



Reserve Spouse Perceptions of Deployment Support Practices in 2008

Overview of Study

Open-ended questions were included in the 2008 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses (*RCSS 2008*), which was conducted December 10, 2007, through February 26, 2008. Completed surveys were received from 13,157 eligible respondents.¹ The overall weighted response rate for eligible respondents, corrected for nonproportional sampling, was 29%.

The *RCSS 2008* included three open-ended questions that asked Reserve component spouses to reflect on their experiences while their husband/wife was deployed, to assess which programs and services helped them cope with deployment, and to identify additional ways the military could help them deal with deployment.

Specifically, participants of the survey were asked:

- “Tell us about the deployment-related support programs, activities, and practices you have experienced that you would recommend the military continue to provide for families.” (Q37)
- “How could the military have provided better support for you and/or your family during deployments?” (Q38)
- “How can the military provide better support for you and your family?” (Q79)

Open-ended questions follow a qualitative research approach to collect subjective details from survey takers on a specific area. Of the 13,157 completed surveys, there were 2,847 responses to Q37, 2,922 responses to Q38, and 8,459 responses to Q79.

Comments were analyzed qualitatively to identify the major themes and ideas conveyed across the responses. No attempt was made to quantify the number of comments made in reference to a specific theme. Findings may be viewed as a perspective on spouses’ views of deployment-related support, but are not a statistical report on performance of deployment-related support systems. The order of presentation does not imply that any one theme is more important than any other. For each theme, supporting comments from the comment fields are included. The supporting comments do not include every comment made on a particular theme; rather they exemplify the themes in the words of the

¹ The target population for the *RCSS 2008* consisted of spouses of Reserve component members from the Selected Reserve in Reserve Unit, Active Guard/Reserve (AGR/FTS/AR; Title 10 and Title 32), or Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) programs from the Army National Guard (ARNG), U.S. Army Reserve (USAR), U.S. Navy Reserve (USNR), U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (USMCR), Air National Guard (ANG), U.S. Air Force Reserve (USAFR), and U.S. Coast Guard Reserve (USCGR) who (1) had at least six months of service at the time the questionnaire was first fielded and (2) were below flag rank. In addition, respondents must have indicated being married to a Reserve component member at the time of the survey in order to remain eligible.

Reserve component spouses. Although the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Reserve component spouses, they do provide insights into specific issues and ideas for further research.

Summary of Major Themes

Overall, a number of themes were recurrent throughout the comments from the *RCSS 2008*. The majority of these themes were similar to the themes found in the *RCSS 2006* survey. The most common themes were providing emotional and practical support to spouses and their families in the form of military and community support groups; disseminating accurate and stable information via accessible channels, such as newsletters and the Internet; supporting communications between Reservists and their spouses; and providing better access to and training for medical benefits, including TRICARE.

Emotional and Practical Support for Spouses and Families. Similar to the 2006 survey, some Reserve component spouses indicated their reliance on military-sponsored family support activities; whereas other spouses indicated they were unaware of such services. Spouses also indicated support from the community and other non-military sources. Spouses indicated the importance of community-sponsored activities during deployment and also indicated joining with other spouses to obtain outside support. Spouses also indicated needing assistance with household duties and child care during deployment.

Dissemination of Information. Similar to the 2006 survey, Reserve component spouses were appreciative of newsletters and briefings, which provided them with information about their husband/wife's deployment and upcoming events. Receiving phone calls on a regular basis, attending briefings, and contacting helpful personnel were also important and useful to spouses. Spouses indicated that improving information channels and increasing communication options between Reservists and their spouses would be helpful.

Medical Care and Benefits. Reserve component spouses indicated they want insurance coverage and more information on managing their insurance options prior to deployment. Some spouses indicated that they would like to have training on the use of TRICARE and others indicated they had difficulty finding providers who accept TRICARE. Spouses also indicated that they would like their husband/wife to have an option for an earlier retirement and compensation that equals their civilian pay.

