Student Handout 2

Extracted Material from Rear Detachment Commanders Handbook, Edition 3, 2006

This student handout contains 13 pages of extracted material from the following publication:

Rear Detachment Commanders Handbook, Edition 3, 2006

Disclaimer: The training developer downloaded the extracted material from the Army Publishing Directorate (USAPA) website. The text may contain passive voice, misspellings, grammatical errors, etc., and may not be in compliance with the Army Writing Style Program.

III. RDC RESPONSIBILITIES

During a deployment, the Rear Detachment Commander performs the duties of the unit commander. These responsibilities are listed below by command function. To address expectations of how the RDC will support families, an emphasis is placed on family matters. For a comprehensive listing of responsibilities, review the unit RDC SOP.

Command and Control

- Establish and maintain two-way communication with forward deployed units to ensure timely and accurate information, resolve issues, and maintain communication.
- Serve as the official information source for families and as a conduit between the deployed unit and their families. This includes conducting information briefings, preparing postings for vFRG web site, and reviewing FRG newsletters. Also ensure deployment-related information and FRG newsletters are published on regular basis.
- Maintain regular connection with families and family readiness groups (FRGs).
- Assist with Family Assistance Center (FAC) operations as requested by garrison or Army National Guard.
- Coordinate with the FRG steering committee in conjunction with FRG leaders, the chain of command, and garrison and community resources to support families.
- Oversee unit administrative functions.
- Carry out personnel actions (e.g., SRP, UCMJ, leave).
- Submit required reports.
- Handle casualty notification when appointed by the Commander.
- Control rumors.

Operations and Training

- Attend RDC and FRG courses.
- Develop staffing plan.
- Develop battle rhythm plan for rear detachment operations.
- Conduct or coordinate mandatory training events with garrison/ Reserve Component agencies.
- Ensure RD and staff duty personnel are trained and sensitive to family member calls and understand how to refer families to the appropriate agency for assistance.
- Coordinate and support training for FRG volunteers and families.

Logistics and Supply

- Maintain physical security and operations security.
- Maintain property and equipment. Conduct inventories.
- Ensure family members have opportunities to maintain contact with deployed Soldiers (includes establishing or providing information on mail operations, video teleconference (VTC), and internet connection).
- Provide FRGs with access to facilities, equipment, and government vehicles for official FRG mission activities.

Family Support

- Maintain contact with families in the command. This includes keeping in touch with families that return to their home of record or otherwise leave the area during their sponsor's deployment.
- Maintain regular contact with FRG leaders and furnish important information to them. Ensure that communication between FRG leaders and unit family members occurs regularly.

- Attend and support FRG meetings and activities. Update FRG phone trees. Coordinate plans with FRG leader for FRG social or recreational activities to build and sustain morale and camaraderie.
- Answer questions and concerns from FRG leaders and families.
- Resolve family issues by referring families to appropriate military or community agencies.

Administrative

- Validate and maintain a copy of family care plans (FCP) for deployed personnel and personnel preparing to deploy.
- Conduct FCP counseling as required.
- Maintain unit roster including augmentees during deployments. This roster will be provided to the FRG for their key callers to ensure these families receive communications and support.
- Coordinate with American Red Cross regarding emergency information on unit Soldiers and family members. Log, track and process Red Cross emergency messages and notify forward unit of impending Red Cross messages.
- Review RDC and FRG SOPs. Develop/revise FRG SOPs as necessary. *(See AR 608-1, Appendix J which is provided in the Operation READY Smart Book.)*
- Oversee FRG informal fund, per AR 608-1, Appendix J which is provided in the Operation READY Smart Book.
- Approve FRG requests for appropriated funds (APF) and supplemental mission funds intended for FRG use. *(See AR 608-1, Appendix J which is provided in the Operation READY Smart Book.)*
- After consultation with the unit's ethics counselor, approve donations and FRG fundraising requests.
- Maintain record of contacts, actions taken, and follow-up with families.
- Request an FRGDA to provide FRG leaders with administrative and logistical support.

IV. KEYS TO SUCCESS

- ★ **Work as a team with the deployed commander, FRG leaders, garrison, FRGDAs, Reserve Component, and others.** *(For information on with whom and how to work with others, see Section VIII entitled Working with Family Support Network, page 32.)*
- ★ **Know DoD and Army policies.** Understand regulatory guidance to effectively manage and/or implement responsibilities. *(The RDC training provides this information. See also Operation READY Smart Book.)*
- ★ **Set boundaries for personal and family time.**
- ★ **Know community resources and how to make referrals.** *(A list of community agencies is provided in Operation READY Smart Book.)*
- ★ **Have strong skills in:**
  - Communication
  - Listening
  - Crisis management *(For further guidance, see Crisis Management, Section X, page 43.)*
  - People skills (including how to deal with difficult people).
- ★ **Identify shortcomings and train early.** *(For information on training opportunities, see Section V, Training, page 12.)*
- ★ **Assign responsibilities.**
- ★ **Cross-train personnel.**
- ★ **Utilize checklists.** *(See checklist in RDC Tasks in Deployment Cycle, Section VI, pages 17-23.)*
- ★ **Maintain and foster genuine care and concern for family needs.**

VII. FAMILY READINESS GROUPS (FRGs)

The Family Readiness Group (FRG) is an official Army organization sponsored by command. FRG membership comprises Soldiers, civilian employees, family members (immediate and extended) and volunteers assigned to the unit. Its purpose is to provide social and emotional support and to keep unit families informed via a structured communication network between command and families. This support is designed to sustain families and ease the stress associated with family separations and deployments. Typically, FRGs are established at the company level with guidance and support from the battalion commander and his/her staff. (For guidance on FRG operations for commanders, consult AR 608-1, Appendix J which is provided in the Operation READY Smart Book. For information on implementation of FRG activities at the company level, consult the Operation READY Family Readiness Group Leader's Handbook.)

FRG Mission and Activities

The FRG serves as a conduit for information, mutual support, and concern. The type and scope of activities conducted by an FRG depends on the commander's budget for FRG activities; identified needs; command interest and emphasis; number of FRG members, time, energy and creativity of FRG membership; make up of the FRG (i.e., Soldier and family demographics); unit's training and deployment schedule; and geographical dispersion of families. The following chart represents primary FRG activities.

FRG Activities	
Mission Essential	**Additional Mission Essential**
• FRG member meetings • FRG staff and committee meetings • Publication and distribution of FRG newsletters • Maintenance of updated family rosters and family readiness information • FRG member telephone trees and email distribution lists	• Pre-deployment and reunion briefings for family members through ACS, Reserve Component Family Programs or Chaplain • Classes and workshops • Volunteer recognition • Newcomer orientations • Frequent telephone contact with family members
Nonessential Mission Activities	
• Social activities • Fundraising Activities	

Army Support of FRGs

Appropriated Funds (APF)

Because FRGs are an official Army program, commanders are authorized to use appropriated funds (APFs) to support FRG mission activities. APFs are to be used to support both the FRG's volunteers and activities. (For detailed guidance, refer to AR 608-1, Appendix J.) The support that is actually provided is dependent upon command discretion and budget. However, commanders are authorized to provide the following to FRGs:

- Government office space and equipment (e.g., office/meeting

space, telephone, fax, computer, email, scanner, copier, equipment, and administrative supplies for official FRG business)

- Telephonic communications for FRG personnel to use for official calls only
- Government paper and printing supplies for official FRG newsletters relaying information from command and to support FRG mission activities
- Official mail for official, mission-related purposes and as approved by the commander (e.g., FRG newsletters containing official information)
- Access to government vehicles for official FRG activities
- Travel expenses of official statutory volunteers. Authorized FRG volunteer travel to geographically dispersed members of the FRG where commander approved and directly in support of the FRG mission
- Training expenses of statutory FRG volunteers (i.e., enrollment, travel, per diem and other expenses) depending upon command preapproval and availability of funds
- Reimbursement of official volunteer incidental expenses (out-of-pocket expenses such as child care, telephone bills, mileage, and other expenses in accordance with chapter 5 of AR 608-1, Army Community Service Center, and Commander's FRG Budget SOP) for FRG volunteers with prior approval of the responsible commander (Note: reimbursement is limited and the commander should inform the FRG leader on reimbursement so that the FRG leader can manage FRG volunteers' expectations)
- Official certificates of recognition for volunteers or volunteer incentive awards
- Child care for command-sponsored training
- Child care, education and other youth services for FRG activities or for family support for FRGs whose Armed Forces members are assigned to or activated in support of contingency operation.

Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG)

The Army has established a Virtual FRG (vFRG) web site (http://www.armyfrg.org) to allow units to conduct certain FRG activities online. Having such a web site enables units to reach families where they live as well as assist geographically dispersed families. The vFRG can be used to: post FRG newsletters, provide information on the unit and issues of concern, update telephone tree and email lists, provide two-way instant messaging, post pictures and articles for download, and maintain communication with families and between families and deployed Soldiers. The unit commander (the RDC during deployment) controls and approves all content and users, who must be registered to access the web site. In sum, the RDC is in charge of the vFRG established at battalion level (with web pages for companies) and must monitor this web site for operational security. Further, the RDC serves as the official source for any unit news posted and approves all FRG content posted.

