

A photograph of a man in a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt kissing a black and white dog on the head. The dog is wearing a green and white vest. A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark jacket and a purple lanyard, is sitting next to the dog, looking at the man. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor event space with a sign that says "EDVA".

YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

WELCOME TO THE FISCAL YEAR 2017 YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE

Director, Office for Reintegration Programs

In establishing the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) 10 years ago, Congress recognized that National Guard and Reserve Service members face challenges throughout the deployment cycle that are uniquely different than those confronting their active duty counterparts. Most notably, National Guard and Reserve Component (RC) Service members often live far from military installations and other members of their units, diminishing their opportunities for support from military bases and personnel during each stage of deployment.

RC members are the backbone of our Nation's military, comprising nearly half of our total force. We have relied on them to offset strains within the active duty force in support of combat missions abroad and will continue to rely on them in the years to come. Nearly one million Guard members and Reservists have deployed since September 11, 2001, with nearly 33,000 mobilized as of January 1, 2018.

RC members not only support combat operations, security, and humanitarian missions around the world, they also ensure our safety when unforeseen disasters and emergencies occur. Just this past fiscal year, RC members have responded to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, providing relief and emergency services to hundreds of thousands of affected Americans. Their compassion, professionalism, and courage continually safeguards our way of life abroad and at home.



YRRP addresses the challenges facing RC members and their families by connecting them with resources where they live and providing a network to support their unique circumstances. Through the program, they gain access to relevant information and resources, including family and marriage counseling, financial planning and education, small business planning, legal benefits, healthcare information, employment training opportunities, and veteran's benefits education.

Between January 28, 2008 and October 1, 2017, YRRP pre-, during, and post-deployment events have supported more than 1.7 million RC members and their families. The Post-Event Survey data indicates that attendees overwhelmingly report the events as being helpful. In fact, YRRP events have

received an 82 percent or higher satisfaction rate through fiscal years (FY) 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. In addition, YRRP is continually evolving to address the changing needs of a dynamic and diverse military community.

These 10 years demonstrate the critical and enduring nature of the YRRP. This program remains committed to maintaining the readiness of National Guard and Reserve Service members, their families, and their communities to enhance the capacity and lethality of our nation's military force.

COL Donna McDermott

Director, Office for Reintegration Programs



OVERVIEW

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) is a joint-Service effort led by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and administered by the Defense Personnel and Family Support Center's Office for Reintegration Programs (ORP). In 2008, Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to establish YRRP in Section 582 of Public Law (PL) 110-181 in direct response to the Nation's recognition of the unique challenges facing the Reserve Component (RC) community. These challenges include:

- Understanding and accessing benefits earned as a result of activation
- Geographic isolation
- Disparate or sparse access to military family support groups in local communities
- Continued and repeated deployments (as of Oct. 17, 2017, 32,654 RC members were activated, and nearly 960,000 had been activated since Sept. 11, 2001)
- Unemployment and underemployment of returning RC members



SECTION 582 OF PL 110-181 ALSO DIRECTS YRRP TO:

- Provide education and ensure the readiness of Service members, their families, and affected communities for the rigors of deployment
- Implement reintegration curriculum throughout the deployment cycle that builds resilience for current and future deployments
- Educate Service members and their families about the resources available, and connect members to service providers who can assist them in overcoming the challenges of reintegration

In FY 2017, RCs conducted more than 800 YRRP events, directly affecting 91,232 Service members and their families. YRRP has supported more than 1.7 million Service members and families since the program's inception in 2008. YRRP's continued dedication to sharing and evaluating resources, tools, and best practices in coordination with each of the seven RCs has led to an event satisfaction of 82 percent in FY 2017 (see Figure 1). YRRP initiatives continue to be developed and implemented through coordination with each of the RCs as they support RC members and their loved ones throughout and beyond the deployment cycle.

