

Alaska PTA
Dialogue for
Military Families



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PTA
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Vice President, Parent Involvement, Alaska PTA

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The Alaska Parent Teacher Association, (Alaska PTA), through funding from the Alaska Legislature hosted three Military Dialogues in Fairbanks, Anchorage and Kodiak during the week of October 12th, 2009.

With our Country being in its 9th year of war with multiple deployments, we realize it is putting a strain on families, particularly the children. In Alaska, all children are educated by local school districts, even if the school's physical location is on a military base. Alaska is considered an overseas assignment for our members of the military.

The Alaska PTA advocates on behalf of all children and we see a multitude of stressors in our schools and our communities. With some of our military families encountering their second and even third deployments, Alaska PTA felt the need to ask the question "What is Alaska's capacity to provide support for our military families?" Because Alaska is home to all branches of the Uniformed Services and Guard members, we asked this question in all three cities.

This is the third Dialogue the Alaska PTA has sponsored on behalf of our military families. Each of these has produced helpful information, not only for our communities, but has also helped give each of the agencies who are represented in this report the opportunity to network and learn of each other's existence and mission.

It became apparent to us very early on that we need to have another dialogue based on the responses of our attendees and presenters. One of the biggest gaps that we observed was a lack of communication between these agencies regarding the services they have available to our military families and the knowledge of the services by the families.

Alaska PTA will again be asking for additional funding for 2010 to host another Military Dialogue. Our focus will be on connecting the providers of services with the families to close the existing communication gap in services. Alaska PTA is in a unique position to help facilitate this information to the families as we have local unit PTA's located in 145 schools across the state of Alaska.

I would like to thank the following volunteers for their help in organizing and facilitating the dialogues.

- Paula Pawlowski, Alaska PTA, National Military Family Association, Alaska
- Bob Roses, Alaska Representative, 2006-2008
- Chris Ward, National Military Family Association, Alaska
- Kathy Moakler, Government Relations Director, National Military Family Association, Alexandria VA
- Dave Gomez, Executive Director of Alaska Armed Services YMCA
- Josh Applebee, Legislative Aide, Senator Meyer
- Katrina Grimwold, UAA Journalism Student

On behalf of Alaska PTA Board of Managers, our 11,000 members and our Alaska military families, I would like to thank the Alaska Legislature for making these dialogues possible. Without their support, we would have been unable to provide these valuable dialogues to our military families.

Respectfully,



Al Tamagni Jr.
Vice President, Parent Involvement, Alaska PTA

Alaska PTA Dialogues for Military Families

Purpose and Objectives

One in five people in Alaska have ties to the military. In the Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley school districts 10,000 children are military dependents – roughly 20% of the student population. Alaska has more military retirees as a percentage of the population than any other State. Being an Alaskan is unique but the presence and our dependence on the military brings additional challenges. “There are some unique issues that military families go through”. (Colonel Marc A. Luiken speaking in Anchorage at the Military Family Summit.) These challenges change as the status of the military family changes.

To address these challenges the Alaska PTA with funding from the Alaska Legislature held dialogues in Fairbanks, Anchorage and Kodiak the week of October 12-16 2009. These meetings were designed to identify needed services and to evaluate existing systems by asking just the simple question, “What is Alaska’s capacity to service its military and families?”

More resources for help in dealing with deployment, family members with special needs, and health and education requirements are available to the military family than at any time in our history. This reflects an awareness and appreciation, as a Nation and as a State, for the men and women who stand ready to defend our freedoms. We understand and appreciate how families also serve.



Three one-day conferences were held: Fairbanks on October 13, Anchorage on October 14, and Kodiak on October 16. At each site the group was able to do a physical tour of housing, hospitals, commissaries, gyms and other offices of importance. Alaska is home to all seven of the uniformed services of the United States both active and reserve components; each has its own characteristic culture and its own set of needs and concerns. Service members and family members representing active duty, reserve component, and retired attended the meetings. A range of political representatives and a multiple service providers participated in the conferences providing information on the diverse services available as well as potential obstacles.

This project was three years in the making. Paula Pawlowski, active in Alaska Parent Teachers Association and Representative for the National Military Family Association planned, secured funding from the State of Alaska through Alaska PTA and garnered support and speakers from military family service providers and Legislators.