How the Military Is Doing. As with the 2006 survey, a number of Reserve component spouses indicated the support they received from the military was sufficient, and some were unable to think of any examples as to how the system could be improved.

The Themes in Comments

Emotional and Practical Support for Spouses and Families

Military-Sponsored Family Support Activities

Reserve component spouses indicated their reliance on military organized meetings or events with other families of deployed members.

- *“Just getting together with the spouses is vital to survival. No one in the civilian world understands the fear of losing your spouse or the ache you feel deep in your soul when your mate is away. Children benefit by being around other children in the same situation as well.”*
– **Spouse of USNR Junior Enlisted**
- *“In the army we had a Family Readiness Group that met twice a month. Once for a meeting and once for an activity. Some of the activities included lunches, wrapping Christmas presents at the PX, Christmas party for kids/parents, and beading/jewelry-making class. It was nice to socialize with other people. The meetings brought in the Chaplin and other resources available to families while their family member was deployed.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“The base provided family days for the children of the deployed members where they were able to swim at a local tree farm, meet other children whose parents were deployed, and receive free admission to a local butterfly center.”* – **Spouse of ARG Midgrade Enlisted**

Some Reserve component spouses indicated they did not receive any support but would have liked to be contacted by the military or Family Readiness Group for support or activities. Some spouses indicated the distance contributed to the lack of support.

- *“ANY support would have been nice. As a reservist family, we are an hour from base. I did not ever get a phone call or email checking in on my family from ANYONE in my husbands unit or through our ombudsman. I was VERY disappointed with the support we got from his unit.”*
– **Spouse of USNR Junior Enlisted**
- *“There needs to be more family or spouse events to get them together. In active duty, you are exposed to other families/spouses daily, but in the reserves, you aren't always in the same town/area. Since he got out of active duty and joined the reserves, there are very few interactions with other family members. I feel it is very important to know others that may be going through the same things as you when there are activations/deployments.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Enlisted**
- *“The Family Readiness Group made no contact with me during my husband's deployment. There were no meetings, no newsletters, and no contact at all.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Junior Officer**
- *“I had NO contact from any military personnel of ANY kind to check on me, to see how I was doing or coping or if I needed anything or service. Even if I had any needs it would have been*

good to have some contact so I had a person to reach out to for help or information.” – Spouse of USNR Senior Enlisted

- *“More personal contact. Since we are not base affiliated, and sometimes the only person in our town experiencing deployment, and not easily accessible to a base or NOSC because of distance, I feel like we should have more communication and perhaps group activities with other spouses. This second deployment is as an Individual Augmentee and I am the only one in this town connected to this particular deployment. There are not any other wives I can call or meet for a meal or even email to share experiences or difficulty with. The preparing this time around has been difficult because I have been left to deal with obtaining active duty ID on my own, instead of in advance like the last time. All paperwork was handled in advance when the orders came before, this time everything has been done by me or my spouse since his deployment.” – Spouse of USNR Midgrade Enlisted*

Some Reserve component spouses felt the distance from the base made it difficult for them to participate in deployment-related activities.

- *“More connection to members in the unit. Being two hours away from the reserve center and even farther from the deploying unit, I have no one in my area to talk that can relate with this deployment.” – Spouse of USNR Midgrade Enlisted*
- *“Although the Family support groups are out there ...If you live in a rural area it is not feasible to attend the meetings because of the distance or cost or weather. By rotating where the function is held would be a huge help. Also I think that there needs to be more people working the family support so that all members keep in touch a great deal of the time and do not fall through the cracks and are forgotten.” – Spouse of ARNG Senior Enlisted*
- *“Being geographically located three hours from the FRG was difficult to get the most current information. There needs to be care to National Guard families that are a distance from FRG meetings and briefings. During the deployment, rarely did any information come our way, not even in e-mail format. A strong feeling of frustration and being left out of the loop on the most current information about the unit's deployment. It was not until the last three months or so that I received the FRG newsletter... – Spouse of USMCR Senior Enlisted*
- *“Families that are not within commuting distance of the unit are pretty much [EXPLETIVE] for assistance. I'm former military and relatively independent, so that gives me an advantage in managing deployments, but both times my husband deployed I felt like I was on my own. It would have been nice to talk to my husband more. My husband deployed to Kuwait last time, so I was pretty much grateful that it wasn't Iraq. If he had deployed to Iraq again, it would placed a serious strain on our family's relationships, particularly if I and my children felt like we were on our own again due to our distance from the unit and family support group.” – Spouse of USAR Senior Enlisted*
- *“The Reserves need to figure out a way to include those families not within an hours driving distance of the drill center (especially if the Marine is reassigned to another Company AFTER being deployed). I have contact with only one other wife during deployment (and this is because we went through this during a previous deployment and got to know each other - both*