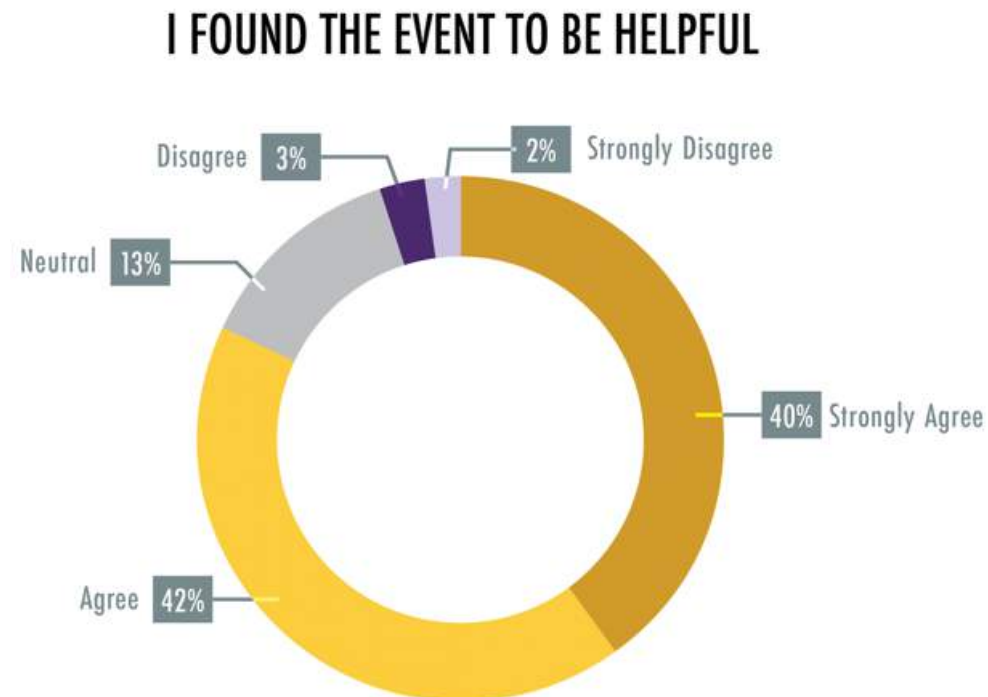


Figure 1: FY 2017 YRRP Event Satisfaction

HIGHLIGHTS

As emerging technologies continue to change the way people live, learn, and work, YRRP is focused on improving program tools to enhance its offerings and capabilities. From online registration and automated agenda creation to live-polling and digital information and resources,

YRRP is leveraging new and innovative technological solutions to increase efficiency and enhance event delivery, impact, and feedback.

EVENTPLUS

Throughout FY 2017, YRRP worked hand-in-hand with the RCs to develop new tools supporting EventPLUS, YRRP's online event management solution. Some of the key EventPLUS updates include:

- **SMS Live-Polling:** SMS Polling is an interactive polling tool using text messaging technology to gauge the audience's knowledge on key topics just before and after the event. This tool allows YRRP and the RCs to better understand needs, and subsequently deliver relevant content to address that need. SMS live-polling promotes interactivity among RC members and their family while providing real-time feedback to event planners during an event.
- **SMS Breakout Evaluations:** SMS Breakout Evaluations use two-way SMS technologies to solicit quantitative and qualitative feedback quickly from event attendees. This reduces the time it takes the participants to complete paper-based surveys and reduces printing requirements.
- **Agenda Builder:** This tool provides YRRP staff with the ability to publish and print a standardized event agenda booklet for participants, tailored specifically for each event and RC. The printed agenda booklet will soon have a companion online version for anytime, anywhere access by RC members and their guests before or during an event.



BEYOND THE YELLOW RIBBON

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon (BYR) supports programs that are intended to provide critical outreach and reintegration services to RC members and their families. BYR funding is provided through a

year-to-year appropriation approved by Congress. BYR is essential for building and maintaining a myriad of locally-based programs that build sustainable community support networks and connect and coordinate organizations, agencies, and companies to provide resources and support to RC Service members and their families.

In FY 2017, these programs supported RC members returning from deployment through a variety of much-needed services, such as employment counseling, behavioral health counseling, and suicide prevention. These services were developed and used across 15 states, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington.



SERVICE MEMBER AND FAMILY READINESS

Service Member and Family Readiness (SMFR) is an activity within ORP that promotes and synthesizes military family readiness, community capacity building, and psychological health programs that prepare and enable RC members and their families to effectively navigate the challenges of military service.

