

**NAVMC 2919**



**U.S. MARINE CORPS**

**KEY**

**VOLUNTEER**

**NETWORK**

**KEY VOLUNTEER  
COORDINATOR'S GUIDE**

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FOREWORD

**MAY 27 1994**

1. PURPOSE

To publish NAVMC 2919, "Key Volunteer Network - Key Volunteer Coordinator's Guide."

2. INFORMATION

a. This Guide is a parallel product coincident to Marine Corps Order 1754.2A, "Marine Corps Key Volunteer Network."

b. NAVMC 2919 is one of four guides that provide detailed guidelines for the Key Volunteer Network. NAVMC 2919 amplifies and reinforces, but does not amend, MCO 1754.2A; if a conflict arises, the MCO shall take precedence.

c. Initial distribution of this Guide will be made per the current edition of MCO P5600.31.

3. RESERVE APPLICABILITY

This Guide is applicable to the Marine Corps Reserve.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for improving this Guide are invited and should be submitted in writing to the Commandant of the Marine Corps (MHF).

5. CERTIFICATION

Reviewed and approved this date.

*R. B. Johnston*

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE . . . . .	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	2
THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK PROGRAM GUIDES . . . . .	3
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	4
II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES . . . . .	5
A. OVERVIEW . . . . .	5
B. THE KEY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S ROLE . . . . .	5
C. THE KEY VOLUNTEER'S ROLE . . . . .	7
D. COMMANDING OFFICER'S ROLE IN THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK . . . . .	8
E. THE FAMILY READINESS OFFICER'S ROLE IN THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK . . . . .	9
F. THE KEY VOLUNTEER ADVISOR'S ROLE IN THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK . . . . .	9
III. KEY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR STANDARD ACTIVITIES . . . . .	10
A. GETTING STARTED . . . . .	10
B. UNDERSTANDING THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVE . . . . .	10
C. KEY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S PERSPECTIVE . . . . .	12
D. RECRUITING KEY VOLUNTEERS . . . . .	15
E. ORGANIZING A NETWORK AT THE UNIT LEVEL . . . . .	17
F. TRAINING . . . . .	18
G. IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY . . . . .	18
H. MAKING FAMILIES AWARE OF THE NETWORK AND HOW IT CAN ASSIST THEM. . . . .	19
I. GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING UNIT EMERGENCY SITUATION . . . . .	19
J. CONDUCTING MEETINGS . . . . .	20
K. EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS . . . . .	21
L. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA . . . . .	22
M. NEWSLETTERS . . . . .	23



## **PREFACE**

This guide is one of several resource documents developed by the Key Wives Working Group which met in July 1992 under the auspices of Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Human Resources Division. A list of the membership of the Working Group, which represented a cross section of the Marine Corps, is provided on the following page.

The major task of the Working Group was to design and outline the documents required to support the Key Volunteer Network throughout the Marine Corps. The task was accomplished with great enthusiasm and creativity.

The accomplishments of the Working Group will have a far reaching impact. Marines and Marine families everywhere, now and in the future, will benefit from the outstanding contributions made by these pioneers in the Key Volunteer Network.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# **THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK PROGRAM GUIDES**

This is the *Key Volunteer Coordinator's Guide*, the primary document for Key Volunteer Coordinators. Section I of this guide provides a brief overview of the history of the program. Section II differentiates the major roles and responsibilities of participants in the Key Volunteer Network. Section III outlines the standard activities of a Key Volunteer Coordinator with an emphasis on the initial stages of setting up a Key Volunteer Network. Additional materials developed in support of the Key Volunteer Network include:

*Commanding Officer's Guide*

*Key Volunteer's Guide*

*Key Volunteer Network Training Guide*

The *Commanding Officer's Guide* provides Commanding Officers (COs) with a description of the purpose of the Key Volunteer Network and suggested guidance regarding establishment and support of the Network.

Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of others within the Key Volunteer Network are found in the *Key Volunteer's Guide*. Detailed information regarding the day-to-day functioning of the program from the Key Volunteer perspective is also provided in the *Key Volunteer's Guide*. The Key Volunteer Coordinator should be familiar with this document.

Since the Key Volunteer Coordinator will also be responsible for seeing that the Key Volunteers within her/his unit are trained, the Coordinator should also be familiar with the *Key Volunteer Network Training Guide*. Normally, the training itself will be conducted by the Family Service Center (FSC). When there is no local FSC, the Coordinator may organize or conduct the training.

Throughout the guides, the Key Volunteer Network is described as assisting Marines and their families with family readiness issues. Included in Marine units are other military personnel, such as Navy chaplains, corpsmen, foreign exchange personnel, etc. When attached to a Marine unit these servicemembers and their families are part of the Marine family and should be considered a vital part of the Network.

# **SECTION I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recent history has reinforced the realization that Marine families, like the Marines themselves, need to maintain a state of readiness -- ready to respond to rapid deployment, ready for extension of deployment time, ready for recall to active duty, ready to deal with pay problems, ready for handling the stress of preparation for war and, ultimately, ready for the realities of war itself. Because of this constant need for readiness at every level, the Marine Corps developed a special program for families.