The program was simple: Mornings were dedicated to the presentation of information from legislators (or their representatives) and service providers. Afternoons provided the opportunity to break into small groups for discussion. Ideas, suggestions and conclusions were then fed back to the entire assembly. Following are some highlights from the speakers and the wisdom gleaned from the discussions.

Speakers

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski

Senator Murkowski opened – via video - each morning session. She focused her remarks on how to better serve the military service members and their families because “military families are serving too...it’s not just a nice phrase but a reality.” Most importantly, she strongly encouraged the attendees to speak their minds.

U.S. Senator Mark Begich was unable to attend personally but sent his representative to each session to share his message of support for our military and the attendees.

Verdie Bowen, Director of the State of Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Bowen served in the military and experienced first-hand the difficulties of deployments. He related how the deployments affected his children: how his children did not immediately recognize him when he returned from assignment; how some household tragedy inevitably occurred in his absence. The audience experienced through his eyes and personal experience the meaning of “military service”. He lauded the quality and quantity of services presently provided and applauded this conference as the first meeting of its type. He was appointed as the Director of Veterans Affairs for the State of Alaska in May 2009. In this position his responsibilities include the development and the sustainment of comprehensive statewide Veterans Advocacy program between the veterans of Alaska, the State Legislature, The Governor and the Veterans Administration. He also serves as the principal contact for Alaska’s 77,000 veterans, their dependents, and/or survivors. He provided, in a very clear and concise manner, information about benefits and programs available to veterans in Alaska.

“What’s working, what’s not, and what needs to come next – where do we go from here?”

- U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski

Captain Bob Pawlowski, NOAA Retiree and President of the Captain Cook Chapter, MOAA

The Military Officers Association of America, (MOAA), is one organization in a group of 34 associations representing active duty, reserve component and retired service members, their families and their survivors – The Military Coalition - in the Nation’s Capital. The Military Coalition addresses personnel issues affecting these constituencies and advocates for their members before Congress. The recent passage of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111-035) resulted in provisions that addressed various personnel issues, including an increase to the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) which provides junior enlisted with large families additional funding. The legislation also called for research into the impact of deployments on spouses and children, and called for a increase in substance abuse prevention programs. Bob Pawlowski encouraged participants to be active in the organizations that represent their service or component. For more information on the Military Coalition, visit www.themilitarycoalition.org.

Jan Meyers, State Family Program Director for the Alaska National Guard

“We support all services”. The National Guard provides the same programs that are available to active duty, but faces challenges because families are so geographically dispersed. There are approximately 4000 National Guard members in Alaska. Many are not fully aware of their benefits. Ms. Meyer’s office is tasked with keeping National Guard members and their families informed, helping with deployments and working with the ‘full time’ employers of these ‘part time’ warriors. Her organization participates and supports the ‘Yellow Ribbon Program’, a Congressionally mandated program that reaches out to deployed service members and their families during all phases of deployment, especially on the return from deployment and reintegration. Returning troops are contacted 30, 60 and 90 days after they return from a deployment. It is

a means to reach out, assess needs, deal with problems and hopefully lower destructive incidents, including suicide, among those who have experienced combat. Ms. Meyer's office was involved in the planning, gathering speakers and getting the word out to providers and interested parties.

Lauri Hogan, Military One Source

Ms. Hogan is part of a Department of Defense (DoD) provided team, including a child and youth specialist

"The Alaska PTA is 52 years old with over 11,000 members representing 150 individual PTAs. The largest volunteer advocacy organized group (501c3) in Alaska."

and Military Family Life Consultant (licensed social worker counselor), that augments the resources available at the State Joint Headquarters. She travels throughout the State of Alaska to spread awareness of programs for the service member and their family. She focuses on reaching those who do not live on or near a military installation. Military One Source is a free service through the Department of Defense with a 24 hour per day/7 days per week call center. Twelve sessions of face to face counseling are available for the service member and family members with local providers who contract with Military One Source. Military One

Source serves as an employee assistance program providing contact information for every day needs such as day care, elder care, school information, scholarships and many other resources, both military specific and community based.

(Note: Military One Source did not attend the Kodiak meetings. Military One Source is a Department of Defense program, and the Coast Guard (which falls under the Department of Homeland Security) does not participate in this program, though they do have an employee assistance program.