In FY 2017, SMFR advanced several initiatives enhancing the readiness and resiliency of RC Service members and their families through outreach, advocacy, awareness, and access to needed services:

- Facilitated the final year of the Council on Accreditation (COA) Family Programs contract. COA is a national accrediting “third-party” body that formally evaluates, verifies, and validates military and family service programs and providers against rigid Department of Defense (DoD) and services accreditation standards. To date, 62 National Guard and Army Reserve programs representing 641 sites have been accredited, with eight National Guard programs and 55 sites remaining to be accredited before the program ends in September, 2018
- Planned, organized, and implemented the 2016 Reserve Family Readiness Awards Ceremony, recognizing the top unit in each of the seven RCs for innovative family readiness efforts supporting unit mission readiness. The award program, hosted by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, promotes Service excellence, builds strength in unit-level family readiness efforts, and helps ensure the deployment and mission readiness of National Guard and Reserve units
- Participated in numerous DoD and other working groups to ensure family readiness programs effectively met the unique immediate and long-term needs of RC members and their families. Team members identified and provided a recommendation to correct a deficiency related to the “opt-in” date for National Guard and Reserve drill status officers in the Blended Retirement System (BRS), ensuring all newly accessed National Guard and Reserve officers had full opportunity to evaluate and select their BRS options
- Conducted research and provided referral contact information that helped ensure appropriate use of evacuation assistance funds by the National Guard after Hurricanes Irma and Maria. To help ensure RC members and their families had the fullest and most immediate access to information specific to the National Guard and Reserves, the SMFR staff evaluated the Military OneSource beta website, and recommended the establishment of a “Guard & Reserve” button to provide “one-stop shopping” for RC-unique information
- Participated in the DoD Total Force Fitness Capabilities Based Assessment and numerous other wellness programs, providing perspective and recommendations to better respond to differences in duty status, geographic separation from units, and other unique psychological and behavioral health needs of National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families



PROJECT Y.E.S!

Project Youth Extension Service (YES) is a national service program engaging college students in service to meet the needs of military families facing deployment. Specifically, Project YES expands the youth resources of YRRP and provides opportunities for students to give back to their communities and country through a year of service while receiving academic credit.

Students who become Project YES staff interns receive first-class youth development educational and facilitation skills, as well as gain valuable experience in program management. With these skills, interns travel the nation delivering specialized youth development programs to children and youth of deployed family members. To date, Project YES has produced 120 interns who have served more than 21,000 youth in 49 states, 4 U.S. territories, and Germany (see Figure 2).

