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Lend a Hand



Each year we mobilize approximately 6,000 Selected Reservists for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. This means 6,000 families are faced with the stress and difficulty of separation while their Sailor “goes forward” to serve as an Individual Augmentee (IA).

Unlike active component (AC) Sailors who work as part of a unit and often deploy together, many reserve component (RC) Sailors are tasked individually to serve. Because our RC Sailors are free to live wherever they wish, many do not have ready access to the resources often found in fleet concentration areas. As a result, many RC families are left to cope with a mobilization on their own. This can strain marriages, confuse young children, and ultimately impact retention and career satisfaction.

To assist, the Navy provides many resources. Every command has a Command IA Coordinator (CIAC) — a subject matter expert who assists Sailors and their families before and during a deployment. Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) provide specialists to maintain contact with each IA Sailor’s family. Command Ombudsmen serve as a link between commands and families.

Military One Source is a 24/7 resource for all military members, spouses, and families. They offer everything from children’s books about deployment to materials to help maintain strong marriages during times of separation. They offer round-the-clock counselors at 1-800-342-9647 to help with practically everything, including locating child care providers or assisting with elder care.

Even with all these resources, sometimes the challenge of maintaining a household without a spouse present seems overwhelming. That’s where you can help.

If you or your spouse served in the Navy, you’ve probably experienced deployments or separation yourself. You’ve been through the uncertainties, solved problems that seemed impossible, and hopefully came through stronger as a person and as a couple. Your knowledge that things can work out can be of tremendous benefit to others who have never experienced this type of circumstance before.

There are over 125 Navy Operational Support Centers (NOSCs) throughout the country — what we used to call Reserve Centers. Every month, hundreds of Sailors prepare to “go forward” to serve our Navy’s combat team with honor, courage, and commitment. Reach out and make contact with the NOSC commanding officer or senior enlisted leader, and offer to help a family of a Sailor who is deploying (or already deployed.) You can find the phone numbers of every NOSC and reserve squadron at <http://ausn.us/o>.

Look for someone who lives nearby. Just knowing that there’s someone to call when the hot water tank starts leaking or the car acts up can provide a tremendous amount of reassurance to a young spouse left alone for the first time. Your families may even build a lifelong friendship.

As members of the Association of the United States Navy, we have a special obligation to help take care of our own. Reach out today and offer a hand. We’re privileged to be part of one, big Navy family, and this is a way of making a real difference. Thank you.

G. Mark Hardy