Dave Gomez, Executive Director of Alaska Armed Services YMCA

ASYMCA has a huge influence on the military bases across the State of Alaska. Mr. Gomez elaborated on the history of the ASYMCA and of the services they offer: free ride van service; Operation Snack Attack (food and companionship for deploying troops as they depart and when they return); housing assistance for women with problem pregnancies of all uniformed services who must travel to the major medical centers for extended care (Elmendorf AFB & Ft. Wainwright); no cost/low cost tickets and tours; Food Pantry; WIC offices; Heroes Home (housing units for hospital patients and their families); Operation Teddy Watch (short-term watch-care for children when their parent has a medical appointment); providing small quilts with pictures of children with their deployed parent –for small children this helps reduce the trauma of separation. The ASYMCA program is more extensive at the installations in Alaska than other states because of the unique needs here because of geographical and weather challenges. The Alaska ASYMCA and its programs are provided by an all volunteer board of directors located within Alaska allowing quick response for the needs of the military.

Kathy Moakler, Government Relations Director, National Military Family Association, Alexandria VA

The National Military Family Association is an advocate for Military Families of the seven uniformed services of the United States. They are celebrating 40 years as the leading non-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life for military families. Volunteers from the military families serve as eyes and ears in the field. The Association gathers information about issues concerns military communities around the world. They work with community leaders to gather data on schools, health care, housing, Commissary and Exchange benefits and spouse education benefits. At Association headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, specialists look for trends, carefully analyze information and if appropriate use it in testimony before Congress and with policy makers in the Department of Defense and the Services. Programs

include scholarships for educational enrichment of military spouses, and Operation Purple – a camp program for children of deployed service members that has served over 10,000 children since inception. In Alaska over 200 attended camps this year. The Association is releasing results on a longitudinal study on the effects of deployment on military children and their caregivers in early 2010. This is the second Alaska PTA conference they have had representation and look forward to the 2010 conference. More information can be found at www.militaryfamily.org.

Al Tamagni, Jr., Alaska Parent Teachers Association, (AKPTA), & National Parent Teachers Association
Mr. Tamagni presented information on the history of the Alaska PTA. The Alaska PTA is 52 years old with over 11,000 members representing 150 individual PTAs. The largest volunteer advocacy organized group (501c3) in Alaska. In 1957 there was a position on the board of managers for a military liaison. This series of Dialogues are the third conference/gathering the AKPTA has sponsored in the last 10 years. The first one was for families and the education system, the military way. The second summit was to inform military leaders and families about the passage of the High School Qualifying Exit Exam and the impacts and challenges it would make for the military families. You can find the results of this work on the Alaska PTA web site at: <http://www.alaskapta.org/akmilsummit2009.html>. He elaborated on the goals of these conferences this week—communication. “We are here to gather information to make things better by figuring out what is available”. The Alaska PTA has a long term interest in helping military children transition into the state and to have better experiences with the Alaska public school system.

Local TRICARE representatives gave brief overviews of how the TRICARE health care program works. TRICARE is the Department of Defense worldwide health care program for uniformed service members, retirees, and their families and survivors. TRICARE has several health plan options to meet the needs of its beneficiary population. The U.S. is broken down into three major regions for TRICARE.

Alaska is part of the western region, where the contractor is TriWest Healthcare Alliance. Active duty members and their family members are eligible for TRICARE Prime, an HMO managed care like benefit and for care at the Military Treatment facilities (hospitals and clinics) at the major installations. Reserve component families are eligible for a TRICARE Prime benefit when the service member is deployed and may buy into a TRICARE standard-like benefit (TRICARE Reserve Select) when the service member returns home. Retired service members and their families can enroll for a TRICARE Prime benefit or use TRICARE Standard. Over 65 retirees are eligible for TRICARE for Life, where TRICARE is a second payer to Medicare. For a more in-depth explanation of TRICARE visit <http://www.tricare.mil/>. In Fairbanks the office is located in the Bassett Hospital. Denise Goldstein, provider field rep and co-located with referral management system.

