Military Family Community Capacity Building Efforts via the Military Families Learning Network

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Research and evidenced-based professional development through engaged online communities

www.extension.org/militaryfamilies

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Friday Field Notes Blog
The Community Capacity Building concentration area is working to leverage the community capacity that exists in the Cooperative Extension Service to enhance military family resilience.

Recent meetings with relevant stakeholders indicated a strong commitment to:

- Leverage extension’s communication and dissemination systems
- Capitalize on the existing community capacity in the many extension programs in every county in the US
- Build awareness among land grant universities and their extension systems about military families and community support systems
Definitions – Community Capacity Building

• The goal of community capacity building is for formal systems and informal networks to work together to achieve positive results for community members.

• Often, people in the community initiate change. The ability to create change increases as these people, who are part of informal networks, collaborate with formal systems.
Challenges of Geographically Dispersed

- In recent years the military has reshaped its deployment methods in order to adapt to the demands of disparate global conflicts.
- In the course of Operation Desert Storm, Reserve soldiers comprised just 25% of deployed servicemen (Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1992, 1991).
- Due to the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the subsequent troop surge of 2007, this number of deployed Reserve and National Guard soldiers accumulated to 40-50% of deployed servicemen (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009).
- At no other time in history has such a large population of Reserve and National Guard units been deployed.
- This adaptation in deployment methods is significant because families of these soldiers are located in geographically dispersed civilian communities, not traditional military dispersed civilian communities, not traditional military installations where important services to support the stresses of deployment are readily available.
Challenges of Geographically Dispersed

• For the National Guard and Reserves service member, their primary occupation is not military, and some families might not consider themselves military families.

• Geographically dispersed from others in the same circumstances (not necessarily located near a military installation).

• Family identity changes from civilian to military with one letter or phone call.
Capacity Pools of Cooperative Extension

- Youth Development
- Agriculture
- Leadership Development
- Natural Resources
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Community & Economic Development
Our Cooperative Extension System can *thrive* in the role of Force Multiplier in Department of Defense missions to build family readiness and resilience.