Family Readiness Group Deployment Support Assistant (FRGDA)

The Family Readiness Group Deployment Support Assistant (FRGDA) is a component of the Army's official FRG program. The FRGDA is a paid position supervised by the unit commander. In the Active Component, the number of FRGDAs varies across divisions/corps. They are typically assigned to support brigade (or battalion) units with a high number of deployments. In the Guard, there is one FRGDA assigned at the state level. In the Reserves, the number of FRGDAs assigned to the Reserve Regional Readiness Commands varies.

The role of the FRGDA is to provide administrative support to both commanders and FRG leaders in support of family readiness programs and activities. (Note: The FRGDA is not to impinge on the role and responsibilities of the FRG leader, but to contribute to the FRG's efforts to assist families.) This administrative support is particularly helpful in lightening the burden on FRG leaders. The actual tasks performed are dependent upon unit needs, command direction (i.e., RDC during deployment), FRGDA's position description, and number of FRGs, but may include:

- Assisting with preparation of unit pre-deployment and reunion activities
- Scheduling and coordinating family readiness training or unit sponsored training for Soldiers and families
- Working with RDCs to provide FRG leaders with timely and accurate information
- Helping develop and distribute unit newsletters, announcements, and flyers
- Coordinating video teleconferences between deployed Soldiers and families
- Maintaining a list of FRG leaders
- Assisting in establishing and updating FRG rosters
- Identifying POCs and obtaining information on community resources
- Providing referrals to community agencies
- Helping FRGs with producing newsletters, flyers, and activity calendars; submission of volunteer forms; scheduling and coordinating FRG meetings and events; arranging guest speakers for FRG meetings or events; and FRG mailings.
- Work collaboratively with ACS to ensure broad range of classes and support are offered to FRG members.

How RDC Works with FRGs

FRG Leaders

A battalion RDC oversees and supports all company FRGs directly and indirectly through company level RDC and the battalion FRG steering committee. When there is a battalion FRG, the battalion RDC works with the battalion FRG leader in the same manner as described below.

Responsibilities of the Company FRG leader

The FRG leader role is held by a family member approved by the unit commander. The responsibilities of the FRG leader are to:

- Support commander's family readiness goals
- Provide overall leadership of the FRG (which includes planning, running and supervising FRG activities)
- Ensure the FRG's communication systems effectively keep families informed
- Provide timely, accurate information from command to families
- Recruit the volunteers needed to conduct required FRG activities as well as those activities requested by command
- Ensure families are referred to appropriate military and community organizations for needed assistance
- Identify important FRG and family issues and inform command
- Assist command in maintaining contact information for families, especially family members that leave area during deployment.

RDC Responsibilities to FRGs

- Serve as unit commander's representative at home station while unit is deployed
- Handle legal and administrative responsibilities of unit commander for FRG operations (e.g., oversight of FRG's informal fund, approve volunteer agreements for FRG volunteers, develop necessary SOPs, authorize resources)

- Serve as FRG leader's link to deployed unit and ensure FRG leader has access to RDC
- Select FRG leaders, when necessary, and ensure FRG leaders (and volunteers) receive required training
- Coordinate with FRG leader on information to be disseminated to families
- Support FRGs (e.g., attend FRG meetings and events, maintain roster used for FRG telephone tree, approve content of vFRG postings and FRG newsletters)
- Discuss FRG and family issues and help FRGs deal with these issues
- Identify appropriate agencies for FRGs to refer families for assistance and take other actions as needed to help resolve family issues
- Plan and notify FRG leader on all unit briefings, welcome home activities, and other unit activities
- Notify Care Team Coordinator and/or FRG leader when a Care Team is needed for a casualty or trauma in a unit
- Be clear about the FRG and Care Team's role in casualty support. FRGs and Care Teams are not involved in casualty notification; they are only involved in family assistance after notification, if requested.

Keys to successful working relationship

- ★ Understand each other's roles and responsibilities
- ★ Define commander/military issues vs FRG issues
- ★ Begin communication prior to deployment to develop relationship and to discuss important issues (including tough topics such as casualty notification)
- ★ Establish communication methods and maintain two-way communication
- ★ Know organizational structure (i.e., identify chain of command within RD for FRG and have FRG identify key FRG volunteers) and ensure each has appropriate contact information
- ★ Aim to speak with one voice
- ★ Demonstrate mutual respect.

FRG Steering Committee

A FRG steering committee (sometimes called advisory committee) is typically established at the battalion level by the battalion commander. The purpose of the FRG steering committee is to provide information and advise company FRG leaders on the battalion commander's family readiness plans and policies, FRG activities needed, and emerging FRG and family issues. The RDC is responsible for meeting with the committee to discuss FRG issues as well as to provide guidance to the committee in its efforts to support company level FRGs.