



**PRESS RELEASE
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Alaska National Guard Warrior and Family Services evolves to better assist Guardsmen

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The Alaska National Guard Warrior and Family Services program is rolling out new ways to reach out to service members and their families.

The program seeks to educate and empower service members and families, help them to develop skills, and encourage behaviors that strengthen self-reliance, promote retention, and enhance readiness within the Alaska National Guard. Warrior and Family Services continues to expand, despite budget decreases, and has recently unveiled new communication tools and partnerships.

“We’re always looking for creative ways to reach our service members and families,” said Lt. Col. Kay Spear-Budd. “We rolled out our web page hosted by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and hope to continue to grow it into a self-help ‘Google of the Guard’ for resources available to our service members and families in Alaska.”

Warrior and Family Services is comprised of more than a dozen programs, ranging from transition assistance to sexual assault prevention, in order to meet the unique needs of service members and families. The services are at no cost to service members and help is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, through the Family Assistance Center at (907) 428-6663 or 888-917-3608 (outside Anchorage).

“We are the only 24-hour Military Family Assistance Center in Alaska and we can assist any military component, not just National Guard and Reserves,” said Spear-Budd.

“The 24-hour emergency number allows us to provide resources and referrals when a service member or family needs them,” explained Spear-Budd. “More importantly, it provides a level of security to a service member who, during a deployment or in response to a natural disaster, needs to concentrate on the mission at hand and know that there is a resource available to his or her family when they need assistance.”

In addition to existing collaboration between NG resource programs such as Resiliency, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention, Military Family Life Consultants, and Education Services, WFS spear-headed the development of the Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition, part of the national Joining Community Forces initiative.

The mission of Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition is to ensure that service members, veterans and families are supported and cared for within their communities through a collaborative effort. The coalition focuses on statewide coordination, community outreach and education.

On its own, WFS provided transitional, emotional and financial support. As part of the coalition, which includes behavioral health, faith, legal and education services, WFS can provide direct referrals for many more services such as addiction recovery, mediation, and youth and adult fellowship groups.

Spear-Budd encourages Guardsmen to access the many services that Warrior and Family Services offers through the phone and web or by visiting the nearest Family Assistance Center. There are six locations throughout Alaska to include Bethel, Juneau, Fairbanks, Fort Greely, Matanuska-Susitna and Anchorage.

“Family Assistance Centers and our webpage are accessible and welcoming points of entry for our service members and families to reach out to us for help,” added Spear-Budd.

Several coalition and WFS events are scheduled for September. The National Guard Armory in Wasilla will host an outreach event for organizations in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough who are interested in supporting SMVF, September 3 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event will offer an overview of the coalition, complimentary lunch, and opportunity to network with like-minded community members. For organizations who are already part of the coalition, or those who may be interested in joining, the annual coalition meeting will be held at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage, September 8 starting at 8:30 a.m.

A family financial fitness fair will be held at building 600 on JBER, September 15 from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. It will focus on training for teens, financial counseling and fraud alert. The National Guard Armory in Fairbanks will host a hiring fair on September 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A Back-to-School blast targeting after school children’s programs and activities will be held at the National Guard Armory in Wasilla, September 25 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

More information about Alaska National Guard Warrior and Family Services and the Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition can be found at www.dmva.alaska.gov/Family. For more information about joining the coalition, please contact Lt. Col. Kay Spear-Budd via email kay.l.spearbudd.mil@mail.mil or phone 907-428-6680.

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Lt. Col. Kay Spear-Budd, the state family program director, speaks with JP Ouellette, program administrator and family mediator for the Conflict Resolution Center, during an Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition workshop held at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage, April 16. The workshop included presentations on the Partners in Care and Adverse Childhood Experiences programs and afforded participants the opportunity to network and learn more about the coalition. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O’Neal Dresel)

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Alaska National Guard Warrior and Family Services and Army OneSource join members from across the community at the Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition workshop held at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage, April 16. The workshop included presentations on the Partners in Care and Adverse Childhood Experiences programs and afforded participants the opportunity to network and learn more about the coalition. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel)