

ARMY FAMILY COVENANT (AFC)

- **BLUF:** The AFC communicates the Army's commitment to provide Soldiers and Families a quality of life commensurate with their service.
- In October 2007, Army leadership unveiled the AFC. It communicates the Army's commitment to provide Soldiers and Families a quality of life commensurate with their service and recognizes the increasing sacrifices that Army Families are making every day.
- The AFC shows commitment to Family readiness by:
 - 1) Standardizing and funding existing Family programs and services;
 - 2) Improving Soldier and Family housing;
 - 3) Increasing accessibility and quality of health care;
 - 4) Ensuring excellence in schools, youth services, and child care;
 - 5) Expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members.
- As of January 2008, all Army installations have signed a Family Covenant.

SOLDIER AND FAMILY ACTION PLAN (SFAP)

- **BLUF:** SFAP is the roadmap the Army is using to fulfill its commitment to Soldiers and Families. SFAP goes hand in hand with the AFC, which is the document that outlines the Army's commitment to providing Soldiers and Families a quality of life commensurate with their voluntary service and daily sacrifices.
- SFAP is divided into 7 sections: Family Programs and Services; Health Care; Soldier and Family Housing; Child, Youth and School Services; Education, Careers, and Libraries; Recreation, Travel and BOSS; and Communities and Marketplace. It details approximately 112 tasks, along with supporting actions and milestones to improve support to Soldiers and Families.
- In 2008, the Army made significant progress on the SFAP and fulfilling the Army's commitment to Soldiers and their Families.

Family Programs & Services:

- Supported 249 enduring Army National Guard Family Assistance Centers to assist Soldiers and Families access support services regardless of their geographic location.
- Enhanced Army OneSource to provide all Soldiers and their Families access to standardized services, programs, and support regardless of their proximity to a military installation. Army OneSource also provides Guard and Reserve Soldiers and their Families access to the Yellow Ribbon Program, which ensures they have access to necessary information and support before, during, and after a deployment.
- Continued Family Readiness Groups hourly child care to reduce the unit fund burden.
- Funded \$8M for exceptional Family member respite care. Funds support Families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program with their medical or education needs.
- Supported 34 Soldier Family Assistance Centers for Warriors in Transition in the vicinity of medical facilities to provide administrative and financial assistance; coordinate government entitlements, benefits, and services; information and assistance in obtaining non-governmental benefits and services; and donations management.

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Health Care:

- Created 35 Warrior Transition Units to support more than 9,000 Soldiers, with the singular focus of warrior healing and support to Army Families.
- Met access standards for 90% of patient appointments in FY08. This includes acute, routine and specialty appointments.
- Implemented enhancements to the TRICARE Reserve Select Program, authorizing TRICARE Standard coverage for more than 500K eligible members of the Selected Reserve and their Family members as well as lowering the co-payment by 44% for individuals and 29% for Family members.
- Provided Advanced PTSD Training (short course) to 350 Army Mental Health Providers and a web based course to over 600 Army Mental Health Providers.

Soldier and Family Housing:

- The Barracks Modernization Program funded \$9.4B for permanent party barracks through FY07 and funded an additional \$2.2B in FY08 for permanent party barracks, construction renovation, and modernization.
- The Training Barracks Upgrade Program has funded \$1.37B to improve training barracks for Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers through 2007.
- The Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) has improved on-post housing. Through the initiative, more than 80,000 homes at 38 installations have been privatized. Close to 16,000 homes have been built and more than 12,000 renovated. By the end of 2011, RCI will provide an additional 89,000 homes at 45 installations.
- Five on-post apartment residential communities are approved for single senior Soldiers at Forts Irwin, Drum, Bragg, Stewart, and Bliss. A total of 1,396, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments will be provided.

Child, Youth & School (CYS) Services:

- Increased CYS operating hours and respite care from 5 to 16 hours per child/per month to support deployment cycles.
- Eliminated CYS registration fees and reduced other program fees to ease the financial burden on Families.
- Increased CYS support for Warriors in Transition, such as no-cost hourly child care for Families and caregivers during medical appointments.