of our husbands have been reassigned AFTER being deployed and neither of us have ever heard from a key volunteer from the new Companies). I find the information and support provided to Reserve families severely lacking. I am lucky in that I have a lot of family support and am financially self-sufficient.” – Spouse of UCMCR Senior Enlisted

Reserve component spouses indicated that support groups would be helpful during deployments.

- *“Information on support groups for spouses and family. Somehow meeting other families like us would help.” – Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer*
- *“Occasional wife or family gatherings/ support groups to let you know that others are going through the same thing. Giving marriage counseling via telephone or video conference.” – Spouse of ARNG Junior Enlisted*

Support From the Community and Other Non-military Sources

Reserve component spouses indicated the importance of community-sponsored activities during deployment.

- *“I was fortunate to have my family, neighbors, friends, and church family gives me a great deal of support while my husband was gone. The company he works for also gave me a great deal of support and help. So, I don't know what the military could have done better.” – Spouse of USNR Midgrade Enlisted*

Assistance with Child Care

Reserve component spouses indicated needing child care assistance during busy or stressful times, such as a spouse's deployment.

- *“Need child care options at Reserve bases... I work full-time and it requires some business dinners and 2-3 wks of travel/ year I end up paying a lot for child care/ baby-sitting. Leaves little for just getting some free time/ night out w/out the children.” – Spouse of USAFR Junior Officer*
- *“After school care/child care. When my husband is out of town on military orders, I often have to take off from work or miss required training due to lack of adequate child care. Typically, this is not a major issue, but he has been out of town so often this year that it has had a negative impact on my work.” – Spouse of USAFR Midgrade Enlisted*
- *“It would be nice to have some drop in child care available for reservists so when we have to go grocery shopping while they are away it would be easier.” – Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer*

Assistance With Household Duties

Reserve component spouses indicated that they needed help with everyday yard work and other household chores. Reserve component spouses also indicated they would appreciate a list of places in the area where they could get such services (e.g., lawn care, 'handyman' jobs).

- *“Here is what could have helped me: a list of mechanics and handymen who could be trusted not to rip me off (on my husband's last activation - our car dealer tried to convince me I needed a new water pump to the tune of \$600), a list of dependable child care in the event my normal child care wasn't available, someone to help with big jobs around the house (cleaning garages, yard work etc.).”* – **Spouse of USAR Warrant Officer**
- *“I think a phone number for different 'handyman' type jobs that could be done by people at a discount rate would be helpful. Such as lawn mowing or plumbing.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**

Dissemination of Information

Information About Support

Reserve component spouses indicated the importance of newsletters and other information about their about support activities and events in the community.

- *“Family Resource Network was helpful. Newsletters and calls from Officers wives to check up on other wives and families. We were invited by host unit to attend family functions although our spouse was deployed. We felt part of the unit even though our spouse was not there.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Warrant Officer**
- *“Packets of information about support services are helpful. I did receive a packet about some available services. Web sites and newsletters from his deployed unit would be helpful.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“A brochure/web site outlining the support services available for spouses of reservists and how to access them. The only thing I knew about military life came from the movie Saving Private Ryan.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Junior Officer**

Some Reserve component spouses indicated they used the Military OneSource system to get support during their spouse's deployment.

