



# Unit & FRG Leadership: Partnering for Effective FRGs



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# Learning Objectives

- Define the Purpose of FRGs
- Identify key components and aspects to an effective unit leadership-FRG leader relationship
- Define the role and responsibilities of the unit leadership and FRG leadership
- Discuss how an effective partnership positively impacts the FRG and unit



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# FRG Purpose

- Official command program per AR 600-20 to provide assistance with family readiness.
- Family readiness is the unit commander's responsibility in accordance with AR 600-20.
- Is intended to encourage self-sufficiency by providing information, referral assistance and mutual support.
- Provides a communication network between command and families.



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## Notes: FRG Purpose

- Per AR 600-20, chap 5-10: Under the Total Army Family Program, family readiness is defined as including Family Readiness Groups and includes immediate and extended family members, as well as Military and Civilian employees assigned or attached to the unit.
- FRGs are supposed to work with the command to promote self-sufficiency of Soldiers and Families and provide a communication channel for the command to the Families.



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# Key Components & Aspects of an Effective FRG

- **Key Components:**
  - **Unit Leadership** (Commander and 1SG)
  - **FRG Leadership**
- **Key Aspects:**
  - **Communication** (This can't be over-emphasized.)
  - Team-work or **Partnership**



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# Who Leads the FRG?

- Commander establishes and supports the FRG
- Selection of FRG Leader based on:
  - An individual volunteering, or
  - The commander asks a person to volunteer.
- Cdr/1SG spouse not required to be FRG leader.
- Leader must be approved by the unit Cdr.



# Notes: Who Leads the FRG?

- Commanders are ultimately responsible for unit FRGs, and approve the FRG leader. They can also relieve an ineffective /toxic FRG leader.
- Unit commanders do not have to select their spouse or the 1SG's spouse to be the FRG leader.
- The unit commander or any other Soldier can **NOT** be the FRG leader.



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# Unit Leadership Responsibilities

- Administrative tasks of FRG program:
  - SOPs for FRG operations
  - Authorization of resources and funding
  - Approval of key FRG positions (e.g., FRG leader and FRG's Informal fund custodians) using appointment letters/orders
  - Review of FRG informal fund reports
  - Update unit roster for FRG phone tree



# Unit Leadership Responsibilities (cont)

- Command and Control of FRG activities:
  - Review and approval of FRG newsletters
  - Approval of FRG e-mails with company or deployment-related information
  - Approval of content and users of company web page on battalion web site or official FaceBook page



## Unit Leadership Responsibilities (cont)

- Support FRG's efforts to help families:
  - Promote FRG to Soldiers and families
  - Determine how to address family issues and help resolve family issues
  - Maintain two-way communication and information flow with FRG leader
  - Provide guidance and support to FRG leader



## Unit Leadership Responsibilities (cont)

- Support FRG's efforts to help families:
  - Appoint RDC (Rear Det. Cdr) as command point of contact during deployments
  - Attend and support FRG activities (e.g. FRG meetings, events)

**NOTE:** While the deployment portion doesn't apply to West Point Units, you may end up PCSing to a location where you'll deploy and need to have a Rear Detachment Commander provide continuity for the families.

**NOTE:** Without command emphasis on your FRG, the expectation for success can be over estimated. Emphasis demonstrates to your unit, families, and the FRG staff that they are an important priority for you as the commander.



# Notes: Unit Leadership Responsibilities

- The Company Commander is ultimately responsible for the successes and failures of the FRG. Most of these duties are administrative: SOPs, reviewing/overseeing the Informal Fund reports/audits, and hiring/ firing the FRG Leadership.
- With specific respect to the FRG Phone Tree, the FRG is required to have a complete list of contacts for the Soldiers' family members. Soldiers sometimes check the “No Contact” without even asking the spouse. This is usually based on past negative experiences with a FRG.



# Notes: Unit Leadership Responsibilities

- Ensure the newsletters are saying what needs to be said. Get involved and make sure that the unit FRG FaceBook page isn't an online gossip circle.
- AR 600-20, chapter 5-10, paragraph b(9), explicitly places family readiness responsibility on the Soldier. However, not all of the information that is given to the Soldier makes its way to the family members. This is where an effective Unit and FRG Leadership team can fill this void with communication to the families.



# Notes: Unit Leadership Responsibilities

- Realize that your FRG Leaders and staff are volunteers. They may not have experience with certain issues that may arise during their tenure. This is where the guidance, support, and even mentorship comes in. Both the commander and 1SG can help the FRG Leader and the staff cope with issues that come up.



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# FRG Leader's Responsibilities

- Support commander's family readiness goals
- Maintain open communication and respectful relationship with unit leadership
- Work **with** FRG Treasurer
- Plan, run and supervise FRG activities:
  - Recruit, train and supervise FRG volunteers
  - Manage/oversee FRG activities (i.e., meetings, committees, newsletters, phone tree, etc.)

**NOTE:** FRG Leaders need to remember that they've been appointed to help the unit command publicize the family readiness goals for the unit. The FRG Leader will help advertise staff vacancies, but only the unit commander can appoint a volunteer to a staff position (Key Caller, Treasurer, Alt Treasurer, Asst. Leader, etc.).



