



Delivering the Army Family Covenant

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Defender 6 sends:

On 8 October 2007, the Army unveiled the Army Family Covenant (AFC), institutionalizing the Army's commitment to providing Soldiers and Families – Active, Guard, and Reserve – a quality of life commensurate with their quality of service. However, as I travel around the Army meeting with Soldiers and Families I'm surprised to find that many are not familiar with the Army Family Covenant and the commitment Army leadership has made to provide a better quality of life to Soldiers and Families.

We are delivering the Army Family Covenant with a focus on five specific areas: Standardization and funding of existing programs and services, Increasing accessibility and quality of health care, Improving Soldier and Family housing, Ensuring excellence in schools, youth services and child care and Expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members.

Some accomplishments over the past two years include:

- Standardized Army community staffing and programs at all Garrisons;
- Added 1079 Family Readiness Support Assistants positions to provide administrative and logistical support to commanders and FRG leaders;
- Funded Exceptional Family Member respite care providing up to 40 hours of care per month for Families;
- Increased primary care visits to more than 7 million people, meeting access standards for 90% of acute, routine and specialty appointments;
- Authorized TRICARE standard coverage for more than 500,000 eligible members of the Selective Reserve and their Family members and lowered the co-payment;

- Funded the Training Barracks Modernization Program to allow 11,306 Soldiers to move into newly designed or renovated barracks in 2009
- Introduced the First Sergeants Barracks Initiative to enhance single Soldier quality of life;
- Reduced financial burden on Army Families by eliminating CYSS registration fees and reducing program fees;
- Collaborated with more than 373 school districts to support military connected students transferring to new school districts; Increased placement of military spouses through the Army Spouse Employment Program, a partnership with Fortune 500 companies and government agencies to provide employment opportunities.

We are indeed making progress on delivering the Army Family Covenant, but we have much more work to do. I am dedicated to deliver on the Army leadership's promise to continue to provide the best care and quality of life possible to Soldiers and their Families. Our commitment to delivering the Army Family Covenant is non-negotiable. We will not depart from this commitment.

I would ask that we always take the time to accentuate the positive. We have so very much to be thankful for when it comes to health care, housing, services and programs, and many other things. Many times we immediately start talking about negative items, and many of those conversations are based on anecdotal evidence without firsthand knowledge. Let's be grateful for what we have, and strive together to improve. An attitude of appreciation will go a long way. Optimism is a combat multiplier.

As always, thanks for your continued service to our Army, and our Nation. Together we are making history.