commander to obtain approval for the proposed schedule. 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.

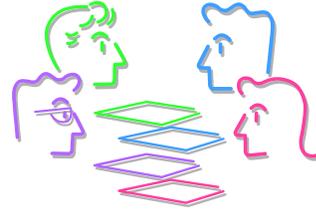
Be sure to thank and praise the committee chairpersons and all volunteers at regular intervals, especially publicly. If any critical tasks begin to slip, use kind and persuasive skills to help the committee chairperson involved to get on track. If necessary, assign someone else to help.

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

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### 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](http://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 _____ 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: _____ FRG Fund		
Type organization: Private, non-profit per IRS Code 501(c)(4)		
IRS Employee Identification Number: XXXX-XXXXX		
Mailing Address: c/o _____, Address, City, State, ZIP		
Authorized signatories:		
<u>Name</u>	<u>SSN</u>	<u>Title</u>
_____	XXX-XX-XXXX	FRG Treasurer
_____	XXX-XX-XXXX	Alternate Treasurer
_____	XXX-XX-XXXX	FRG Leader
_____	XXX-XX-XXXX	Special Events Chair
If any questions, please contact _____ at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Thank you for your assistance.		
Sincerely,		
_____ 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
--	-------------------------------

**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.



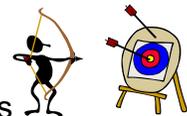
Identify Problem



Gather Information

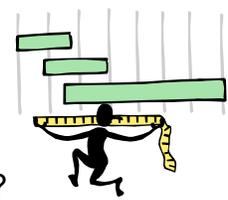


Identify Possible Solutions



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:**

<b>Solution</b>	<b>Positive Side</b>	<b>Negative Side</b>

**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.

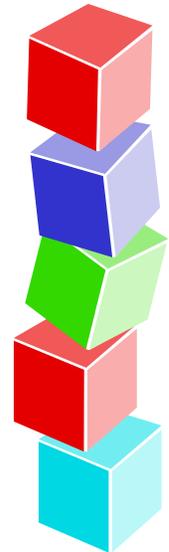
### Prevalent Problems in Weak FRGs

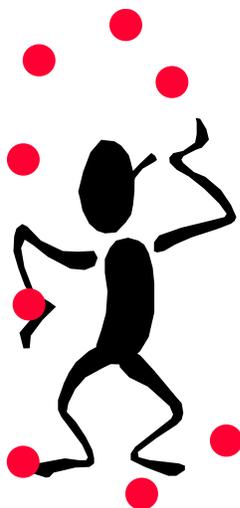
In most weak FRGs, the underlying problem is poor leadership. Here are some of the possibilities.

*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

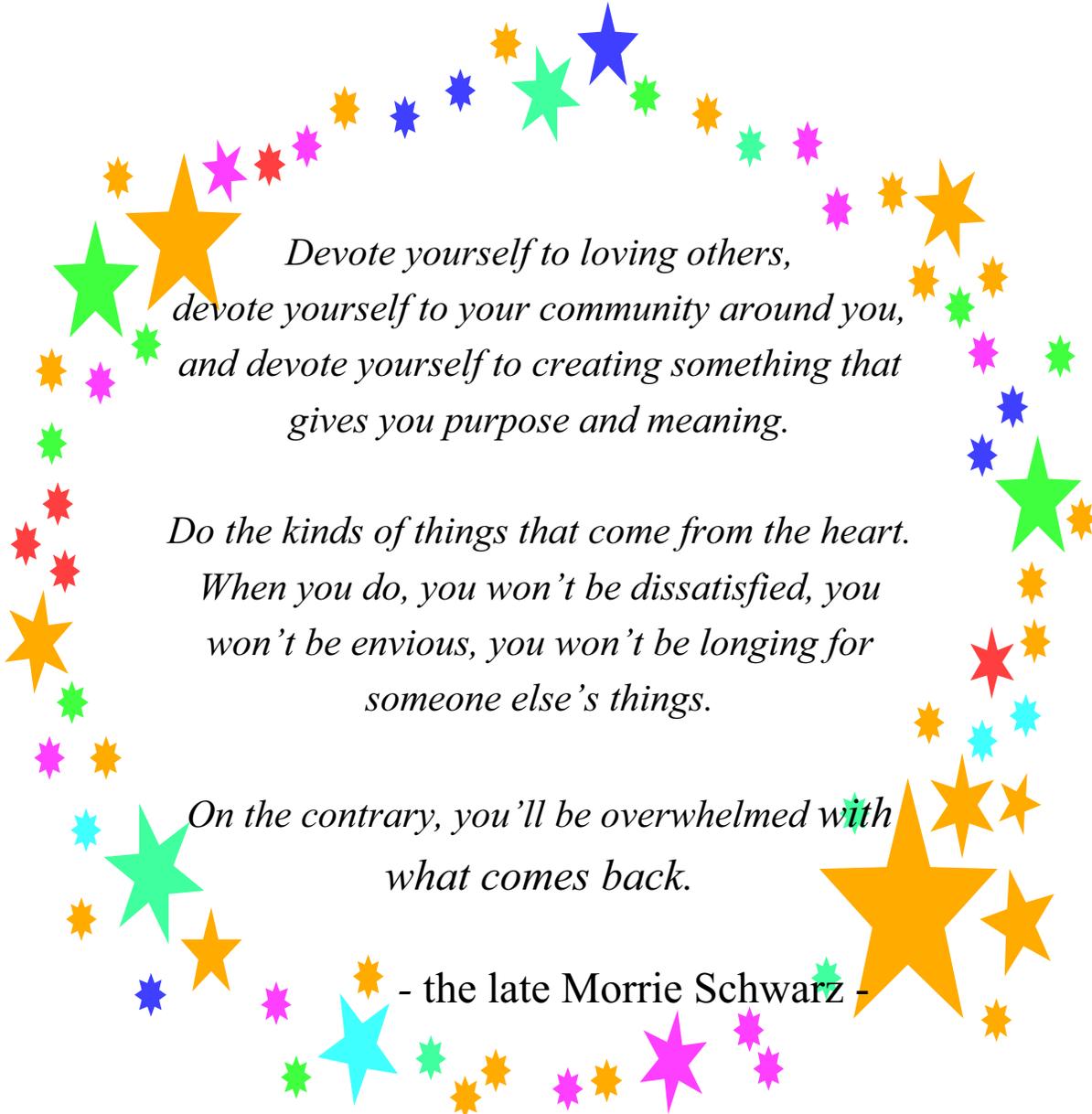
FRG Checklist periodically to gauge where the FRG stands. Make smart changes where needed. Quietly keep things humming along, and keep the FRG effective.