## FRG Leader's Responsibilities (cont)

- Ensure FRG maintains communication with and provides support to families:
  - Get and update contact information and phone tree and e-mail distribution lists
  - Refer families to appropriate community agencies
  - Schedule and conduct activities so that families get timely information, including classes
  - Identify important issues and inform command



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## FRG Leader's Responsibilities (cont)

- Handle administrative tasks:
  - Ensure paperwork and reports (i.e., FRG Treasurer reports) prepared and submitted to Cdr (or appropriate agency)
  - Submit funding, resource, Supplemental Mission Fund (intended for FRG), and reimbursement requests to Cdr
  - Assist commander with preparing the unit's FRG SOPs
  - Ensure FRG Informal Fund SOP written and command approved

**NOTE:** The key word on this slide is to **ASSIST**. The FRG Leader is **not** responsible for composing SOPs from scratch on their own. The FRG Leader is **not** responsible for creating the treasurer reports each month.



## NOTES: FRG Leader's Responsibilities

- FRG Leaders should have a working knowledge of resources that are available. Some of this information is gained through experience within the military community and some is gained through FRG Leader training. Just realize that it's not a negative reflection on you, the FRG Leader, to refer Family members to outside sources, including ACS.



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# Similarities

- Some of the responsibilities for the FRG Leader and Unit Commander are similar. The delineation is that the Commander is overall responsible for everything and the FRG Leader provides assistance and reminders to the Commander.
- Commanders have more on their plates than the FRG, so assistance is sometimes needed.



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# Keys to Successful Partnership

- Discuss and understand each other's roles and responsibilities.
- Define command issues vs. FRG issues.
- Communicate and discuss important issues (support to families, casualty procedures).
- Establish methods to be used to maintain two-way communication, incl appropriate contact information
- Aim to speak with one voice.
- Promote mutual respect.



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## NOTE: Keys to Success

- The constant and overriding theme in creating and maintaining a successful and effective relationship between the unit Commander/1SG and the FRG Leader is effective, candid and tactful communication. There needs to be a professional relationship between the two parties.
- The FRG Leadership should be relaying the information that the command wants relayed.



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# Impact of Strong FRG-Unit Leadership Partnership on FRG

- A harmonious teaming relationship enables each to support each other's efforts.
- Two-way communication enables command (through the FRG) to “provide mutual support” to families
  - Arrange classes for Spouses
  - External resources made available



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## **NOTE: Impact of Strong Partnership**

- With a shared understanding of how the unit will support families, the FRG can implement activities with minimal guidance thereby reducing burden on commander. In addition, the FRG can focus activities in ways that help leadership fulfill their responsibility to enhance family readiness.
- Two-way communication enables command (through the FRG) to “provide mutual support” to families.



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## NOTE: Impact of Strong Partnership

- When command keeps the FRG leader informed, then the FRG can truly “act as an extension of the unit”.
- When the FRG maintains contact with families, the FRG can keep command informed of the state of unit families. Command can then provide guidance that enables the FRG to “help families solve problems” and “advocate use of community resources.”



# NOTE: Impact of Strong Partnership

- Examples of this is the FRG hosting classes geared towards resiliency, financial readiness, Army Family Team Building exercises, to name a few.



## ACS' Role in a Successful FRG

- Mandated by AR 608-1, ch 4-6, para b
- Provide expertise, support, & training
  - FRG Leader, Key Caller, Treasurer, SOPs
- Is the 1-stop shop for Soldier & Family resources
  - AFTB, Resilience, Financial classes, Relocation/ International Spouses & Travelers Club
  - Anger Management, New Parent Support, MFLC, Employment Readiness for Spouses/Family Members



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## NOTE: MFLC

### What is MFLC?

- Military Family Life Counselors
- Masters & PhD level licensed clinicians
- Free, Confidential, and Private sessions
- Services on or off post
- Short-term, non-medical problem solving counseling

### How can MFLC Help?

- Deployment Stress
- Separation
- Building Resiliency
- Homesickness
- Loss & Grief
- Conflict Resolution
- Communication
- Anger Management
- Parenting

**West Point MFLC: Bldg 626, 2d Floor, ACS Resiliency Center**

**845-219-4199 (Cell) 845-938-3212 (Office)**



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## NOTE: ACS' Role in a Successful FRG

- The ACS regulation, AR 608-1, has an entire Appendix dedicated to FRGs, in addition to the original paragraph that mandates our involvement.
- Please don't hesitate to contact ACS to schedule classes, like the ones listed previously. We're a free resource with tons of information. Use us to help your units and FRGs.



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**PLEASE FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE NEXT SLIDE TO TAKE THE QUIZ AND RECEIVE YOUR CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING.**

**If you have any questions that weren't answered during this class, please contact our office at 845-938-4621.**



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Open a new internet browser and visit <http://quizstar.4teachers.org/indexs.jsp>.

- Register for Quiz Star by clicking the yellow **“SIGN UP”** arrow and create a username and password.
- On the next screen, select “Click here to search for a new class.”
- In the Class #1 box, type “West Point Partnerships for Effective FRGs” and select “Exact Match”. Check the checkbox next to the training and click the “Register” button.
- The following screen confirms your enrollment in the class. Click the “Classes” tab at the top of the page to view your enrollment.
- Click on 1 Untaken Quizzes and on the next page, click “Take Quiz” to begin.
- You must pass with an 80% or better to receive a Certificate of Training.
- Once you pass the quiz, email [michelle.bradley@usma.edu](mailto:michelle.bradley@usma.edu) with your contact information. It may take 1-2 business days to process your certificate.