The Family Readiness Support Program, established by Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1754.1, is a network of agencies, programs, services, and individuals that supports family readiness. In conjunction with the Family Readiness Support Program, the Key Wives Network was originally established by MCO 1754.2, and subsequently renamed the Key Volunteer Network. MCO 1754.2A gives basic guidance for the funding, training and administration of Key Volunteer Network activities. The Order also gives guidelines for letters of appointment and specified training components, and also provides guidance for legal issues regarding confidentiality, protection of privacy, and access to records.

The Key Volunteer Network is a major component in the Family Readiness Support Program. A Key Volunteer Network Coordinator's role is to assist and coordinate Key Volunteers as they in turn assist families who use the system. The benefits are far-reaching for Marine families. Most volunteers find it personally rewarding as well. Preparedness is each individual Marine's responsibility, but it is the Marine Corps' intention to create an atmosphere of support and concern for the welfare of military families. The primary goal is always to help families help themselves.

It is important that the Family Readiness Officer (FRO) and the unit Key Volunteer Network, with the installation's FSC, work together to assist Marines and their families with a variety of support, education, information, referral and training programs to help minimize the stress that arises in the typical mobile military lifestyle. The goal is to keep Marines and their families ready to respond to any contingency that might arise.

## **SECTION II**

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **A. OVERVIEW**

The Key Volunteer Network is an official Marine Corps family support initiative that links the Marine's family members with the military chain, of command and to support services within the military and civilian communities. The linchpin that ensures this linkage is effectively established and maintained is the Key Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **B. THE KEY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S ROLE**

The Key Volunteer Coordinator position is required in each unit at the battalion/squadron level and above. The Key Volunteer Coordinator provides leadership to the group of Volunteers who comprise the Key Volunteer Network for that unit. If the unit is small, the Coordinator may be the only Key Volunteer appointed. The Coordinator serves under the direction of the unit's CO and works closely with its FRO to identify problems that affect family readiness and create a dependable communication network between the unit and families.

In addition to the FRO and as determined by the CO, the Key Volunteer Coordinator sometimes works with the Executive Officer (XO), the Sergeant Major (SgtMaj), and/or the Chaplain in handling the routine business of the Network's family assistance. The Key Volunteer Coordinator may also have the assistance of a Key Volunteer Advisor where one has been appointed. This Advisor can be a valuable resource and mentor when the Coordinator is faced with particularly complex or difficult situations.

The Key Volunteer Coordinator must be the spouse of a member of the unit and ideally will have demonstrated leadership and organizational ability.

The Key Volunteer Coordinator is appointed in writing by the CO for a specific period of time to work within the guidelines established under MCO 1754.2A. Upon completion of the term of appointment or at the change of command, the Coordinator submits a letter of resignation, allowing the CO to choose a new Coordinator if desired.

Duties may include:

1. Keep the CO informed on a regular basis on the state of family readiness in the unit.
2. Serve as a liaison between the CO and Key Volunteers, and provide feedback to the CO about family concerns.

3. Work with the FRO regarding family readiness matters.
4. Coordinate with key command personnel as necessary; e.g., the FRO, XO, SgtMaj, Chaplain, Key Volunteer Network Advisor, etc.
5. Develop an effective communications network among unit families; e.g., organize a telephone tree through Key Volunteers and activate it upon the CO's direction or as otherwise needed.
6. Assist in recruiting eligible volunteers and make recommendations to the CO for appointment to Key Volunteer positions.
7. Coordinate the training of Key Volunteers with the FSC's Family Readiness Support Program Coordinator.
8. Communicate to Key Volunteers the responsibilities of their position, informing them about the support available from the unit and the expectations of the CO.
9. Oversee the development and distribution of a newsletter on a regular basis.
- 100 Participate, as appropriate, in the local installation's Family Readiness Support Program Council and work closely with the FSC on training and resource matters.
- 110 Work with the Key Volunteer Coordinators from other units temporarily attached to their own unit during deployment.
- 12• Perform other Network activities as determined by the CO.

### Discussion:

The Key Volunteer Coordinator provides assistance to Key Volunteers who are not able to resolve family concerns and acts to ensure unit support when families need assistance. In performing the Key Volunteer Coordinator duties, she/he will work with the unit, the FSC, and agencies - both military and civilian - to ensure that the Network provides effective assistance in enabling unit families to meet their needs. Careful follow-up is always needed but especially when unfamiliar civilian resources are used.

The Key Volunteer Coordinator and Key Volunteers assist the FRO in finding ways to educate families about their readiness responsibilities. Duties may include organizing opportunities for families to meet others for educational purposes so that they can find support and learn new skills. Though the Coordinator and Volunteers often plan social events for the families in the unit, the primary function of the Network is providing infor-



mation and referral. The Coordinator and Key Volunteers can and should encourage interested family members to take initiative in planning social events and support their efforts.