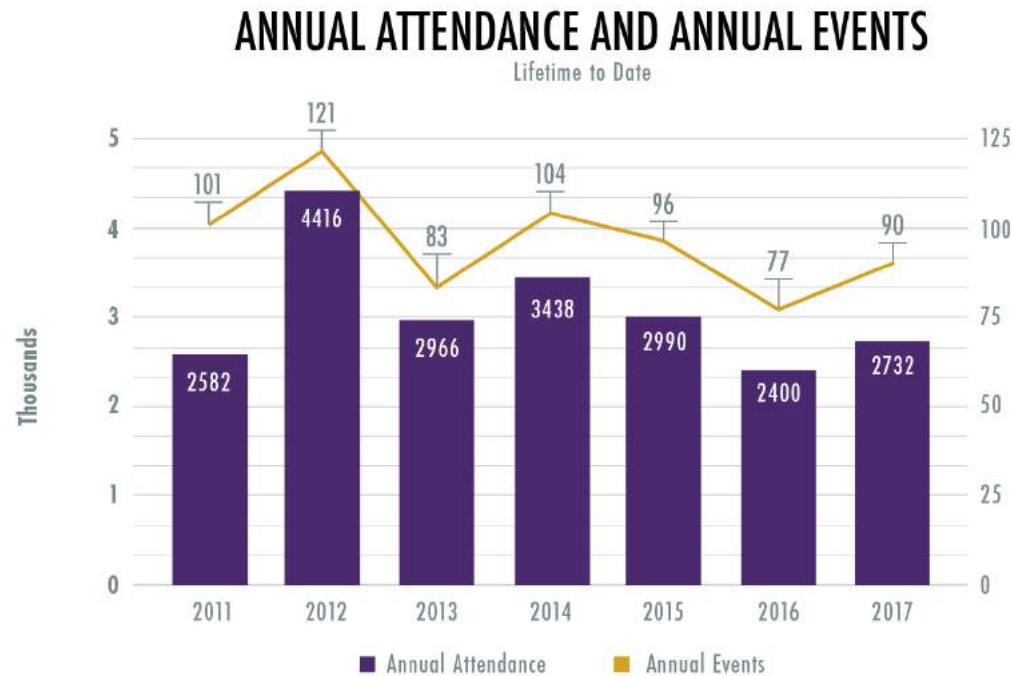


Figure 2: Annual Attendance and Annual Events, Project YES

YOUTH EVALUATION



YOUTH SATISFACTION

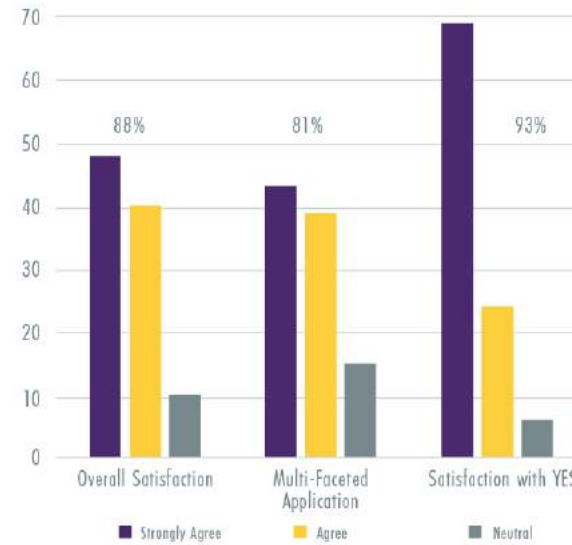


Figure 3: Youth Evaluation/Youth Satisfaction, Project YES

CADRE OF SPEAKERS

The Cadre of Speakers (Cadre) is comprised of a pool of highly effective and qualified presenters and facilitators who deliver DoD curriculum at YRRP events. The Cadre began in FY 2010 in order to assist RC training, event planning, and curriculum requirements. In FY 2017 alone, the Cadre supported 366 YRRP events, impacting an estimated 75,000 RC members and their families.

Members of the Cadre undergo training in presenting DoD-approved curriculum to RC members and their families prior to deployment, during deployment, and upon their transition from deployment to their civilian lives. Curriculum presentation topics include mental health, suicide



awareness, financial literacy, stress reduction, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, and other subject-areas representing the most significant challenges affecting the RCs. Equally important, the Cadre assists YRRP in reviewing, editing, and developing new curriculum based on attendee feedback, collecting curriculum and break-out session surveys for program enhancement, and participating in event planner training events in order to standardize and improve YRRP program delivery across the RCs.



EVENT PLANNER TRAINING

In an effort to increase standardization and consistency of program delivery across the RCs, YRRP conducted an event planner training in Denver, Colorado, July 19-21. More than 45 event planners representing all the RCs participated in the three-day event.

Event planners were paired with members of the Cadre of Speakers who facilitated table-top discussion and activities, and subject matter experts delivered training briefs on a variety of topics, such as EventPLUS, SMS live-polling, and agenda development.

The event also offered an opportunity for event coordinators to develop wider networks of support among the RCs in attendance, as well as the chance to participate in a “Frequently Encountered Problems” session where attendees shared their experience overcoming event coordination challenges.