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Education, Careers & Libraries:

- 35 states now provide in-state tuition rates to military Families.
- Enhanced the Army Employment Readiness Program, providing job search assistance, job skills training, and information and referral services to Soldiers and their Family members.
- More than 7,000 spouses were hired through the Army Spouse Employment Program in FY07 and more than 23,400 since the program's inception.
- Provided over 30 online library resources including eBooks, career information and practice test sites for Soldiers and Families in libraries and via three portals, Army One Source, AKO, and Military OneSource. These resources were used over 1.5M times in 2008.
- FY07 - sent 135 different deployment and redeployment support books and CDs to each library, ACS, FRG, and SFAC. In FY08 sent these same titles to 235 enduring National Guard Family Assistance Centers.

Recreation, Travel & BOSS:

- Provided sports, fitness, recreation, and library services to deployed military personnel.
- Created the Wounded Warrior Sports Program, in conjunction with the WCAP, to provide goal-oriented sports program for physically disabled Soldiers remaining on active duty.
- Expanded recreation programs access by adapting/increasing hours of operation, partnering with CYS Services to provide on-site child care services and delivering non-facility-based programs to meet the needs of the diverse Army Family.
- Developed the Warrior Adventure Quest program.
- Funded \$20M for commercial grade, heavy use exercise equipment in all FMWR fitness facilities.

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Communities & Marketplace:

- Army programmed 11 new commissary projects with a \$160M investment over the next 3 years.
- Defense Commissary Agency brought the commissary benefit to the Guard and Reserve through 11 remote case lot sales in 2008; serving 5,000 customers.
- AAFES Associates deployed mobile field exchanges in support of 400 National Guard members battling wildfires in California and Yosemite National Park. They also supported deployed customers in OIF/OEF, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Funding:

- In FY09, programs initiated in FY07 and FY08 will continue. In FY09, Family Programs received \$1.19B in base funding and requested an additional \$360M in supplemental funds to continue our commitment to the AFC and enhance QOL programs in support of Families and Soldiers during persistent conflict.

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Q: What do you view as the most essential quality of life need?

A: In 2007, Secretary Geren and GEN Casey asked Soldiers and Families to express their concerns about the Army's support systems. Their concerns consistently fell into 6 areas: Family programs and services, physical and mental healthcare, housing, education, child and youth services, and employment opportunities for spouses. As a result, in October 2007 the Army Family Covenant was unveiled. The Covenant recognizes the commitment and increasing sacrifices our Families make every day and commits the Army to provide them a quality of life commensurate with their service. The needs addressed in the Army Family Covenant represent the voices of Soldiers and their Families; they spoke and the leadership listened. Each facet of the Covenant is interwoven in the community, and that is what creates a supportive environment for Soldiers and their Families to live and thrive. Stating that one quality of life need is more essential than another creates a greater imbalance in the support system.

Q: What are the greatest challenges the Army faces in making good on the promises made by the Army Family Covenant, and what are you doing to overcome them?

A: The greatest challenge associated with fulfilling the promises made in the Army Family Covenant is maintaining a predictable level of funding to support the All Volunteer Force. Army is committed to providing Soldiers and Families a full range of essential services to support readiness and retention and enhance Family resiliency. The Family Covenant is our promise to provide a strong supportive environment, and our Families want to trust and believe in the Covenant and the Army Leadership's commitment. To overcome this challenge, we will balance our requirements within the Army to provide for our Soldiers and their Families and continue to focus in specific areas. The Army made a concerted effort to increase funding for Family support programs because we have to take care of our Soldiers and their Families in an era of persistent conflict.

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Q: The AFC seems to focus on Families, what is being done to address Single Soldier issues?

A: The Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program enhances the morale and welfare of single Soldiers, increases Soldier retention, and sustains combat readiness through planned and executed community service, recreation and leisure events, and identifies well-being issues for resolution. BOSS is designed to be the collective voice of single Soldiers for quality of life issues. BOSS also provides a variety of activities before, during, and after deployment designed to maintain the morale of single Soldiers affected by increased operational tempo and deployment stress. BOSS directly supports the Army's strategic initiative to achieve re-balance by 2011 and aligns with the Soldier and Family Action Plan.