“For those who are paying for TRICARE for Life, where TRICARE is a second payer to Medicare, the real challenge is to find a doctor who will accept Medicare. “

Local representatives of the VA from both the benefits and the healthcare arenas gave overview presentations. Information on basic benefits and VA eligibility can be found at www.VA.gov. While this information does not impact the active duty and National Guard and Reserve service members and their families presently, there can often be a gap in providing the information on benefits when they separate from service or return from deployment. It is important to get this information out in as many venues as possible to reduce this gap. The VA in Alaska is trying innovative techniques to help veterans in rural areas, including a pilot program that provides reimbursement for travel costs for VA health care and a mail order pharmacy. The goal of this pilot program was to maximize primary care for rural veterans. When the program began it was a preauthorized 6 month program. Lab and radiology were not included. The pilot program will operate for one year based on funding.

One challenge to the VA program is getting more veterans to register for VA benefits. If more veterans were identified, then more resources could possibly be built or provided. Alaska has the greatest number of veterans per capita of all the states. The highest concentration of eligible veterans is in the Anchorage bowl. 4000 registered for health care in Fairbanks. Alaska does not have a free standing VA hospital. March of 2010 will have a site in Juneau. Site care is provided in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Kenai and Matsu. Purchase care from local community based on needs of the vets. Inpatient care for Anchorage bowl is at Providence, in Fairbanks is FMH. Elmendorf is building new VA facility. For rural health care, a team of care managers travel to seven areas used for TBI and Suicide prevention, eligibility information, and education presentations. They travel with National Guard yellow ribbon.

Sessions by City

Fairbanks Meeting - October 13, 2009

Tom Moyer, Interior Regional Director, spoke on behalf of U.S. Senator Mark Begich. Sen. Begich is actively advocating for the military by serving on the Armed Services committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee in the Senate. The Senator has a long standing interest in military families and understands because his wife is also involved and from a military family.

Althea St. Martin, Staff to Senator Murkowski - made comments to the group on behalf of Senator Lisa Murkowski, and then a video of the Senator was played. Senator Murkowski spoke about the new programs for the welfare of the military families. She talked about the Stryker families issues – especially in light of the extended time of their deployment. Secretary of Army and Defense met with families in Fairbanks and rules were reassessed and sometimes rewritten; lessons learned were captured and helped with the expanded programs we have today. She asked where do we go today? We need to learn from you, through these meetings, what is working, and what more we need to do.



Senator John Coghill

The military presence has grown and impacted the interior of Alaska. Clear Air Force station built up and he went to school with many of those who helped build it. Eielson was called 26 mile at that time. Ladd Field, had a huge impact on the community. People love it here and retire here. Children are his biggest concern – it is the kids that really get deployed, being pulled out of friendships and changing schools. He hopes the Interstate Compact will ease transfers for students. How the compact helps the youngsters that get “deployed” into new schools. Friendship and support are important. Anything we can do is important. This compact attempts to address these issues. It is being looked at in other areas and will continue to become a better model. As the compact goes forward from the education standard are we putting together our best foot? We need to keep track of what is going on. By being aware of what is going on, we can and should be a leader in this. In closing he said let’s not create a circumstance where the different support systems pits one group of military folks against another. As you see them in total, we need to make sure we

are fair and evenhanded between branches; guard and regular military are going to have different needs. The Air Guard has become a regular military in so many ways. If we bring them up to a pedestal and then push them over, they fall pretty hard. Honor them, but let's honor them by not immortalizing them.

Leslie Rick, Family Life Education, Eielson AFB Airman & Family Readiness Center

This is the year for the Air Force Family. They are being proactive in helping military families by implementing programs to help community leaders help military families, such as 'Teacher-A' which provides educators with insights on what it means to be a child with a deployed parent. There are 1006 students on Eielson. \$1.3 million grant to FNSBSD – for 3 years for 5 schools with a small military population. How great for the students of the military; when we build them up the entire community is built. Leslie talked about where the money would be applied in order that the students are given the same opportunities as other students in Alaska. We need to foster community and this money will help support that. As an Air Force base we have 3 FNSBSD schools on the Base. We have parenting university, an opportunity for parents to come out and partner with the schools and they get an opportunity to learn teaching and parenting skills. Bring civilian people onto base and see what happens on Eielson. Firemen and dentists are also out in the schools. FNSBSD will have a hiring fair on Eielson, and that way possibly those in the military could work in the schools on base. In 2011 there will be school liaisons on the base schools.

Joan York and Lynda Goodwin, Army School Liaison.