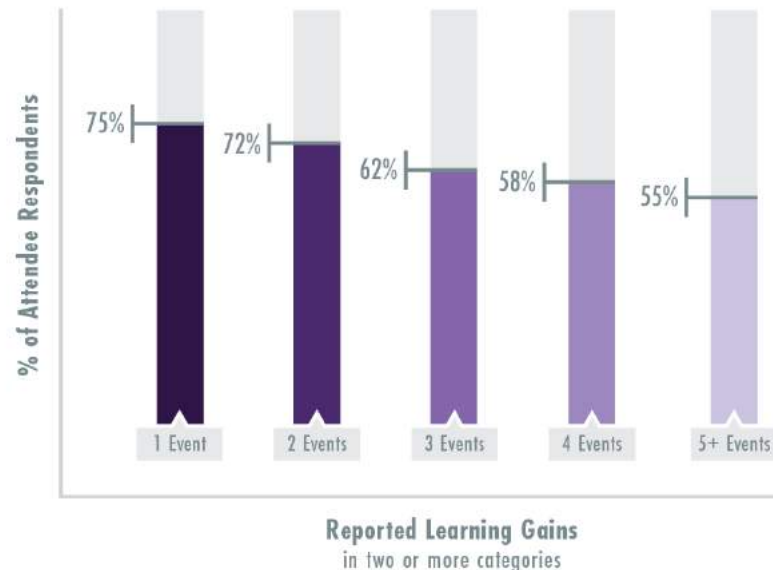
IMPACT

YRRP continues a collaborative relationship with the DoD's Office of People Analytics and the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) to collect and analyze data. YRRP is simultaneously collaborating with the RCs to improve program evaluation techniques, enhance data integration, and address the needs and feedback of RC members and their loved ones.

POST-EVENT SURVEY RESULTS & UPDATE

Whether pre-, during, or post-deployment, YRRP distributes and collects surveys to capture attendee feedback immediately following an event. The data collected from the Post-Event Survey helps to analyze the impact YRRP has on RC members and their families. This data is a critical tool used to continually improve program offerings, curriculum, and available resources.

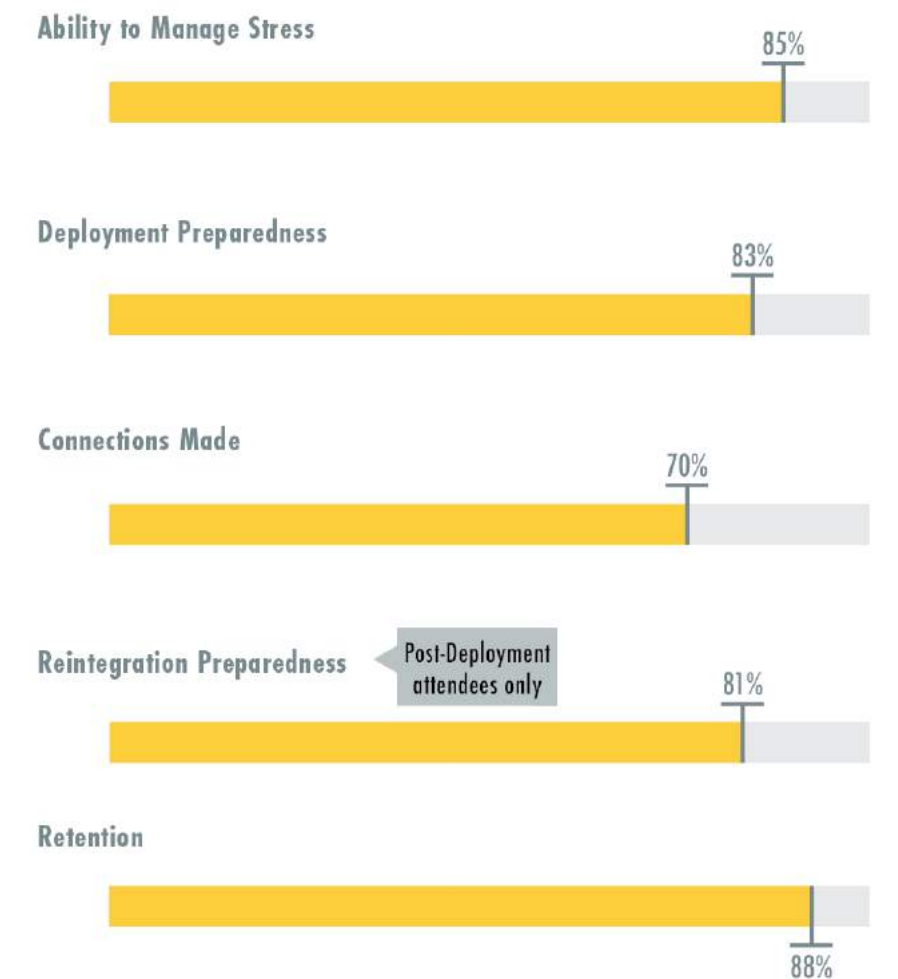
CONTINUOUS LEARNING ACROSS MULTIPLE EVENTS



Measuring learning gains examines whether the information and resources presented at YRRP events are relevant and useful to attendees. More importantly, measuring the learning gains of Service members and their families who attend multiple YRRP events demonstrates sustained benefits of the program. As seen in Figure 4, 55 percent of Service members and families who have attended 5 or more events still reported learning something useful in at least two categories, such as finance, employment, legal, medical, mental health, communication, and Veterans Affairs.

Figure 4: FY 2017 YRRP Reported Learning Gains

REPORTED BENEFITS OF EVENT ATTENDANCE



Percent represented on each bar includes both "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses.

Figure 5: FY 2017 Reported Benefits of YRRP Event Attendance

Another key feature of the Post-Event Survey is its ability to measure and analyze the benefits RC members and their families report from attending YRRP events (see Figure 5). These outcomes are essential to measuring YRRP's impact on retention, stress management, networking, communication, and deployment and reintegration preparedness. This information provides an initial assessment of successful efforts and informs program changes to sustain YRRP's ongoing impact.

YRRP LONGITUDINAL STUDIES

YRRP has yet to follow and track attendees throughout their deployment experience, as it relies heavily on data gathered from attendee surveys administered during events. To address this limitation in understanding program impact, the United State Navy Reserve (USNR) and the United States Army Reserve (USAR) are participating in longitudinal studies designed to assess the well-being of YRRP attendees at pre-, during, and post-deployment.

The goal of these studies is to assess RC members and their families in the areas of coping, financial well-being, relationships and communication, resilience, social support, and transitional stress. These identified areas of interest directly align with YRRP's mission and public law..

SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

The Army National Guard (ARNG) has continued to build the foundation focused on sustainability. The ARNG YRRP team has implemented a YRRP Scorecard with the goal of enforcing and encouraging compliance of standard operating procedures (SOPs). From a practical standpoint, the YRRP Scorecard provides beneficial data and metrics for the monitoring and evaluation component of the ARNG YRRP program. With a solid foundation finally put in place, the ARNG is now optimistically looking toward 2018 and beyond.

Stemming from after-action reports, there is increased satisfaction with TRICARE and resiliency breakout sessions. Likewise, the consistent use of the Cadre of Speakers generates positive feedback from event attendees. The ARNG also reported successes with the implementation of “Question and Answer” sessions with families during events to clear-up possible miscommunications. Lastly, the ARNG in Nevada created and implemented the first “in-progress report,” an initial logistical meeting with vendors to ensure efficient coordination throughout the event.

ARMY RESERVE

The USAR YRRP continued its pursuit to establish the most impactful and most efficient delivery of services to its Soldiers and family members. As part of this effort, the USAR YRRP completed a yearlong program-redesign project. The redesign focused primarily on the standardization of several critical areas of the program.

Those areas included event planning and execution procedures, course curriculum and content delivery methods, and program evaluation techniques. As part of this redesign, the format for hosting multiple phased events was changed. The Army Reserve Command's Mobile Training Team began conducting all pre-deployment and during deployment event phases separate from post-deployment event phases. The four Army Reserve Readiness Divisions now host only post-deployment phases at event venues.

The USAR YRRP, along with the DoD and the Clearinghouse, conducted a Longitudinal Impact Study on an USAR unit that deployed in FY 2016. The purpose for this study was to evaluate the impact and relevancy of the information and resources provided to our Soldiers and family members throughout their deployment. The study involved the observation of the USAR unit members and anyone that may have been impacted by the unit's deployment, including the rear detachment, members that didn't deploy, and family members or any other designated individual identified by the Soldier, regardless of whether YRRP events were attended. A custom survey was developed with the Clearinghouse, and all eligible participants were provided an opportunity to participate during each event phase. This study will allow the USAR to measure the impact of YRRP on individuals as they progress through each phase of deployment and reintegration.

MARINE CORPS RESERVE

The Marine Corps Reserve (MCR) continues to succeed due to Commanders' flexibility in conducting YRRP events based on the needs of the unit. YRRP is a tool for Commanders to address the challenges and issues facing Marines, Sailors, and their families. The YRRP works in partnership with other Marine Corps programs. In addition to YRRP events, other innovative methods for program delivery have been designed to meet the individual needs of Service members and family, including webinars and one-on-one personalized briefs through our Family Readiness Officers assigned to each unit.

The MCR YRRP continues to receive positive comments and interest from its Service members and families. The program successfully gathered satisfaction information from post-event surveys, reporting that 82 percent of attendees would recommend YRRP events to others and 86 percent felt better prepared for the next phase of deployment. The MCR is committed to program improvement by increasing the use of EventPLUS to track event attendance, increasing the consistency of event evaluations to improve data collection and analysis, and increased emphasis on delivering quality YRRP events to improve attendee experience.

NAVY RESERVE

With an emphasis on standardization, the Navy Reserve YRRP continued to provide timely support for its Service members and their families throughout the deployment cycle during FY 2017.

- The Navy Reserve YRRP provided Deployment Readiness Training (DRT) and Returning Warrior Workshop (RWW) training and support services to 3,555 warriors and guests in FY 2017. DRT attendance in particular, saw an increase of 6 percent in FY 2017. This is attributed to a steady demand for mobilizations and policy enforcement of mandatory DRT attendance for mobilizing personnel.
- Electronic DRT/Pre-Mobilization – In FY 2017, the Navy Reserve approved the use of virtual training via Joint Knowledge Online to supplement the robust schedule of deployment readiness training events scheduled throughout the year in each of the regions. This new training option increases flexibility in training delivery methods for the impacted commands and deploying warriors, while still ensuring optimal deployment preparedness.
- The Individual Augmentee (IA) Longitudinal Study – The study began in FY 2017 and is expected to conclude in FY 2019. The ultimate goal of the USNR IA Longitudinal Study is to assess the welfare of USNR-affiliated IAs and their family members throughout the deployment cycle. Key focus areas include coping, financial well-being, relationships/communication, resilience, social support, and transitional stress.

AIR FORCE RESERVE

The Air Force Reserve (AFR) held 48 pre-, post-1 and post-2 events educating 2,219 Service members and 3,471 family members, as well as conducting more than 5,000 personal touches to family members during their Service member's deployment in FY 2017.

The AFR is pioneering SMS-text message feedback, revealing attendee learning during YRRP events. From this feedback, the AFR YRRP has found that Service members and their families attending four or more events—comprising 55 percent of YRRP event attendees—continue to make learning gains in two or more educational domains (communications, finances, VA, TRICARE, etc.). Additionally, surveys receive a 75 percent response rate, and 95 percent of AFR members and those that support them report they are more willing to continue their military service because of their attendance at AFR YRRP events.

The AFR continues to meet the needs of Airmen and their families.

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

The Air National Guard (ANG) expanded Yellow Ribbon Support Specialists (YRSSs) to all 91 wings throughout the 54 states and territories. YRSSs are working to improve the availability of resources and delivery of YRRP events. The management team focused on updating the ANG training plan to include EventPLUS, funding form guidelines and timelines, and working with contracting offices at each wing. The ANG also focused on further development of a compliance tracking system that helps YRSSs track individuals who are required to attend pre- and post-YRRP events. In addition, Yellow Ribbon staff have begun using uniform agenda builder templates and creating curriculum builder spreadsheets to aid in the development of robust agendas with breakout options to maximize attendee selections.

of RC members and their families. The ANG plans to continue to expand curriculum and host one-day events with agenda changes, as well as implement a compliance system to provide ANG leadership compliance data.

COAST GUARD RESERVE

The Coast Guard Reserve (CGR) YRRP team is seeking ways to meet next-level expectations for Service members and their families. Some of the highlights for FY 2017 include:

- Successfully implemented Project YES into three YRRP events. As a result, child resilience and parenting skills were enhanced as reported on surveys. The child exercises developed by the University of North Carolina, such as Traffic Jam, Stress Webb, and Battle Ship, helped children connect with each other and allowed them to express themselves and share their experience with other children.
- Incorporated the Cadre of Speakers in the YRRP planning process. This allowed Cadre members an opportunity to help develop the event and discussion topics. As a result, Cadre members reported improvements in connecting with Service members and their families through relevant, insightful, and timely information and resources before, during, and after deployment.
- Offered “Saturday Movie Night” events for kids ages four through 10. These events were supervised and allowed parents quality time to attend marriage enrichment workshops.
- Resourced the American Red Cross to offer re-connection (mental health) workshops for adults and resiliency workshops for kids between the ages of six and 16.
- Successfully implemented a color-coded system that groups attendees into blue, red, green, and purple teams. This concept promotes maximum Cadre impact and smaller groups that supports Service member and family networking. Surveys revealed that the smaller groups allowed the Cadre to provide more personalized information.
- Implemented SOPs and served a total of 1,122 Service members and their families
- Shared the CGR SOP with the MCR to assist in the development of an MCR SOP.
- Maximized participation of service providers, including the VA, the Veterans Business Administration, Career One Stop, American Red Cross, Project Y.E.S!, Legal, Coast Guard Support, Navy Fleet Services, Military Families.org, Coast Guard’s Tutor.com, Operation Homefront, Operation Hope, TRICARE, education support officers, chaplains, Children Health Insurance Program, and the Small Business Administration.

