

SECTION V

OPERATIONAL EVENTS

A. OVERVIEW

The life style of the Marine family means separations because of deployments, mobilization, and responses to natural disasters. Whether these family separations are planned or unexpected, the role of the Key Volunteer Network becomes a major factor in the life of the unit. It is strongly recommended that the entire Key Volunteer Network, in conjunction with the Family Readiness Support Program personnel, develop specific action plans rather than waiting for these events to occur and then responding as if in crisis. Keeping the Key Volunteer Network in place all the time provides the framework to be proactive rather than reactive in the face of changing conditions.

B. DEPLOYMENT

Unit deployments are a fact of life for the Marine Corps. The history of the Key Volunteer Network is grounded in the tradition of "Marines take care of their own." When Marines deployed, families remaining behind have been supported by volunteers who helped others cope with the stress of being alone and responsible for all family matters. With the establishment of the Key Volunteer Network within the Family Readiness Support Program, the tradition of unit family support was institutionalized.

The Network's tempo of activity certainly changes when a unit deploys. Units prepare for deployment by making opportunities available for Marines to handle personal and family matters prior to departure. Key Volunteers may be asked to support family days, pre-deployment briefings or other unit events prior to a deployment. Any contact with unit families can be an opportunity to help prepare them for separation.

When a unit deploys, the composition of the unit changes with the addition of attachments. The attachments become part of the deploying unit, and their families are incorporated into the host unit Network. The host unit Coordinator maintains contact with the Key Volunteer Coordinators of the attachments.

Most units deploying on a regular rotation arrange for Key Volunteers to work with a designated representative (often the FRO) to assist with family problems requiring command attention. Contact with this Marine may be directed through the Key Volunteer Coordinator.

C. FAMILY SEPARATION

Some people who face separation go through some or all of the adjustment stages described below. Awareness of these stages often helps people to better understand and cope with their own emotions. The four familiar stages are:

1. Protest against a spouse's departure usually comes a week or two before he or she is due to leave. Spouses talk of feeling tense, selfish, unbelieving that the other will actually leave, and guilty about not wanting their spouses to go. There is also frustration with the increased hours the Marine spends getting the unit ready to deploy, the awareness of how many household and family business chores must be handled before departure and the physical and mental exhaustion that both husband and wife experience. Children often react to this stressful period by either misbehaving or becoming withdrawn.
2. Despair or depression is the emotional period which may come even before the spouse departs. Depression is often defined as anger turned inward. Unacknowledged anger about the situation can trigger depression and even physical problems. Thoughts like, "I hate the Marine Corps" and "How will I ever live through these next months alone?" are common, but often denied. Some people tend to withdraw from the world to grieve. Feelings of disorganization and sadness are common.
3. Detachment is the level on which people live for most of the separation. It is a state of relative calm and confidence in handling day-to-day living. If a major crisis or event occurs, however, they may tend to revert to the states of despair and protest. Having a baby, for instance, can trigger these feelings.
4. Adjustment to the return can be difficult. Many spouses experience an almost incredible emotional and physical frenzy, getting every inch of the house and themselves ready for the return of the spouse. The Marine arrives from the final days away exhausted and excited to be home. The first days of unwinding can bring long conversations which are attempts to catch up and talk about how the responsibilities of the household will be shared. Finally, the returning Marine spends lots of time sleeping which can be frustrating for the spouse. This can often be the most difficult stage in the cycle, as families reunite, work out accumulated concerns and tensions, and re-establish the rules for living together.

D. CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Accidents and crisis events can happen any time Marines train, whether deployed or in non-deploying units. Word of a mishap will spread quickly among the families, even if the event

occurs far from the area where they live. Television coverage often brings even more information, uncensored and confusing. Families will worry that their loved one is in danger, injured or at risk until they hear specifically to the contrary.

The development of an anticipatory support plan and a definition of a Key Volunteer's individual role during a critical event should be discussed with the Key Volunteer Coordinator. Key Volunteers must know how they will be informed of a crisis, how often information will be updated, where to refer questions, how to handle rumors, and what to do with people in crisis. That role must be clarified before any event occurs.

A rapid response by the Key Volunteer Network can help families cope with a stressful event and prevent some of the confusion and panic caused by misinformation.

E. MOBILIZATION

The Gulf Crisis in 1990-91 tested Marine Corps systems for incorporating reserves into active duty units during a mobilization of forces. While reserve units will be supported by their own Key Volunteers, members of the Individual Ready Reserves (IRR's) may be attached to any unit. Their families should be added to the roster when that occurs. Usually those families will live away from the installation and have their own personal sources of support. However, like all the families in the unit, they will look to Key Volunteers for information and emotional connection as they cope with their unique set of problems and concerns.

Section VIII of this guide pertains to the operation of the Key Volunteer Network within reserve units.

SECTION VI

LEGAL AND OTHER MATTERS

A. CONFIDENTIALITY

It is a Key Volunteer's duty and obligation to keep each call and the personal matters discussed during such calls in strictest confidence, within limits set by applicable laws and regulation. A Key Volunteer's first responsibility must be to provide the caller the freedom to discuss matters in a private and safe environment.

1. Keeping confidentiality means:

- Not disclosing the name or personal information about a caller or call unless authorized by the caller or required by law or regulation.
- Passing along general information ONLY with the permission of the caller.
- Carefully protecting any written notes pertaining to Key Volunteer calls and keeping them in a secure place.
- Informing the caller when she/he is beginning to discuss issues that require disclosure, such as threats to self, others or property.
- Resisting the temptation to share irrelevant or inappropriate information regarding other members of the unit, either with callers or members of your own household.
- Protecting a caller's privacy when referring to another resource. When a Key Volunteer checks a resource's availability, the identity of the potential client is not disclosed.
- Understanding clearly the CO's policy on what personal family member information will be disclosed to the CO.