Their job is connecting family, school and community. We help with registration, policy, transitions, home school information, post secondary information, referrals for child counseling and other things, including a free on-line tutoring services where you can get help in whatever you need help with. One of the things we do is military life consultants – they can be reached by families and deal with problems with deployment and schools. School liaisons work for the installation commander and coordinate with the school districts that serve the installation. They defined their job as connecting the family, the school and the community.

Cheri Weber, Deployment Readiness Manager

She works with family members and soldiers as they prepare for deployment. She helps to make sure the remaining parent can take care of the family by providing them tools to be better equipped to care for the family. When the soldier gets back there can be predictable patterns such as a honeymoon stage and conflict, this training helps them through that. The welcome center in building 3401 is a one stop shop. People who come in are no longer searching all over the building trying to find services. We partnered with DYFS. EFP (family with special needs - learning disability; Financial readiness program, budget; Family advocacy program; New family program, parenting classes; Anger management program; Relocation readiness, to help with transition to and from; Army family team building, a forum for families - week-long process for families to bring issues to Garrison; Employment readiness; Teen hire program; Outreach services, to go out to the community and let the community know what is available to the military families that do not live on the installations.

Michelle Benjamin, Army One Source

Army One Source (which is different from the purple Military One Source program) is charged with recruiting community resources and service providers that want to connect with Army families. They add these resources to the list used by information and referral specialists at the installations or at the state Joint Family Support Coordinator's office to help get Army personnel in touch with the services they need.

Anchorage Meeting - October 14, 2009

Greg Kaplan, Staff for Sen. Murkowski

Brought remarks and then the video was played with Sen. Murkowski's message.

Susanne Fleek, Representing U.S. Senator Begich

Ms. Fleck reiterated Senator Begich's current support of the military and for the work of the attendees.

Ward Hinger, Representing Alaska Governor Parnell

Mr. Hinger conveyed the Governor's disappointment that he could not attend. Governor Parnell is most interested in the dialogues coming out of these conferences. The impact of long deployments cannot and will not be ignored by the Governor's office.

State Senator Bill Wielechowski

Senator Wielechowski is appreciative of what the military means to the State. Alaska is the second state to have a Declaration of Armor to show respect and gratitude for those who have been killed in action. "The military is really a part of our Alaska family and an economic driver".

Representative Nancy Dahlstrom

The joining of Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base is a positive event for the community. Sharing services will save money. With these conferences, duplication of services is apparent and can be addressed for future savings.

Josh Temple, Representing Alaska Sen. Charlie Huggins was also present.

Colonel Billy P. Cecil II, Deputy Commander for the 3rd Medical Group, Elmendorf AFB

The Elmendorf hospital was voted the Best Air Force Hospital in the nation for 2007 and 2008. "We are about the patients. For us, that is what we focus on and rightfully so. That is what we are here for." The hospital is self-sufficient. It can withstand an earthquake, close its air vents in case of a volcanic eruption and it has its own water and electricity supply. Multiple construction projects are progressing for the facility including a 'Fisher House' which will accommodate visiting veterans, family of patients or persons from outside the area who are undergoing medical treatment.

"We are about the patients. For us, that is what we focus on and rightfully so. That is what we are here for."

- Col. Billy P. Cecil II

Colonel Marc A. Luiken, Vice Commander, Eleventh Air Force, Elmendorf Air Force Base

He serves as chief advisor to the Commander in executing the air component mission in Alaska and focal point for implementing command decisions, plans and policies. He assists the commander in ensuring operational readiness of the Eleventh Air Force and subordinate active and reserve forces, comprised of 9,217 active duty and 1,921 guard personnel. Col. Luiken elaborated on the impact the military life has on children with frequent moves and frequent separations due to deployment or other job-related assignments.

George Vakalis, Municipal Manager for the Municipality of Anchorage, Representing Mayor Dan Sullivan
Mr. Vakalis served 28 years in the Army, including service in Vietnam. He appreciates the military presence and is grateful for such a supportive community. Military families are what hold the military together; they sacrifice as much as the military men and women. "No matter how difficult it was to be deployed, the one

thing I always knew was that my family was taken care of.” ...“Alaskans take care of their military...it’s the word love. They love their military”.

Marc Derosier, Elmendorf Family Program Director

The Family Programs office oversees programs such as financial counseling, relocation and welcome workshops for children that relocate. The biggest issue is dealing with relationships, particularly those having to do with deployments. They realize the importance of leveraging community assets. “The more we are partnering and collaborating, the better off we will be”.