- *“For me, the Military OneSource was an excellent resource while my husband was deployed. The remainder of my support came outside of the military. So I have no recommendations for providing better military support.”* – **Spouse of USNR Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“OneSource is a really great resource - maybe expand on Military OneSource. Thank you.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Enlisted**
- *“OneSource is great and I've called a few times to get counseling. I think that counseling is one of the things that should get more funding as it is very beneficial to starting or continuing*

healthy relationships not only with your spouse but within the family. Please have more support programs!” – Spouse of UCMCR Junior Enlisted

“Check in” Phone Calls

Reserve component spouses indicated that receiving regular phone calls was helpful to them.

- *“I really enjoyed having someone who called me once a week or once every 2 weeks to check up on me and my 3 daughters and this person had experience with having to raise children while her spouse was deployed” – Spouse of USAFR Senior Enlisted*
- *“We would receive a phone call once a month from a counselor just to check up on us I found that to be very comforting.” – Spouse of USAFR Midgrade Enlisted*
- *“I would receive calls from family support group asking if I were alright and asked if there was anything they could help me with. Very helpful while spouse was deployed.” – Spouse of ANG Midgrade Enlisted*
- *“I was called on a regular basis to make sure everything was alright with me and my children.” – Spouse of ARNG Junior Officer*

Reserve component spouses indicated they could have better deployment support if they had received occasional check-in phone calls to see how they were doing and whether they needed any assistance.

- *“It would have been nice if someone from his unit called just to see if I needed anything. My husband had e-mail so I was able to talk to him everyday so that was really nice but if that was not the case a phone call would have been nice.” – Spouse of ANG Junior Officers*
- *“Just let me know that as a dependant I have help available if need be. Check in once and a while to see if I need any help. Whether they can help or not is not as important as I think just a little communication...to let me know they care about my wife's deployment.” – Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer*

Briefings About the Deployment

Reserve component spouses indicated that briefings were helpful or would have been helpful to keep informed about deployment-related issues.

- *“When my husband deployed to the Middle East in 2004, my FRG provided extensive briefings, given by military personnel, with family services information (i.e., TRICARE, Military OneSource, etc.). These are vital, even for CONUS deployments” – Spouse of ARNG Midgrade Enlisted*
- *“I liked it when they would have briefings so that I could ask the questions that I needed to survive while my husband was away (i.e., health insurance questions, what to expect if something happened, benefits when he returned, etc.)” – Spouse of ARNG Junior Officer*

Reserve Spouse Perceptions of Deployment Support Practices in 2008

- *“Provide a half-day or one-day 'briefing' for spouses of the facilities and personnel available for support needs. Specifically hands-on: locating and seeing where and who the people are and what each can do for the spouse if those needs arise, including brochures, pamphlets or hand-outs.”* – **Spouse of USNR Senior Enlisted**
- *“Briefings for the wives to help understand what our husbands are going through and feeling while deployed. I wish the Army reserve made it easier transfer over to active duty. Have activities for the younger children, help understand why their other parent is gone over seas or deployed.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Junior Enlisted**
- *“I wish they would have more support for spouses. I would have appreciated briefings on what, when, where, how, and all others.”* – **Spouse of USNR Midgrade Enlisted**

Newsletters, and Pictures About the Deployment

Reserve component spouses indicated that newsletters, pictures, email, briefings, and other information about their husband/wife's deployment were helpful.

- *“Newsletters and briefings with pictures of the area were extremely helpful and made me feel like there although we weren't together I had some idea of what he was facing.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“Individual unit support is best provided through direct communication from the unit. Monthly/quarterly newsletters or e-newsletters providing only of the following: thoughts from the commander, first sergeant, promotions, moves, planned deployments, exercises, inspections, maybe a 6-month calendar, etc. An e-mailed newsletter that can be done specifically to pass on to the non-reserve spouse can help a lot.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“Newsletters from the unit provide information (& pictures!) that you might not receive from your spouse. I highly recommend those services be continued.”* – **Spouse of USAR Junior Officer**

Points of Contact and the Key Volunteer Network

Reserve component spouses indicated the importance of having access to helpful personnel.