An important aspect of the Key Volunteer Coordinator's work will be to acquaint the unit CO with issues that affect family welfare, the unit's morale and the level of preparedness she/he has encountered in contacts with Marine families. The Key Volunteer Coordinator may also be asked to assist in organizing appropriate recognition of Key Volunteers for their contribution to the unit.

If the Key Volunteer Coordinator needs to or wishes to resign, she/he should submit a letter of resignation to the CO stating briefly the circumstances and the intention to resign as of a specific date. The CO may wish to speak to the Coordinator personally about the decision and set up an appointment. The CO may accept the resignation without comment. As a courtesy, the Coordinator should have one or two replacement candidates to suggest, if asked.

### **C. THE KEY VOLUNTEER'S ROLE**

The Key Volunteer's primary responsibilities are listed in MCO 1754.2A and in the Key Volunteer's Guide. Key Volunteers are spouses of members of the unit. (This includes the spouse of active members of a reserve unit.)

A Key Volunteer is the primary point of contact for a designated group of families when they are in need of assistance or information. The Key Volunteer is also the primary point of contact for the Key Volunteer Coordinator who needs to pass information. The Key Volunteer is a communication link between a family and the unit. Additionally, she/he acts as an information and referral resource for those in the unit. Often the Key Volunteer is seen as a role model who may serve to demonstrate coping and stress management skills.

The number of Key Volunteers needed to form a manageable Network depends on the needs, deployment schedule, size of the unit, and experience of the families in the unit. A ratio of one Key Volunteer to ten to fifteen families is common. Sometimes when circumstances require more assistance than the officially appointed Key Volunteers can manage, they may recruit temporary help from other family members. A lower ratio of Key Volunteers to families is recommended during deployment.

Although the Key Volunteer Network is more visible during the deployment cycle, there are important tasks that provide vital continuity and support for families from the time their Marines join a unit until they leave. The duties of a Key Volunteer are:

1. Welcome and assist incoming members and families of the unit and ensure they are aware of services available to the "Marine Family."

2. Participate in a telephone tree as directed by the Key Volunteer Coordinator to ensure a rapid dissemination of information to families.
3. Maintain a family readiness roster of names, addresses, and telephone numbers for their assigned families and provide changes to the FRO via the Key Volunteer Coordinator.
4. Provide information to families to refer them to appropriate resources as needed (FSC, Red Cross, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, etc.), and follow up on referrals to ensure the assistance required was obtained.
5. Provide information and feedback to unit COs, via the Key Volunteer Coordinator and FRO, regarding family readiness issues.
6. Offer moral support and assistance to families during times of difficulty and/or crisis.
7. Assist the Key Volunteer Coordinator with occasional Network activities where unit families can meet each other and form support systems; e.g., videotaping, reunion workshops, etc.
8. Assist with Key Volunteer Network newsletters by providing input, writing, distributing, etc.
9. Perform other Network activities as determined by the CO.

In the performance of their duties, Key Volunteers may encounter experiences when spouse or child abuse/neglect is suspected. Part of the basic Key Volunteer training includes the requirement to report allegations of neglect/abuse to appropriate agencies. It is essential that Key Volunteers fully understand local laws as well as Marine Corps and installation regulations and appropriate reporting procedures.

Key Volunteers may be recommended by the Key Volunteer Coordinator, the FRO, XO, SgtMaj, Chaplain, Advisor, or volunteer directly. They are appointed in writing by the CO. All Key Volunteers should complete basic training before appointment, or should sign an agreement for training to be completed within a certain period of time. They should also sign a statement of understanding such as the sample provided in MCO 1754.2A. In addition to the training required by MCO 1754.2A, unit training may be required or offered on other issues.

#### **D. COMMANDING OFFICER'S ROLE IN THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK**

The CO determines the direction of the program based on the needs of the unit's families. The CO selects, appoints, and maintains contact with the Key Volunteers as he/she determines the need. This may be done in consultation with the Key Volunteer Coordinator or other appropriate sources.

**E. THE FAMILY READINESS OFFICER'S ROLE IN THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK**

The FRO is appointed by the CO and is an active duty member of the unit. The FRO coordinates the unit's family readiness efforts, and works with the Key Volunteer Coordinator and the Key Volunteer Network. The primary function of the FRO is to serve as the military point of contact for routine matters between the unit and members of the Key Volunteer Network. He/she acts as a liaison to other military family support organizations and assists the Key Volunteer Coordinator with routine matters.

**F. THE KEY VOLUNTEER ADVISOR'S ROLE IN THE KEY VOLUNTEER NETWORK**

The Key Volunteer Advisor position is optional. The CO may fill this position with his/her own spouse, the spouse of the senior SNCO, or the spouse of another senior member of the unit. The Advisor acts as a mentor for the Key Volunteer Coordinator and the Key Volunteers by providing advice and support. The Advisor is particularly valuable when the unit is deployed.

# **SECTION III**

## **KEY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR STANDARD ACTIVITIES**

### **A. GETTING STARTED**

Each unit's Key Volunteer Network will be different, depending on the unit's mission, CO's priorities, the pool of eligible volunteers, the tasks assigned, and the time available to get organized.

When appointed, a Key Volunteer Coordinator may join a smoothly functioning Network, or may need to organize one, depending on the unit's needs. A meeting with the CO will help establish the guidelines and goals for the Network. During the meeting the Key Volunteer Coordinator can ascertain the CO's priorities for the Key Volunteer Network. The Key Volunteer Coordinator can then discuss her/his plans and vision concerning how they might work together to the benefit of the unit and the families involved. The goals established together need to be realistic. Written goals help to keep the Network on target. It is important to review MCO 1754.1 and MCO 1754.2A, as part of the planning process.

### **B. UNDERSTANDING THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVE**

For the Key Volunteer Coordinator to tailor the Network to the needs of the unit, it is important for the Coordinator to obtain an answer from the CO to as many of the following questions as are appropriate to the situation:

1. What are the CO's goals for the Network? What are the priorities? (For instance: does the CO want continuing outreach to unit families or a concentration on basic response to needs during deployments?)
2. What is the unit's history with the Key Volunteer Network in the unit?
3. How many volunteers does the Network currently have? Is that number adequate for the program goals in this unit?
4. How will additional Key Volunteers be recruited, screened and selected?
5. How will the Key Volunteer Coordinator and Key Volunteer Network be introduced to the unit?
6. How is the Network supported administratively?
7. How would that change if the unit deploys?

8. If the unit deploys, will the FRO or a rear-detachment be left behind? If not, with whom should the Key Volunteer Coordinator work to support the unit's families, e.g., the FRO of the next higher echelon in the chain of command or the FRO of a sister unit?
9. What situations does the CO want reported to him/her?
10. How will the Key Volunteer Coordinator communicate with the CO and how often? (Examples: will there be regular monthly meetings or will the meetings be on an as needed basis?)
11. Will the Key Volunteer Coordinator work through the FRO or other unit staff on routine matters?
12. what communication systems will be available, such as access to telephone lines, use of hot lines, newsletters, E-mail, answering machines?
13. How and when will information be updated during a deployment, e.g., recorded messages from CO?
14. How will Key Volunteers have access to these communications systems?
15. How often will rosters be updated and made available? How will Key Volunteers be advised that incoming families have arrived?
16. Will families and designated beneficiaries of single Marines be included in the network, if requested?
17. Who represents the command unit as liaison to the Family Readiness Support Program Council?
18. How will the Network be supported financially?
19. What expenses will the unit reimburse and what is the system for reimbursement?
20. What plans are in place should the unit experience a critical incident?
21. How will internal conflicts with Key Volunteers be handled?
22. What constitutes grounds for dismissal of a Key Volunteer Coordinator or a Key Volunteer?
23. What is the procedure for removing an inappropriate Key Volunteer?
24. Should removal of a Key Volunteer be necessary during a deployment, what is the procedure?

25. How are Key Volunteers to be recognized and rewarded for their service?

26. How are Marines in the unit instructed on their personal readiness responsibilities?

27. Would the CO be comfortable with a three or six month trial period for all appointments?

Any scheduled meetings with the CO should be treated in a professional manner. This means arriving on time, dressing appropriately, and being well prepared. It is imperative that the CO's remarks made during the meetings be held in confidence. Most Key Volunteer Coordinators will find that COs recognize the valuable contributions a Key Volunteer Network can make to the smooth functioning of a unit and that usually their goals for the Network will be realistic and their support will be responsive, fair and consistent with available resources.

Written goals and guidelines, based on the CO's expectations, the unit's volunteer assets, and its history should be developed to be used for future reference.

### **C. KEY VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

The Key Volunteer Coordinator must become knowledgeable about:

1. Family related issues and/or problems of the unit.
2. Setting realistic estimates for the time it may take the unit to respond to requests, especially if the unit is preparing for deployment.
3. How to update and supplement basic training for Key Volunteers with information on available support services, especially if the Key Volunteers are new to the unit and/or to the Key Volunteer Network.
4. How the unit supports Marines in developing their personal readiness goals.

The following is a brief description or perspective on coordination factors with which the Key Volunteer Coordinator will deal on a day-to-day basis:

#### 1. Coordination Techniques.

A Key Volunteer Coordinator's style will typically change with the situations and the composition of the Key Volunteer Network. At times, circumstances may require a decisive leader who, in coordination with the FRO, acts quickly in response to challenges. This style is necessary during a crisis. Usual circumstances permit a more democratic style of leadership where members contribute to making decisions.

Highly motivated and committed Key Volunteers usually thrive under this style. Part of the Coordinator's preparation for this position should include, whenever possible, advanced training in leadership styles and techniques.

The point to remember is that this program functions within a military framework. Ultimately, the CO has complete control over the unit Network and what it does. The leadership provided by the Key Volunteer Coordinator is to implement command decisions and guidance.

## 2. Routine Operations of the Network.

Delegating responsibilities can help Key Volunteers develop their own leadership skills and give them a greater sense of involvement in the success of the Network. Regular meetings of the Key Volunteers will provide the Key Volunteer Coordinator with assistance for specific projects and feedback from the unit families. Developing a list of Network activities in order of their importance will help to identify priorities. In order to build an effective team, the Key Volunteer Coordinator should develop an atmosphere of cooperation, have definite, measurable and achievable goals, and be responsive to changing circumstances.

## 3. Solving Problems.

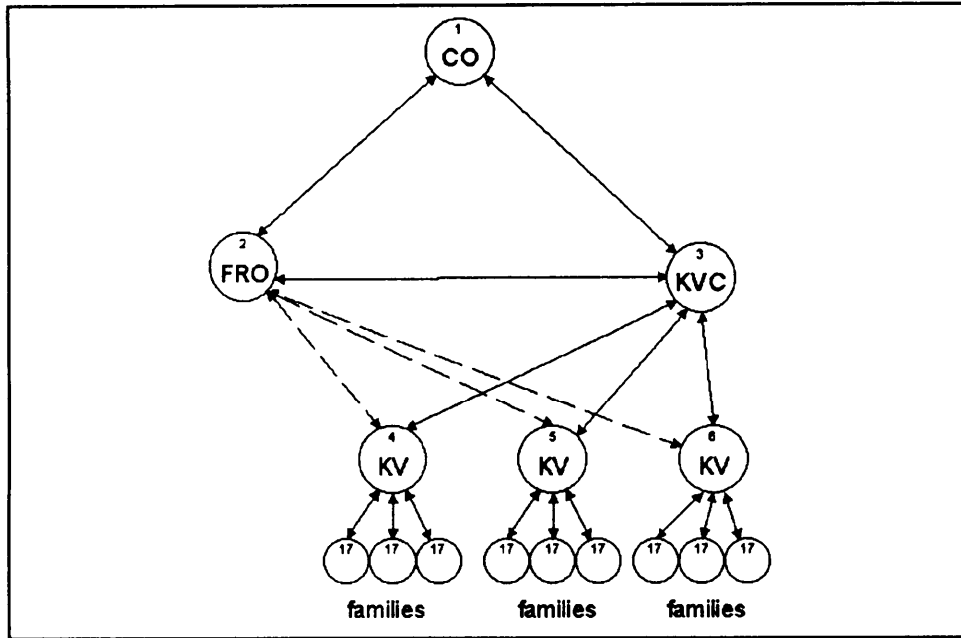
When internal problems arise because of individual personality conflicts rather than administrative or organizational issues, the Key Volunteer Coordinator should meet with both parties to avoid being caught between conflicting stories. If the conflict is between the Key Volunteer Coordinator and an individual Key Volunteer, the disagreement should be handled early and directly. If a serious breach of confidentiality or disregard of the CO's direction necessitates the removal of a Key Volunteer, the CO will handle the termination. It is not appropriate for a CO to reach a Key Volunteer through the Marine spouse. The CO should speak directly to the Key Volunteer, the Coordinator, or the FRO. In the CO's absence, the FRO, working with the Coordinator and the Advisor, would handle the problem.

When external conflicts arise between a Key Volunteer and a Marine family member, the Key Volunteer Coordinator may be asked by the unit to listen to both sides and help resolve the conflict. Differences may arise because family members do not understand the CO's policy or may be basing their expectations of the Key Volunteer Network on the way it was implemented at another location. If the Coordinator is unable to resolve the conflict, assistance should be sought from the FRO.

#### 4. Chain of Command.

Though the Key Volunteer Network will not have a chain of command it does have a chain of communication. However, it is important to understand the unit chain of command and develop a good working relationship within it. A civilian volunteer program working within a military system must be sensitive to chain of command issues. It is mandatory for military members to go through the chain of command for all purposes. The concern is brought to the direct superior who in turn goes to her/his superior, if necessary, and so on. The Key Volunteer program works in a similar manner through a chain of communication. Key Volunteers normally go to the Key Volunteer Coordinator or the FRO with their issues and they, in turn and if necessary, go to the CO as shown in the model on the next page.





The Key Volunteer Coordinator's job is to explain this system and the importance of respect for it—to the Key Volunteers and through them, the families. Insensitivity to the correct use of the military chain of command within the unit can cause great difficulties and destroy the credibility of the Key Volunteer Network. Occasionally, a difficult situation will arise when a Key Volunteer feels there is a "block" in the flow of information. (It could even be the Coordinator!) For guidance on any delicate issue and how to proceed, it can be helpful to turn to the Advisor, the FRO, the chaplain or even the CO. Utmost discretion should be used in these circumstances.

Within the Network, each level should be respected and allowed to function as designed. The Key Volunteers are working directly with the families and reporting to the Key Volunteer Coordinator who in turn works with the FRO and reports to the CO. Only in very difficult situations (i.e., an unsuitable personality in the FRO or Coordinator position expressed as unavailability, arbitrariness, indifference to concerns) should the Volunteer go directly to the CO. It is always wise to try through dialogue within the Network to solve problems before taking extreme measures.

#### D. RECRUITING KEY VOLUNTEERS

Most units have developed some system for recruiting candidates to fill Key Volunteer positions. Successful methods include:

1. Approaching candidates individually based on recommendations from other unit members or other Key Volunteers.
2. Inviting interested candidates to a meeting where the program is outlined and the selection process is described.
3. Sending letters to unit families from the CO asking for participation and describing the selection process.

At a minimum, Key Volunteers should have:

1. An understanding of the requirement to work within the guidelines established by the current CO.
2. A willingness to volunteer and attend training.
3. An understanding of the critical importance of confidentiality issues.
4. An understanding of the nature and limitations of the Key Volunteer role.
5. A motivating and positive attitude about the Key Volunteer role and about the Marine Corps.
6. A good reputation among the unit families for judgment and reliability.
7. A willingness to familiarize families with the CO's expectations for the Network.
8. The maturity to be effective.
9. Plans to remain in the area if the unit deploys.

Be prepared to offer other volunteer positions to those candidates who do not meet the qualification to serve as Key Volunteers. Other positions include assistance with newsletters, welcoming committee, event planning, and administrative and clerical support.

MCO 1754.2A recommends that the unit establish a screening process to select Key Volunteers. Most Key Volunteer Coordinators will have a part in that process as it is defined by the CO's direction.

The composition of the Network should reflect the composition of the unit. The Network would include spouses of enlisted and officer personnel of various ages and experiences with the military lifestyle. The credibility of the Network depends on its members, and the utmost care should be given in recruiting and selecting Volunteers who are perceived as trustworthy and approachable by unit families.

## **E. ORGANIZING A NETWORK AT THE UNIT LEVEL**

A new Key Volunteer Coordinator may join a well organized, smoothly functioning Key Volunteer Network or she/he may need to create one. There should be a turn-over file and activities may be based on what has been accomplished. If no organizational materials are passed on from the previous Key Volunteer Coordinator, or it has not been a successful program, changes may be made that meet the needs the CO has outlined.

The steps needed to organize a unit Network are:

1. Meet with the CO to establish guidelines for a Key Volunteer Network in the unit.
2. Recruit volunteers.
3. See that volunteers are trained.
4. Screen volunteers and recommend to the CO for appointment to Key Volunteer status.
5. With the CO's guidance, set up the terms of appointment, resignation procedures, and recognition opportunities.
6. Establish ratio of assigned families to volunteers and organize the system, e.g., telephone tree, newsletters, information events, outreach and welcome activities.
7. Establish support for the Network, e.g., regular meetings for resource information, problem solving, mutual support, etc.

Sometimes many of these steps will be taken simultaneously. The Coordinator will find each unit's procedures are a little different and reflect the CO's style and policies. The

priorities placed on which aspect of Network activities are established first will reflect the CO'S guidance and the needs of the unit.

The assignment of unit families to Key Volunteers for Network activities may be done in a variety of ways. Rosters can be divided according to companies, neighborhoods, detachments, along the lines of existing friendships or interests held in common, or by any combination that works to create comfortable groups. The rosters are used when activating the telephone tree for dissemination of information. Any Network can anticipate that there will be some families missing, some incorrect information, and that updates will be required frequently. Part of the Key Volunteer's job is to contribute any relevant information on moves, address changes, etc., to help keep rosters current.

The use of the telephone tree should usually be restricted to dissemination of unit information. The CO may direct the activation of the telephone tree on a regular basis or in emergency situations. An exception to this policy is during deployment, the Key Volunteer Coordinator and Key Volunteers may use the telephone tree as a regular way of supporting and keeping in touch with families. A Key Volunteer is required to clear with the Coordinator when she/he passes specific information on the tree.

#### **F. TRAINING**

Following successful recruiting efforts, eligible Key Volunteer candidates must be trained. The required training outlined in the MCO 1754.2A should be available through the FSC, if located near a major installation. When an FSC is not available, the Key Volunteer Coordinator can use the materials provided in the training guide to organize a basic training course using local talent such as a Chaplain for assistance in putting together acceptable training.

Sometimes at small and isolated installations and at Reserve Training Centers, the Key Volunteer Coordinator may find it necessary to seek related training in the community, e.g., Red Cross, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, and community colleges for courses such as stress management, time management, communication skills, etc.

Key Volunteers trained at another installation will need further information on how the Network may differ from the one in which they served previously. They will need to attend local training for their new position in the Network, and information on local resources.

In addition to the basic training, Key Volunteers need to know:

1. The CO's intent for the program - their role and the Key Volunteer Coordinator's expectations.
2. The history of the unit's Key Volunteer Network.
3. How to use the unit's "chain of command."

#### **G. IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

The reliability and effectiveness of the system will depend on each Key Volunteer understanding the importance of keeping confidences and knowing which situations require reporting to the CO. Confidentiality and the Privacy Act of 1974 are required elements of Key Volunteer training.

Key Volunteers should be aware that families are not under the same obligation to keep confidences. Therefore, Key Volunteers should be cautious about sharing personal information when showing empathy.

Providing guidance on the procedures for reporting spouse abuse, child abuse and neglect, drug abuse, or other potentially dangerous situations will be a element of basic training for Key Volunteers. Since this is a critical area, the Key Volunteer Coordinator must have up to date information on state and local laws and Marine Corps regulations in these areas. The CO, the FRO and the FSC can help provide this information.

#### **H. MAKING FAMILIES AWARE OF THE NETWORK AND HOW IT CAN ASSIST THEM**

Some units send letters introducing the Key Volunteers and the Network to families. Others use the initial contact a Key Volunteer has with each family to establish that connection. Key Volunteer training includes guidance on introductory telephone calls. It is also important to tell families how to use the local Network effectively. This will be especially important if families are familiar with another program different from the local one. All Key Volunteers should understand the Marine Corps-wide concept for family readiness and the Key Volunteer's role within the Family Readiness Support Program. By offering consistent information, Key Volunteers will help families understand their personal preparedness requirements and the support systems, including Key Volunteers, which help them reach the necessary level of readiness.

Some families may not have telephones. In those cases a note providing information may serve as an introduction to the Network. It is important to emphasize again and again that the Network enables families to help themselves more efficiently.

#### **I. GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING UNIT EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

During stressful times, Key Volunteers perform an important function in helping families cope with crisis situations. Any unit can experience a critical incident, a training accident, a rapid deployment or other emergency, whether in a non-deployment status or on the front line. It is important to establish in advance with the CO how the unit Network will react and pass information that will help Key Volunteers react quickly to prevent confusion and distress. Contingency planning regarding support services and individual role assignments should be ongoing. As part of the local training some of the factors to consider are:

1. Describing the anticipated events and organizational consequences.
2. Identifying problem areas for families.

3. Explaining procedures to deal with those problems.
4. Assigning specific responsibilities and roles to implement the procedures.
5. Identifying the sources of additional resources that may be needed.

All members of the Key Volunteer Network should know about the contingency planning. Rumors are difficult to handle during a crisis. With almost immediate media coverage of events, misinterpretation and misinformation are common. Knowing where to go for correct information helps both Key Volunteers and families cope more effectively. Plans regarding the distribution and updating of information should be a high priority. Continual feedback up and down the chain is the most effective way of keeping information current.

Even the most effective and credible Key Volunteer Network will struggle to maintain its balance during a unit crisis. It will be important to remember that the Key Volunteers will be experiencing the same stress as the families they serve. The Key Volunteer Coordinator should make every attempt to provide additional support to Key Volunteers during periods of crisis. The Coordinator may need to seek additional support, too. The unit Key Volunteer Advisor would normally be a great source of insight and understanding. Chaplains or the FSC staff are other good resources. Ideally, the Coordinator and the Key Volunteers will be mutually supportive at all times.

#### **J. CONDUCTING MEETINGS**

Some Key Volunteer Coordinators ask their Key Volunteers to meet regularly as a group. Others find that frequent meetings impose hardships for busy Key Volunteers and are not needed. However, periodic meetings of some sort are useful for exchange of information, mutual support and the development of unit camaraderie.

Because their time is directly involved, ask Key Volunteers to state preferences regarding meeting times, locations and frequency. Most Key Volunteers appreciate occasional opportunities to share experiences and resource information, especially if the unit is deployed. Keep in mind that some Key Volunteers may not be comfortable hosting such meetings. Based on the Network's needs, keep the core of the meetings brief, structured and professional with optional time for social support and anecdotal exchanges. Gathering at the unit headquarters or a base facility may be an option to reinforce that Key Volunteer groups are not social gatherings, but a professional Network that is meeting to conduct matters of business and work and mutual support.

Experienced Key Volunteer Coordinators suggest that Key Volunteers not meet preceding or following social gatherings. Key Volunteers, as unit representatives for family assistance, need to be seen as professional in both their work and their meetings. If the consensus is that regular meetings are necessary, the Key Volunteer Coordinator may have a schedule of regular meetings and also exercise her/his judgment to call special meetings when the need arises.

The Key Volunteer Coordinator should make clear her/his expectations regarding attendance at regular meetings.

The following five steps should guide the conduct of most Key Volunteer Network meetings:

1. Develop an agenda for each meeting and ask someone to keep minutes.
2. Begin promptly at the pre-arranged time with a review of goals for the meeting.
3. Take care of business needing attention.
4. When problem solving is needed, a useful technique is to list each Key Volunteer's comments on chalkboard or chartpaper. (Listing acknowledges differences and concerns, and also helps when generating options or evaluating them.)
5. End promptly at preannounced time. Summarize conclusions and specify assignments for follow-on activities. Establish the next meeting date, time, and place.

Some organizational problems will be resolved within the group; others will need unit intervention. Key Volunteers need to understand that until the CO's decision is reached, they may need to delay some actions. As issues arise, manage what the group can handle, and elevate those items needing the action of the CO. Temper aggressive or overly vocal members by reinforcing a group decision-making process. Use meetings to acknowledge the group's progress or jobs well done. It is important to offer appreciation, specific reinforcement and recognition regularly. Simple refreshments at a meeting create a friendly atmosphere, especially if they are more than an hour in length.