## 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

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Unit** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark Yes or No in each blank**

**1. Effective Leadership**

- a. The commander has prepared a Family Readiness Plan. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. The commander has unit readiness goals. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. The commander has appointed an FRG leader or co-leaders in writing. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. The commander appointed an FRG fund treasurer and alternate in writing. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. The commander delegates leadership of the FRG to the FRG leader. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. The commander actively supports the FRG materially and morally. \_\_\_\_\_
- g. The commander encourages participation of all soldiers and spouses in FRG events. \_\_\_\_\_
- h. The commander exhibits a friendly and respectful attitude toward all FRG members. \_\_\_\_\_
- i. The commander actively promotes diversity within the FRG. \_\_\_\_\_
- j. The FRG leader supports the unit readiness goals of the commander. \_\_\_\_\_
- k. The FRG leader is assertive yet kind and tactful toward all members. \_\_\_\_\_
- l. The FRG leader actively encourages and trains other leaders to be assertive but kind and tactful to all members. \_\_\_\_\_
- m. The FRG leader shares leadership authority and responsibility with others. \_\_\_\_\_
- n. The FRG leader often recognizes others' efforts and contributions. \_\_\_\_\_
- o. Our FRG meetings and events are well attended. \_\_\_\_\_
- p. People volunteer readily to work on FRG committee projects. \_\_\_\_\_
- q. We genuinely enjoy our FRG events as a unit family. \_\_\_\_\_
- r. Morale is high in our FRG. \_\_\_\_\_

**Results, Section 1:**  
**Total yes answers** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total no answers** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Percent of yes answers** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**FRG Position** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Effective Organization**

- a. Our FRG is organized into several committees, each with a leader and a number of volunteers to help do tasks. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Each committee chairperson has a written job description. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. The committee chairperson shares his/her job description with other volunteers so they understand the duties. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. The committee chairpersons attend all organizational meetings. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. FRG leaders plan and run our meetings well, with an agenda. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Our FRG meetings are short, focused, and follow the agenda. \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Our FRG meetings are relaxed but business-like. \_\_\_\_\_
- h. We have snacks, drinks and childcare provided at FRG meetings. \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Committee chairpersons present reports of their activities. \_\_\_\_\_
- j. The treasurer presents an up-to-date status of the FRG fund. \_\_\_\_\_
- k. There are plenty of volunteers to help with FRG projects. \_\_\_\_\_
- l. We have an up-to-date FRG phonetree and POCs for all families. \_\_\_\_\_
- m. Our FRG has a newsletter. \_\_\_\_\_
- n. At our fundraisers, there is always a good mix of members to help. \_\_\_\_\_
- o. Our hospitality/welcome committee does a great job of helping new families feel welcome to the unit FRG. \_\_\_\_\_
- p. We have a special events calendar set up for the whole year. \_\_\_\_\_
- q. Our FRG secretary keeps excellent records of our meetings. \_\_\_\_\_
- r. The special events chairperson schedules training presentations by Family Readiness Program. \_\_\_\_\_

**Results, Section 2:**  
**Total yes answers** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total no answers** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Percent of yes answers** \_\_\_\_\_

## 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:**

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**Area(s) needing improvement:**

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Attach additional sheet(s) as needed.