- *“The key volunteer network for Marine Corps families was extremely helpful. They kept us informed during their training and deployment by sending us newsletters and more personal emails when needed. We were always informed of the necessary information.”* – **Spouse of USMCR Junior Enlisted**
- *“The Key volunteer network is amazing & extremely helpful! It helps doing activities with the other wives & families of the deployed troops.”* – **Spouse of USMCR Junior Enlisted**
- *“Key Volunteer Network is the single most important connection to the families of reservists...especially because the families are most likely spread out geographically and lack*

- *“I had a point of contact person via email. Because we do not live on base this was so critical for me and my family to receive all of the daily updates on my husband. She was so awesome!”*
– **Spouse of ARNG Warrant Officer**
- *“Would like a single point of contact who has information on deployment status as well as list of critical contacts in the event contact is required.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Junior Officer**

Improving Information Channels

Some Reserve component spouses indicated they did not receive a sufficient amount of information about future deployments.

- *“Information received from my spouse is unclear on when, where or if she will be sent to serve in Iraq or Afghanistan this year or not. Her training in the past several months have been in convoy security and support indicating her Air Force unit, and predator unit, might be tasked with this type of mission. If the military is wanting to provide better support, that unit and it's height headquarters should be able to provide a clearer window on when that unit is slotted to be activated. I'm not sure if this is a problem with her unit's command or higher, but let us know so we can be better prepared.”* – **Spouse of ANG Junior Enlisted**
- *“The Navy Reserve unit could provide more information about how probably a future deployment is and how long the duration might be.”* – **Spouse of USNR Senior Officer**
- *“More advanced notice of changes to deployments, missions, trips. Instead of waiting until the last minute to say he is going or not going, make up your mind and lets runs with it. It is not the going that is the problem; it is the last minute changes which don't allow for plans to be made on the home front.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Enlisted**
- *“Information, I should know as much as possible when the information is available. I ran into some attitude that I didn't get to know about length of deployment or where he was going. I should have a contact that can fill me in when my spouse is leaving for a year.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“More details about spouse leaving and returning (go and from) a deployment. Contact from spouse from deployed location and can they be contacted and how?”* – **Spouse of ANG Midgrade Enlisted**

Supporting Communication between Reservists' and Their Spouses

Reserve component spouses indicated the importance of communicating with their husband or wife while on deployment.

Reserve Spouse Perceptions of Deployment Support Practices in 2008

- *“The family support center contact told me that I was able to call my husband on the DSN line twice a week in addition to his calls to me. This was very helpful to me.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“E-mail addresses helped with the communication and connection with the deployed and those still at home”* – **Spouse of ANG Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“VTC- A monthly video with your loved one is very helpful and reassuring to see their face and know they are ok.”* – **Spouse of ANG Junior Officers**
- *“Need to continue to facilitate communication via e-mail and phone. Made a huge difference when we stayed in contact.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**

Reserve component spouses indicated their desire for the military to provide them with better opportunities to communicate with their deployed spouses. Spouses often specified the VTC as preferred methods of connection.

- *“Video teleconferencing equipment available on both ends for those of us who have PCs at home, so family members can also see each other while military spouse is away. Ability to fly space-A (CONUS) without my sponsor, if my reserve spouse/sponsor is activated, but not deployed, for more than 120 days. Thank you for your concern for those of us who support our military members from home!!”* – **Spouse of USAFR Junior Officer**
- *“We need more avenues of communication during a deployment. Other services have had access to webcams and video conferences/satellite conferences and we have never been afforded that luxury. Also, the turn around time on the mail could be a little faster. If I had more confidence in the mail system, I would send more packages.”* – **Spouse of UCMCR Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“More time for family interaction by providing use of modern technology (i.e. video conferencing).”* – **Spouse of ARG Junior Officers**

Reserve component spouses also indicated that retreats were important for reconnecting with spouses.

