

2/23/2010



ISSUE
OUT BRIEF

SPOUSES OF DEPLOYED SOLDIERS FOCUS GROUP

CMS

Ft Riley Customer Management Services | Colleen Bay

**FOCUS GROUP
INFORMATION PAPER**

FOCUS GROUP AND DATE:

Spouses of Deployed Soldiers
4 FEB 2010

TITLE:

ACS Deployment Activities Working Group

SCOPE:

Agencies are spending a lot of time and effort planning activities for Families of deployed Soldiers, however, the events are not well attended because they are not well advertised or they fall on bad dates. To-date, this working group has produced few activities and the perception from this point on will be that since Division has deployed, we will now do events.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Include Family members in the working group (not just the FRSA from each unit).
2. Keep events simple.
3. Advertise.
4. Include every deployed unit. (Don't target specific units, but rather do a general open to all Families of deployed Soldiers).

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TITLE:

Teens are left out

SCOPE:

We do a great job taking care of the younger members of our community (regarding pre-deployment briefings, FRG meetings, etc). Teenagers, however, are often overlooked.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Target teenagers in planning events. (What will attract teens to our event or what can teens do at this event?)
2. Beef-up advertising for existing teen activities.
3. Develop a teen book or magazine (or section of existing media) that talks about teen related issues and activities available to them.
4. Separate teenagers from school-age kids and infants during FRG meetings and Pre-Deployment briefings.
5. Establish Deployment groups in high schools and middle schools which can meet over lunch, a "lunch bunch". (Currently, kids have assigned seating during lunch on post and this could help gain the "lunch bunch" popularity within the teen community as well as provide them the opportunity to meet and socialize with other teens of Soldiers).

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TITLE:

Post Marketing is not getting outside the gates

SCOPE:

There are many Ft Riley Families that live off post. These Families often feel separated and not supported by the installation. Existing activities are poorly attended as a result of only marketing on post.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Find a replacement for "In Touch"
2. Explore text messaging (Ft Carson)
3. Edgier marketing that will draw people's attention (such as funny road signs, like "if you can dodge traffic, you can doge a ball" for an upcoming dodge ball tournament)

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TITLE:

There is no Social Calendar to reference

SCOPE:

Agencies are spending a lot of time and effort planning activities for Families, however, these events are often duplicated elsewhere on post or conflict with unit functions.

For example, on Jan 28, there were 5 events in the same evening:

USO No Dough Dinner

Dinner & a Movie Night at Riley's

DHHB Pot Luck

2-16 Chicken Night

Movie Night at Teen Center (same movie as Riley's Dinner & a Movie, but free).

These calendar conflicts are setting competing events up for failure.

The MWR calendar online is muddled with self-help classes, special events, and fitness classes.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Develop a Master Social calendar.
2. Provide a social calendar at muster meetings that goes out 1-3 months so units can plan accordingly.

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TITLE:

Family Night Dinner

SCOPE:

Ft Riley no longer has a consistent, predictable event available to its Families. This type of event will support a positive morale for our Families.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Include food. (Italian buffet, Mexican buffet, etc)
2. Keep affordable, \$5-\$8. Kids eat free.
3. Weekly (Fridays?)
4. Provide a space for teens.
5. Kid tables.
6. Door prizes (Could be used to market services not heavily used, such as the monthly Brunch or Teen Center Activities).
7. Go big and keep it going. Give it a chance to catch on.

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TITLE:

The Pre-Deployment Briefs need to be Revamped

SCOPE:

Currently, most pre-deployment briefs are set up in a round robin format, which is rushed and not informative. This leaves Family members left without necessary information and upset with the unit. This is especially true for spouses of first time deployees. Today's pre-deployment briefs are different for each unit. The briefs are only as good as the Unit's staff's knowledge of what is available to them. Some Units have subpar briefs (tables with flyers), while others are top notch; leading to the perception, "my unit is not as important as that other Unit". Additionally, some Units believe that ACS coordinates and develops the pre-deployment briefings, taking away the involvement of the Command in creating a successful pre-deployment briefing for their Families.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Take the Soldier out, they have the SRP. (Soldiers are just buzzing through to get signatures. Spouses are the ones with questions, but are being rushed through due to an impatient Soldier behind them just wanting a signature)
 - a. Have a separate pre-deployment for single Soldiers.
 - b. Have a pre-deployment meeting for first time deployee spouses.
 - i. Provide a list of commonly asked questions.
 - ii. Provide a copy of slides presented at meeting.
 - iii. Formatted as a meeting, where things are explained more thoroughly.
2. Establish a SOP or check list to help units tailor their pre-deployment briefs to match the needs of their Families.
 - a. Developed by a working group comprised of seasoned green-suiters and organization representatives.
 - b. Some vital services will be required to be present at all briefs, such as SJA, and will be held accountable for attending.
 - c. The FRSA Coordinator will provide a list of organizations that can provide enhancements or freebies (K-State Picture Opportunity and Daddy Dolls)
3. Organizations participating will be prepared to help and answer questions, not just sit there with flyers.
 - a. SJA should have the ability to do a Power of Attorney on site.
 - b. CYSS will have an up-to-date wait list and be able to register youth on site.

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TITLE:

Freebie/ Discount Resource List for FRG/FRSA during Deployments

SCOPE:

There are vendors and businesses in our community wanting to support Soldiers and their Families during deployments. Currently, there is not a resource maintained for FRSA's or FRGs to reference. The result is some units seem to be "better taken care of". Having a deployment resource list will strengthen community partnership and make our Soldiers and Families feel appreciated by the local community.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Develop a single deployment resource for FRGs and FRSA's to reference during deployments.
2. House resource list with FRSA for correct distribution.

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TITLE:

Ft Riley Military Discounts and Hookup List

SCOPE:

There are vendors and businesses in our community wanting to support Soldiers and their Families. Currently, there is not a single resource maintained for Soldiers and Families to reference. A resource list will strengthen community partnership and make our Soldiers and Families feel appreciated by the local community. This tool may contribute to cost savings for our Soldiers and Families as well as advertising for participating local businesses.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Develop and maintain a list of local businesses offering military discounts.
2. Incorporate the MACs and extend list to Wamego and Abilene.
3. Include the list in Ft Riley Welcome packets, Ft Riley's Treasures class, Muster meetings, disseminate through FRSAs, and make available on the installation website.

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TITLE:

First Time Deployee Spouses Support Group

SCOPE:

Currently all reintegration training is unit-specific and formal. There are no ongoing discussion groups available for spouses to attend as individuals, where they can share personal experiences.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Create a discussion group targeting spouses going through a deployment for the first time.
2. Sponsor legislation expanding MFLACs role on installations to facilitate discussion groups.

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TITLE:

Battalion Steering Committee Meeting

SCOPE:

There are no Battalion-level steering committee meetings where leaders can network and swap best practices. There is no outlet to share ideas, successes, or failures.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Create a quarterly, Garrison sponsored forum.
2. Membership will include Battalion-level FRGs and Advisors.
3. Propose forum to follow a muster meeting .