



**KANSAS ADJUTANT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT**  
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**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AND HOMELAND SECURITY**  
**TESTIMONY OF THE KANSAS ADJUTANT GENERAL**  
**JANUARY 12, 2012**

Mr. Chairman & Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss some of the major efforts that the Kansas National Guard utilizes to support our Guard members and their families.

Before I begin, I want to thank this committee for all the tremendous support and genuine caring that you have shown those Kansans who have worn the uniform. I know it has become a cliché, but let me be very clear: the support of the people and communities of Kansas is *still* absolutely vital to our service members and their families.

The last decade has been a time of war, multiple deployments, great pride and tremendous personal sacrifice for the soldiers and airmen of the Kansas National Guard, and their families. Ten Kansas National Guard soldiers never returned home, and many more have been burdened with physical and/or mental wounds, making an already difficult transition far more daunting for our Guard veterans and their families. Add to that a very tough job market and you can begin to understand why I say that support for our troops is still so critical.

As Adjutant General my statutory responsibilities and focus is the Kansas National Guard. There is a uniqueness of the National Guard that affects the majority of my soldiers, airmen and their families. It is the distinctive characteristic of living off an active duty military installation.

Instead of having easy access to "on base" or "on post" resources and support, Kansas Guardsmen live in Kansas communities, where this level of care they and their families need is not always easily available, especially in rural areas. Because of this, connecting our Guardsmen to resources and support usually requires working through various avenues, such as national and state organizations such as Red Cross, Operation Military Kid, etc.

Within the Kansas National Guard, service members and their families may receive resources from a variety of programs. I will briefly touch on them, but please know that I'm barely introducing them to you in light of available time. The available programs and resources include:

**Family Assistance Centers** which provide information, referral, and outreach for Service Members and Families. They provide all service branch members and their families affected by an event, mobilization or deployment a place to receive reliable and accurate information, referrals to obtain crisis/grief support and general military and veteran's benefits information. The Kansas National Guard has Family Assistance Centers in Wichita, Great Bend, Salina, Hiawatha, and Iola.

**Family Readiness Program** which was developed to promote Family readiness, quality of life, and empowerment of military families through education, communication, resource allocation and community involvement. Services are provided during military deployments and times of peace, and work through Kansas National Guard unit commands. Volunteer Family Readiness Group Leadership Teams are part of each unit Commander's staff and work to assist Families of Service Members by providing increased morale, education and communication. The Kansas National Guard has three Family Readiness Support Assistance (FRSA) locations at Joint Forces Headquarters in Topeka, 69<sup>th</sup> Troop Command in Topeka and 287<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade in Wichita. Four additional Family Readiness Support Assistance locations are slated to begin work in spring of 2012, under a new national contract.

**Child and Youth Program** which promotes quality of life and resiliency of National Guard families by providing secure, timely and flexible high-quality support services and enrichment programs to National Guard children and youth. Goals for the child and youth program are directed by the National Guard Bureau and focus on education, access, opportunity, communication, resiliency and outreach. Kansas National Guard has one State Youth Coordinator located in Topeka.

**Chaplain Services** create and implement religious support plans that will meet the operational tempo of the Kansas National Guard. This is accomplished by organizing and conducting pre-mobilization briefings, mid-tour well checks, family reunion events and holding reintegration briefings. Areas of special emphasis are marriage enrichment retreats, critical incident stress debriefings, death notifications, memorial ceremonies, pastoral counseling, and suicide prevention/intervention training statewide.

**Joint Family Support Assistance Program** provides mobile, high quality family services to augment current family program's ability to meet the needs of Active Duty, Guard and Reserve family members. Primary focus of support is families who are geographically dispersed from a military installation. Staff collaborates with military, state and local resources to access needs, identify available resources and address service gaps and enhances community capacity.

**Director of Psychological Health** is to advocate for and support National Guard members and families by promoting mental fitness and personal wellness for operational readiness. The director's duties include educating National Guard members and their families on how to access behavioral health services, refer members and families who may have behavioral issues, build psychological health fitness and resilience and document and track data to provide quality services and identify needs/trends.

**Transition Assistance Advisor** serves as the statewide point of contact and coordinator to provide technical support to managers, supervisors, Guard members, and their family members as to the benefits and entitlements available through Department of Veterans Affairs and to provide technical assistance in resolving entitlements to TRICARE.

**Employer Support Guard Reserve** gains and maintains employer support for the Guard and Reserve services by recognizing outstanding support of military employers, increasing awareness of the military re-employment laws and resolving employer military member conflicts through mediation. Additionally, the ESGR provides Guardsmen and Reservist, families and employees the opportunity to raise issues of concerns for leadership and policymaker action.

**Resiliency Program** develops curriculum and provide tools to teach and enhance resiliency skills to solders, airmen, emergency management personnel and families of the National Guard. This preventative skills and strengths-based course is designed on an adult learning model, focused on bolstering strengths, adaptive thinking, problem solving, spiritual resiliency, relationship enhancement, financial education, self assessment and leadership.

These programs and services compose some of the major resources we currently have available to provide services to our soldiers, airmen and their families. Please know that we will continue to evaluate and work to improve the effectiveness of these programs, especially in light of the fiscal environment.

Again, I want to thank the committee for this opportunity and for its continued support to the excellent men and women of the Kansas National Guard.

Before I close, I would like to introduce two great people who are far more knowledgeable than I am on the details of these worthwhile programs. Mary Nesbitt is Family Programs Director, and Steve Rexer is a retired Air National Guard officer who is with our Resiliency Program.

Thank you for your time and we stand ready for your questions.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Maj Gen (KS) Lee E. Tafari  
Kansas Adjutant General  
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