- *“I really like seminars and retreats that include the spouses and family...continue more of that.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Officer**
- *“Having family support specialist helped us alot. We got correct information and support immediately. I would highly recommend having these positions again. We had spouses day/evenings out that we actually continued once the soldiers returned. We had multiple briefings and coping seminars to help us. My husband and I also attended the marriage retreat after his return and got outstanding help.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Officer**
- *“Had longer time for R&R, had a family retreat with our kids to”* – **Spouse of USAR Midgrade Enlisted**

Medical Care and Benefits

Insurance Coverage and Information

Reserve component spouses indicated they would prefer to continue with TRICARE insurance coverage to prevent lapses in coverage.

- *“When spouse goes off active duty orders, please continue medical coverage for 30 days, until civilian coverage kicks in. When spouse is cut another set of orders, within a month (or a week) of the last set, please let the medical care continue without the break of coverage.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“Continue TRICARE for a period of time after deactivation”* – **Spouse of UCMCR Warrant Officer**
- *“I really appreciate the benefits we do get as a reserve family. TRS was invaluable before we activated. In the past we have had difficulty getting our orders back to back. My spouse would do a year of mandatory service then would have to do his regular reserve time before getting more mandatory service. This lapse caused a frustrating break in our medical/dental coverage. Sometimes the break would only be a few days or a month. Allowing TRICARE benefits 6 months beyond helped greatly with the transitions. Thank you.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**

Reserve component spouses recommended better training and instruction on the use of TRICARE.

- *“Make TRICARE more user friendly for the Reserve and National Guard troops and their families. Also, the website is very confusing and difficult to decipher just what kind of benefits there are and how to get to them. It is even more difficult where there is no active duty base nearby that can assist. (which is definitely my situation).”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“Make TRICARE more easily understood - the web site is a mess, the explanatory info doesn't explain at the 'horsey, duckie' level. I don't have a clue as to how I sign up, or how [NAME] signs up, and I'm a retired O-6 with a master's degree in Systems Management. I can't imagine how an 18 year old spouse with a baby could get help when needed if the military spouse is deployed.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“Make sure TRICARE is easier to understand and use. Make sure families get as much truthful information as possible. When they feel like they are being lied to or intentionally misled is when they no longer want to support their service members and encourage them to 'get out' of the military.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Officer**
- *“Please improve TRICARE and the administration of the benefits. We have been 'dumped' out of TRICARE more times than I can count due to administrative error. As a result of the error, we incurred financial debt paying the difference in medical bills.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Enlisted**

Reserve Spouse Perceptions of Deployment Support Practices in 2008

- *“Provide me a CLEAR understanding of how the TRICARE Medical/Dental Programs work and who the providers are in my area.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Midgrade Enlisted**

Reserve component spouses frequently mentioned their feelings on military-provided insurance companies. Responses ranged from complete satisfaction with the insurance process to frustration with parts of the system, such as finding doctors or whether they were covered for specialty medical care providers.

- *“TRICARE is excellent for our family. Our family is eligible because of my husband’s mobilization several yrs ago. We are eligible for TRICARE for approximately 3 more years I feel that any and all reservists not only deployed/mobilized should be eligible for TRICARE for family. TRICARE is a huge reason that I support my husband’s decision to stay in the reserves. Reservists are backbones of the country and should be eligible as well as their families for health coverage at reasonable costs. Reserves is a job.”* – **Spouse of USNR Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“It is very difficult to find doctors who will accept TRICARE. It is next to impossible to find medical specialists who will accept TRICARE. Further, customer service for TRICARE is only open from 8-5 which is very difficult when both spouses work a standard 8-5 job--especially when claims must be clarified. If we were lucky enough to fit the typical health issues, things MIGHT flow more smoothly, however, any exceptions to the paradigm are met with great resistance which requires time (during my 8-5 job) and great persistence. My supervisor loses patience with the time I spend trying to work through medical issues.”* – **Spouse of ANG Senior Officer**
- *“The administrative aspect of TRICARE reserve select is horrible. It was so difficult to enroll we almost could not get into the program. There was no one on the base or on the phone who help us either. We felt like it was another insurance promise undelivered.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“TRICARE is excellent, a lot better than civilian insurance we had. I think the military in general is doing an excellent job in state & overseas. Military support & readiness for families that live in rural areas and have to travel to the nearest base needs to improve. I have not been contacted by anyone for services or support for families of deployed soldiers. I support my husband’s decisions of being in the military 100% even to it is extremely difficult to manage a full time job & take care of 5 kids -- all the work around the house & farm. I can manage and will continue to support my husband & the military.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Officer**
- *“TRICARE is a joke. Any attempt to see a specialist is denied, unless you drive hundreds of miles to a military installation. No one on the 'TRI-CARE' side understands what they are saying and I have been directly misled by people who do not know their facts or their jobs. I've had claims denied because I was given bad information.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Enlisted**
- *“Many of the health care providers do not accept TRICARE around here, because we do not have a military population. Also the doctors told me it is too much paperwork to apply for it.”* – **Spouse of ARNG Warrant Officer**