2. Though care must be taken when discussing personal or embarrassing information about a case or request for information, the CO must be told anything which may affect unit readiness. This includes but is not limited to:

- Circumstances potentially embarrassing to the unit.
- Expectation of media coverage regarding a family issue.

- A serious crime.
- Any case about which the Key Volunteer Coordinator believes the CO should be aware.

Confidentiality is critical to the integrity of the Key Volunteer Network. All contact between members of the Key Volunteer Network and a Marine or a family member will be given special handling to make sure that only persons with "a need to know" learn of any sensitive information. A breach of confidentiality is cause for dismissal as a Key Volunteer per MCO 1754.2A. This must be made clear to family members. The CO of each unit will discuss with the Key Volunteer Coordinator the types of information he/she wishes to know. If a Key Volunteer becomes aware of the situations noted above, she/he must report it to the appropriate agency, or the FSC, and to the CO through the Key Volunteer Coordinator. If the unit is deployed, the CO should designate the appropriate individual to whom reports should be made.

B. FUND-RAISING GUIDANCE

The Marine Corps Key Volunteer Network is an official organization of the Marine Corps. Network volunteers may not solicit gifts or contributions for Marine Corps organizations or personnel without the Secretary of the Navy's authorization. They can accept unsolicited gifts from businesses and persons who independently approach the Key Volunteers with offers of assistance. Gifts which might create an appearance of impropriety should not be accepted.

C. UNIT SUPPORT

Based on guidance contained in MCO 1754.2A the CO should provide program-essential support at government expense, to include:

- Office space, meeting space/facilities, and if necessary, storage space.
- Office supplies and access to equipment, to include necessary computer hardware and supporting database management and word processing/desktop publishing software.
- Telephone services (including answering machine).
- Authorized transportation for official Key Volunteer Network functions.
- Use of official mail, for official purposes, provided the mailings carry the return address of the command.

D. REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Reimbursement for incidental expenses can be made, if funds are available. Approval for reimbursement should be sought prior to expending per paragraph 10608.3 of MCO 1700.27. Reimbursable expenses are limited to: If in doubt, ask the FPO. Reimbursable expenses are limited to:

- Child care.
- Mileage for privately-owned vehicles when used on official business.
- Parking and tolls related to official business.
- Telephone toll calls related to official business.
- Invitational travel orders.

Installation Commanders may approve non-appropriated fund support for qualified Network activities per paragraph 10608.3 of MCO 1700.27.

SECTION VII

MANAGING STRESS AND AVOIDING BURNOUT

A. STRESS

Everyone is subject to stress. Those in the helping professions, however, seem to be more susceptible than others. This is because those who get involved tend to do so because they are caring, giving individuals. Sometimes they give so much to those for whom they care, they have little left to give to their families or themselves.

An effective Key Volunteer tries to manage stress. Individuals who get overloaded tend to continue the activities, but may become mechanical and even resentful.

Reaching the point of over-extension doesn't happen over night. If any of the following symptoms appear, it is time to think about the situation and decide how to best deal with it:

1. Anger and resentment without cause.
2. Discouragement and indifference.
3. Pessimism and overall negativity.
4. Chronic fatigue.
5. Inability to organize and concentrate, sometimes even on routine matters.
6. Procrastinating.
7. Sleep disturbances, too much or too little sleep.
8. Increased marital, social, family conflict, more fights, less companionship and understanding support.
9. Increased use of alcohol and medication.
10. Changes in eating habits.

These symptoms may slowly develop so that it seems normal to feel that way. Refer to the list for a mood check every few months. Also, ask a friend, colleague, or family member to watch for these symptoms.

Be on the lookout for these symptoms among colleagues and the unit families. Become familiar with these stress reactions and help others become aware of them.

B. PREVENTION OF BURNOUT OR EXHAUSTION

There are things that can be done to prevent burnout and to improve a person's general outlook. They include:

1. Do keep track of feelings and health. Get forthright help from others, if needed, but do regular checkups both mentally and physically.
2. Do set boundaries. Be conscientious about time restraints and just how much can be done. Take regular work breaks and vacations. Reserve time for yourself and your own or family.
3. Do learn to give yourself permission not to be available if exhaustion sets in on some days. There are times when limits should be set on taking calls. Some Volunteers find it useful to have time limits on calls, for example: from 7:00 - 9:00 in the evenings. The Key Volunteer should also let her/his family members know that there are times when the volunteer needs some personal time for "battery recharging."
4. Do not be too hard on yourself. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from them and keep going and growing.
5. Do have a support system. Be involved with others who understand: other Key Volunteers, military spouses, chaplains, etc. Whether formally or informally, it always helps to share with someone who has done the job before or understands.
6. Do engage in stress reduction techniques. Whether it's physical exercise or mental relaxation techniques, find something that works to relieve stress.
7. Do re-evaluate. If a Key Volunteer is not happy or feels continually over-stressed, something needs to be done. Perhaps it is time to handle the requirements of being a Key Volunteer differently. Perhaps it is time to take a break from being a Key Volunteer.

The Key Volunteer is an integral part of the Family Readiness Support Program in the Marine Corps. The rewards for serving in this role go beyond the knowledge that you are helping others, for it is in the process of helping others that we become more capable ourselves.

In your position as Key Volunteer you will increase your organizational skills, communication skills, learn time management and stress reduction techniques, become more self-assured and self-confident, and gain invaluable experience in dealing with people. These skills are necessary for you as an effective Key Volunteer, and will benefit you long after your appointment as a Key Volunteer has ended.