Jena Bienia, Elmendorf School Liaison Officer

Ms. Bienia has been working at Elmendorf Family Support for 22 years and has recently taken the job of School Liaison officer. She looks forward to the challenge. “I do whatever I can do to help military members and their families”.

“No matter how difficult it was to be deployed, the one thing I always knew was that my family was taken care of.”

- George Vakalis

Brian Griggs, Director of Youth Education Support Services

“I am fortunate to serve military personnel and their families. We are dedicated to programs for students in transition.”

Kodiak Meeting – October 16, 2009

Senator Murkowski’s video was presented to audience.

Shawna Thoma, representing **U.S. Senator Begich**

Ms. Thoma discussed the military-related committees on which Senator Begich serves and conveyed the Senator’s resolve to continue as an advocate for military families.

Doug Letch, representing Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Senate President

He has a great appreciation for the military. Kodiak is a caring community that supports its Coast Guard and National Guard population and is proud of its relationship with the military.

Captain Jessie Moore, Integrated Support Command for U.S. Coast Guard in Kodiak

As commanding officer of Integrated Support Command, Kodiak, Moore is responsible for overseeing a 21,000 acre semi-isolated complex. The first question Coast Guard members ask when transferring to Kodiak is “What can you provide for my family”. He is always happy to say that there is a lot to offer in Kodiak. As a ‘ship driver’ by trade he understands that community support is vital – and Kodiak is exceptionally supportive.

Vanessa Bryant, Family Resource Specialist and Retired Coast Guard member

To be stationed in Kodiak, families have to go through special screenings to determine if they can handle the harsh conditions. In spite of the screening they still get people with Post Traumatic Stress – triggered under a delayed reaction. There is only one psychologist and one psychiatrist to serve the entire community of Kodiak. They have extremely limited resources in comparison to the Air Force and Army facilities in Anchorage or Fairbanks. However, they do have multiple programs ranging from ADHD support groups to substance abuse, suicide prevention and employee assistance programs.

Gina Mozola represented the Kodiak TRICARE Service Center and Msgt. Jason Johnson reviewed the programs offered by Alaska National Guard office.

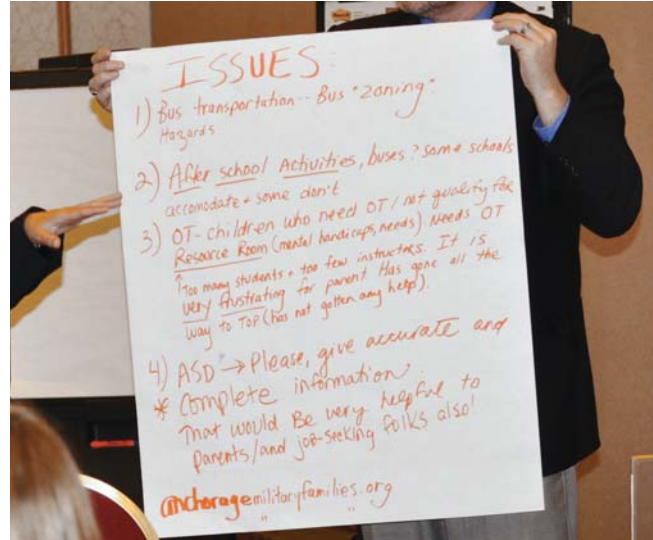
Discussion Group Feedback

What Is Working – What's Not – Where are the Holes

Fairbanks Group Feedback

What Is Working

- ASYMCA, National Military Family Association, MOAA – working well and have the numbers to prove it.
- Family Readiness Support Assistance (FRSA)
- Military establishment involvement in helping families quickly step up and get involved in new school situations i.e. the school liaisons.
- Networking among service providers to understand array of goals and services – getting connected.
- Support of State and Federal government



What's Not Working

- There is insufficient incentive for TRICARE providers in rural areas – these are folks who do not take Medicare either and TRICARE fees are predicated upon Medicare fee structure.
- There is a need for more VA travel benefits i.e. paying mileage for veterans to access VA facilities.
- Programs have a lack of trust and lack of funding.
- No central location for needed information – need to get out information about Military One Source.
- Military personnel tend to wait until they are in a crisis mode to get help – for fear of professional repercussions.
- There is a difficulty in navigating Benefit Systems.
- Programs that are specific to only one branch of service. Programs need to be 'Purple' in nature – equally available to all services.
- Marketing of this conference. Getting information to PTA and Military Family members was difficult.
- Relaying information to military families and educating the civilian community i.e. school teachers.
- Communication systems – getting the information to properly filter from source to commanders, to officers, to enlisted to families.
- Financial Management emphasis. Basic Life Skills including Fiscal responsibility should begin by being taught in the elementary school system.
- System for promoting extra-curricular participation for transient students.