Retirement

Reserve component spouses indicated they would like to lower the retirement age similar to that of active duty members.

- *“Reduce the retirement age for Reservists to 55 or less. It is not fair that Reservists and Guardsmen must wait so much longer to receive a retirement pension. If active duties are ready to retire after 20 or 30 years at the age of 38 to 52, why should the rules be so different for Reservists? Yes, there's is a part time job when they are not activated; however, their pensions are far, far smaller than the active duty pensions. This equalizes the expense, yet we're told it's too expensive. The truth is that our country and our leaders do not truly value the service of Reservists as they do active duty. If you so they do, I say put their money where their mouth is.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Junior Officer**
- *“Lower the retirement benefit age to 55.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“Better pay and military retirement at 50-55.”* – **Spouse of ANG Junior Officer**
- *“Continue to strive for more benefits for Reserve members and their families. Example: reduce the age for retirement from 60 down to 55.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“Ensure Reserve retirement at 55 years of age. Ensure pay and allowances, and later COLAs, keep pace with inflation, rather than allow them to be eroded.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“If you are going to force him out due to high year tenure why not pay him his retirement annuities immediately instead of waiting until he is 60. He has to meet or exceed all requirements that his active duty counterparts yet he still has to wait to get his benefits. I don't approve of him being required to wear his uniform while in civilian status without paying any benefits whatsoever.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Enlisted**

Compensation

Reserve component spouses indicated they would like to be compensated for pay loss while their husband/wife is serving.

- *“If my husband were to be called to active duty, I would like for his pay to greater than what his civilian job is to compensate for the absence of my husband and his civilian job salary.”* – **Spouse of USNR Junior Officer**
- *“Shorter deployments and more incentive to compensate for loss of income while deployed.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Midgrade Enlisted**
- *“Better utilize his time while on drill status. Provide better pay while on active duty to compensate for loss of civilian wages.”* – **Spouse of USCGR Midgrade Enlisted**

How the Military Is Doing

Although many Reserve component spouses provided examples of how they could be better supported during deployment, some Reserve component spouses indicated the support they were receiving from the military was satisfactory.

- *“Military is supporting us well....no problems.”* – **Spouse of USAFR Senior Officer**
- *“I think the military is providing superb support to our family.”* – **Spouse of ANG Senior Officer**
- *“I believe that the National Guard does a good job with family support programs.”* – **Spouse of ANG Senior Enlisted**
- *“I think overall the military has done an excellent job with programs, communication, showing genuine concern for our family while my husband was deployed. My son was 14 and it probably had the greatest impact on him. I was not aware of the counseling that was available to us. Other than I have only good things to say!”* – **Spouse of USNR Senior Enlisted**
- *“In all of my personal experience with military personnel, I have been impressed with efforts to be communicative, personal, and caring within difficult and stressful circumstances (i.e. a family member being in a war zone for over a year). Thank you for your efforts; they are noticed and appreciated. (My ONLY exception to this has been my uniformly discouraging interaction with TRICARE.)”* – **Spouse of ARNG Senior Officer**