#### **K. EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS**

The Key Volunteer Coordinator often assists at unit briefings and/or gatherings held to educate families or provide them with opportunities to meet others. Although at times the situation may require the Key Volunteer Coordinator to initiate an event, the idea should not be fostered that the Key Volunteer Network's sole function is to plan and/or coordinate unit family activities or social gatherings. The primary focus of the Key Volunteer Network is to provide information and referral.

Some Key Volunteer Network activities are unit-sponsored functions such as pre-deployment briefs and return and reunion briefs. It is inappropriate and illegal to use the gatherings to sell any commercial item or service, (i.e., insurance, estate planning, cosmetics, toys, kitchenware).

When events are held to help prepare families for deployment, the Key Volunteer Coordinator may be asked to help brief families about the Network. Members of the Network should be visible so that families become comfortable with the Key Volunteer to whom they are assigned. Wearing a name tag for easy identification is important.

If a Key Volunteer Coordinator is asked to assist in planning a unit event, several things should be considered: the group level of experience with the Marine Corps, timing of the event to avoid family conflicts, and availability of child care. Attendance usually is increased when child care is provided.

#### **L. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**

As the official representative of the CO, the Key Volunteer Coordinator or Key Volunteer may be approached by the media for interviews - especially during a crisis situation when the unit is deployed. The media should always be referred to the Public Affairs Office. The unit CO or designated representative should be notified of the media contact. In case of direct contact, the following guidelines may be helpful:

1. Don't be overly concerned.

There is no obligation whatsoever to provide information. The safest bet is to refer the call to the command or the base Public Affairs Officer. The caller's name, organization, and questions should be passed to the Public Affairs Officer.

2. Be wary!

Remember that the media has a job to do, and will often be persistent when trying to confirm a rumor! If a media representative persists, the name of the representative and his/her organization should be taken and notification made to the Public Affairs Officer immediately. Keep referring to the Public Affairs Office.

3. Be cooperative.

If a comment is provided to the media, notify the unit and the Public Affairs Officer immediately. If media coverage of an event (i.e., family day, homecoming, etc.) is desired, contact the Public Affairs Officer for assistance.



4. Be accurate.

If an interview or comment is provided, stick to the facts and avoid speculation or personal opinion.

#### **M. NEWSLETTERS**

The newsletter which is prepared and sent to the unit's families is an excellent way to disseminate information. Newsletters create and sustain a sense of family within the unit. Newsletters also facilitate information and referral by providing how-to information and the latest updates on a variety of programs and services. Including answers to questions asked frequently of Key Volunteers could serve to lessen routine information calls. For some families without telephones or who live away from the installation, it will serve as the main source of information.

For those who have never prepared a newsletter, more experienced Key Volunteer Coordinators are willing to provide feedback and pointers, as well as share copies of their unit's newsletters. The FSC is another resource. When there is a Key Volunteer Office, it will have samples on file. The task of editing and proofreading may-be delegated to a willing volunteer.

Discuss with the CO the newsletter guidelines, requirements, restrictions (length, content, frequency, etc.), potential contributions, and desire for review and approval. Also discuss, in large units, support of assembly and delivery to the postal stations.

Guidelines for the Key Volunteer Network Newsletters:

1. Choose an easy format. It should be easy to produce, and easily read by family members. The newsletter should definitely be typed, but another Key Volunteer or willing party can be recruited to assist with typing. Also, arrange for a proofreader, several if possible! A proofreader is critical to a credible finished product. Check all facts before publication.

2. A list of items suitable for the newsletter might include:

- A message from the CO.
- Specific news relating to unit family readiness issues and upcoming events.
- Information about helpful military or community resources. For instance, a change in hospital policies or hours, child care locations and hours, etc. Always include as much information as possible, especially a telephone number that has been verified.

- For deployed units: tips on handling different kinds of problems while servicemembers are gone, e.g., the help you can get at the base auto hobby shop.
- A listing of opportunities for volunteer work both in the military and civilian community.
- A question and answer section on frequent problems.
- Encouragement directed to the family members to call the Key Volunteer when needed and a brief summary of the Key Volunteer's job.
- A column by the Chaplain.
- A periodic listing of most frequently used resources with reminders of services offered. This is particularly important during deployment.
- Readiness information or checklists.

Frequency of the newsletter's publication is determined in original guidance by the CO. A monthly newsletter helps to maintain a sense of contact in the unit, keeps useful up-to-date information flowing, and reminds families of the Key Volunteer Network functions. The length of the newsletter is decided by the Key Volunteer Coordinator acting with general command guidance. Except for special issues, one or two pages normally suffices. Mailings should carry the return address of the command and not the Key Volunteer Coordinator.

There are regulations governing the handling of official mail. Check with the FRO to determine the proper mailing procedure for the newsletter, including the type of address label.

The Key Volunteer Coordinator must use good judgment about the type of material to be included in any newsletter. Be conservative and responsible in screening the content of each newsletter so that it falls well within the guideline of the franking privilege. If in any doubt, consult the FRO; the postal officer has the regulations. Specific guidance is contained in MCO 1754.2A.