Holes:

- Communicate information and services available to those who need it. Getting the information from the commanders to the servicemen then to the families proves unsuccessful. This also goes back to a central communication hub.
- Finance Management should starts in schools to training military families.
- Education in Basic Life Skills should become more of a part of regular education.
- They need actions to support children in school and have student groups for more student involvement.
- Duplication in services was also a complaint.

Anchorage Group Feedback

What Is Working

- Wounded Warrior and Wounded Survivor Programs
- Heroes at Home Program – a support program enforcing that parents are the first teachers –has already affected 80 families on Fort Richardson. Monthly play groups get parents involved to create a family-to-family connection and a welcoming atmosphere.
- Access to school system and school liaison roles, for parents
- General Leadership Meetings held with school officials each month, allowing airing of concerns that are not being met at the teacher/principal level.

What's Not Working

- Communicating between service and program providers with those they wish to serve.
- Waiting for a 'crisis' mode before seeking information.
- Concerns about children who live just outside the bus service boundaries walking to school in cold, dark, or critter-potential conditions.
- Appropriate placement of special needs children. There are too many students with diverse and special problems and not enough teachers in these specialties.
- Information on the impact on children of multiple deployments vis-à-vis long deployments.
- Options for deployed family members interaction, especially for those not living on an installation.
- Communicating accurate information to parents, job seekers, through the CARE Team (Integrated Delivery System for the Elmendorf Community) www.AnchorageMilitaryFamilies.org.

Holes:

- School bus transportation home from after school activities for those living on the base/post.
- Education on all aspects of military life to families of National Guard troops who are deployed
- Wounded Warrior and Wounded Survivor programs - are they neglecting children and/or parent concerns?
- Educating the school officials in recognizing and dealing with unique situations of military family students.
- Making programs, like the ASYMCA more available to military families – particularly National Guard

Kodiak Group Feedback

What Is Working

- "211" number is a great resource.
- This conference: It brought great information and the participants learned a lot.

What's not Working

- The term 'Purple', referring to the combined branches of the military, was unknown.
- Information does not get to the families. "Informed families are happy families". Those attending did not know about the availability of teleconferencing with a Psychiatrist- the new TRICARE TRIAP program.
- The Coast Guard has a large enough facility on Kodiak and should have a resident Psychiatrist.
- Resources are limited.

Holes:

- There is a need for expanding the network to disseminate information.
- More conferences like this one would be useful. It was suggested that there be specific-theme workshops.
- The conference needs to be better advertised in the community with a more clearly stated mission, and it should last longer than a single day.
- There should be enhanced behavioral programs for children.
- There needs to be a better way of getting information through the chain of command to the families.
- There needs to be education of the civilian community to better understand 'deployment'.
- Concerns regarding leave time, professional items weight allowances, and retaining in-home child care providers were expressed.

Conclusions and Next Steps

1. Communication: Getting pertinent information to families was a recurring theme. The family members attending the conferences were unaware of many of the services and programs available to them. They are aware of difficulty of such information filtering through the chain of command. E-mail contact was suggested as a beginning to open the doors of communication.

2. Educate the Community: Less than one percent of this nation's population is in the military. To many the system is just 'strange'. Military families move three times more often than the average. Children are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems due to deployment and/or frequent relocation. Teaching the local schools' staff how to deal with specific issues relating to the military child would be helpful. Support groups for children with deployed parents could be initiated as an after-school program. Educating community leaders and resource providers could leverage the dissemination of military specific programs and resources to help those they are already helping.

3. Nation-wide Education Consistencies: Our children's education is of primary concern. The inconsistencies of education quality and class requirements – particularly in relation to graduation – can be a nightmare for a family relocating to a new community. The Interstate Compact On Educational Opportunities for Military Children and its commission are a step in the right direction.

4. Central Source of Information: Having a central information source with paths to all information and resources would be helpful. So many wait until a 'crisis' to begin seeking help or resources or information, and don't know then where to begin. Make sure families know about Military One Source as a start.

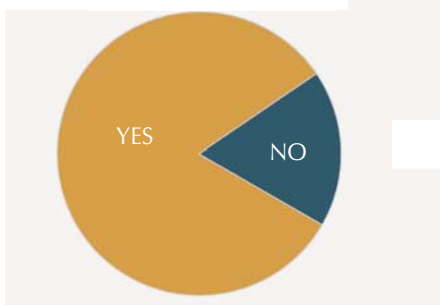
5. More Purple Programs: Purple is a term used to describe a neutral position, rather than allegiance to one military service; concerning all military branches. Having programs that are universal to all services would be advantageous. It would also promote equal quality and quantity of resources.

6. Duplication of Services: Many of the services and programs provided overlap. The service providers were often unaware that there were others with similar or even identical missions and programs – costly in time and energy and expensive. This conference provided a beginning of communication among the providers and hopefully a feeling for the needs and concerns of those whom they serve.

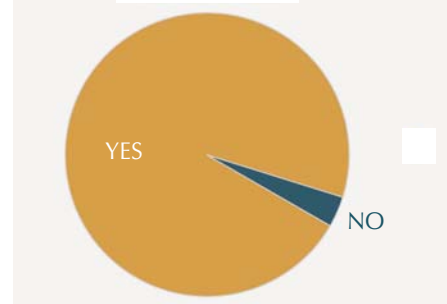
Attendee Feedback

- It (the conference) provided information that was unknown to the community and military families. It provided a net working opportunity.
- This summit was extraordinary! I had no idea of all the resources available.
- There was more avenues of information presented than I expected.
- Now is the time for pulling together and creating innovative change to make a difference for families.
- Briefings in the AM and then more time in the afternoon for breakout sessions, this was a very very good forum.
- An opportunity to present this program to military families should be provided with the strong representation that was present today.
- I always knew the Coast Guard was 'different' but I heard a lot today to confirm that. At the risk of sounding selfish..perhaps we can focus a bit more next time.
- We need to come together more often. Have a lot of hurting military families with increased deployments. Alaska is a wonderful but challenging place.
- Needs to be more than one day. More workshops.

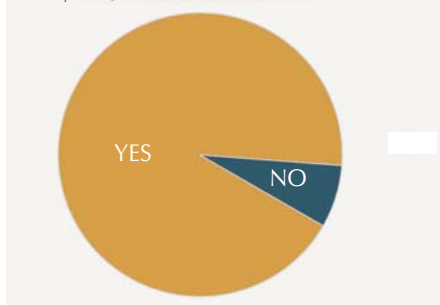
Was the information provided NEW to you?



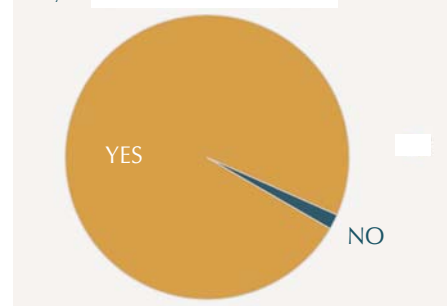
Was the Alaska PTA Military Helpful?



Would you attend another Summit like this in the future?



Will you use or share this information with others?



Alaska PTA main web site

www.alaskapta.org

Alaska PTA - Military Summit

www.alaskapta.org/akmilsummit2009.html

This contains documents posted for only the summit. Contains research papers, results of previous AKPTA work and PowerPoints for the summit. For the latest up to date information be sure that you visit their home website as changes may have occurred since the presentation.

National Military Family Association

www.MilitaryFamily.org

Military Officers Association of America, MOAA

www.MOAA.org

SOS, Survivor Outreach Services

www.mwrarmyalaska.com/acs/sos

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

www.va.gov

Alaska Armed Services YMCA

www.asymcaofalaska.com

TriWest Healthcare Alliance, TRICARE West Region

www.triwest.com

Military OneSource

www.militaryonesource.com

Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs

www.veterans.alaska.gov

Alaska National Guard

www.akguard.com

2010

Military Dialogue Convention

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November 5, 6, 2010

BP Exploration Building

For additional information contact the Alaska
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1-888-822-1699 akpta@alaska.net