The CGR YRRP will continue to elevate its child resiliency program by coordinating with Project YES and American Red Cross representatives. In addition, the CGR will continue to develop single-Service member programs. Finally, in 2018 the CGR YRRP program will continue to offer 90 minute Ombudsman/Service member Panels in support of ongoing deployments and to improve reintegration for future deployments.

WAY AHEAD

After nearly ten years of support of the National Guard and Reserve, YRRP remains committed to improving the readiness and resilience of RC members and their families. This enduring mission is done to enhance the lethality and capability of the total force, as well as ensure the well-being of RC members and their families as they face the challenges of deployment.

Our commitment to supporting RC members and their families guides our way ahead, as YRRP's efforts are concentrating on streamlining data integration to enhance program evaluation capabilities, revising and expanding in-person and web-based curriculum, and developing new measurements to increase understanding of the program's long-term outcomes on RC member and family well-being.

DATA INTEGRATION

YRRP's commitment to improving attendee experience drives data integration and evaluation. With better data integration, respondents would no longer need to be asked to provide demographic information while completing event surveys. Instead, individuals could be assigned a unique identifier to provide anonymity to the respondents and allow analysts to track data across efforts and events.

This capability may enhance the rigor of program evaluation and allow YRRP to track anonymous individuals through every stage of their deployment. This data may not only improve the YRRP experience by reducing attendee burden, but it may also allow YRRP to better understand program impact and apply program enhancements to increase positive outcomes experienced by RC members and their families.



**YELLOW
RIBBON
REINTEGRATION
PROGRAM**

SUPPORTIVE. RESPONSIVE. ENDURING.

CURRICULUM EXPANSION

YRRP conducts annual and systematic reviews of its in-person standardized curriculum to ensure content is consistent with the best available evidence. In addition, YRRP seeks to refine and expand its existing web-based curriculum and learning management system to better align with their corresponding in-person equivalents.

Although in-person events remain the most impactful and preferred delivery mechanism for program resources and information, YRRP also recognizes the requirement to support RC members and their families who cannot attend an in-person event. This commitment to ensuring every RC member and their family has the resources and information they need to successfully navigate deployment is driving YRRP's effort to create the most beneficial virtual experience it can.

WELL-BEING INVENTORY

YRRP is investigating the implementation of the Wellbeing Inventory (WBI). The WBI is a recently developed multidimensional assessment tool that could allow YRRP to identify strength and vulnerability across key aspects of RC member lives.

This measure could help identify how individuals are impacted by YRRP across key life domains, including health, vocation, finances, and social relationships. Analyzing the effects of YRRP across these four life domains may help YRRP improve program impact by allowing the identification and measurement of key outcomes.

YRRP BY THE NUMBERS

YRRP BY THE NUMBERS

	ARNG	USAR	MFR	USNR	ANG	AFR	USCGR	Total
Total Number of Attendees	31,999	18,418	2,458	3,528	19,055	14,264	1,241	90,963
Service Members	14,786	7,982	1,747	2,145	12,668	2,219	323	41,870
Family Members	16,270	8,181	629	1,184	5,862	11,397	863	44,386
Designated Representatives	943	2,255	82	199	525	648	55	4,707
Total Number of YRRP Events	400	101	110	40	247	48	9	955
Total Number Activated (as of September 30, 2017)	11,142	8,999	853	3,268	4,224	2,292	200	30,978
Projected Events for FY2018	239	41	100	39	252	51	9	731
Projected Total Attendees for FY2018	40,074	13,000	2,500	3,700	18,900	8,700	880	87,754

Figure 6: FY 2017 Statistics by Service

YRRP EVENTS IN FY2017

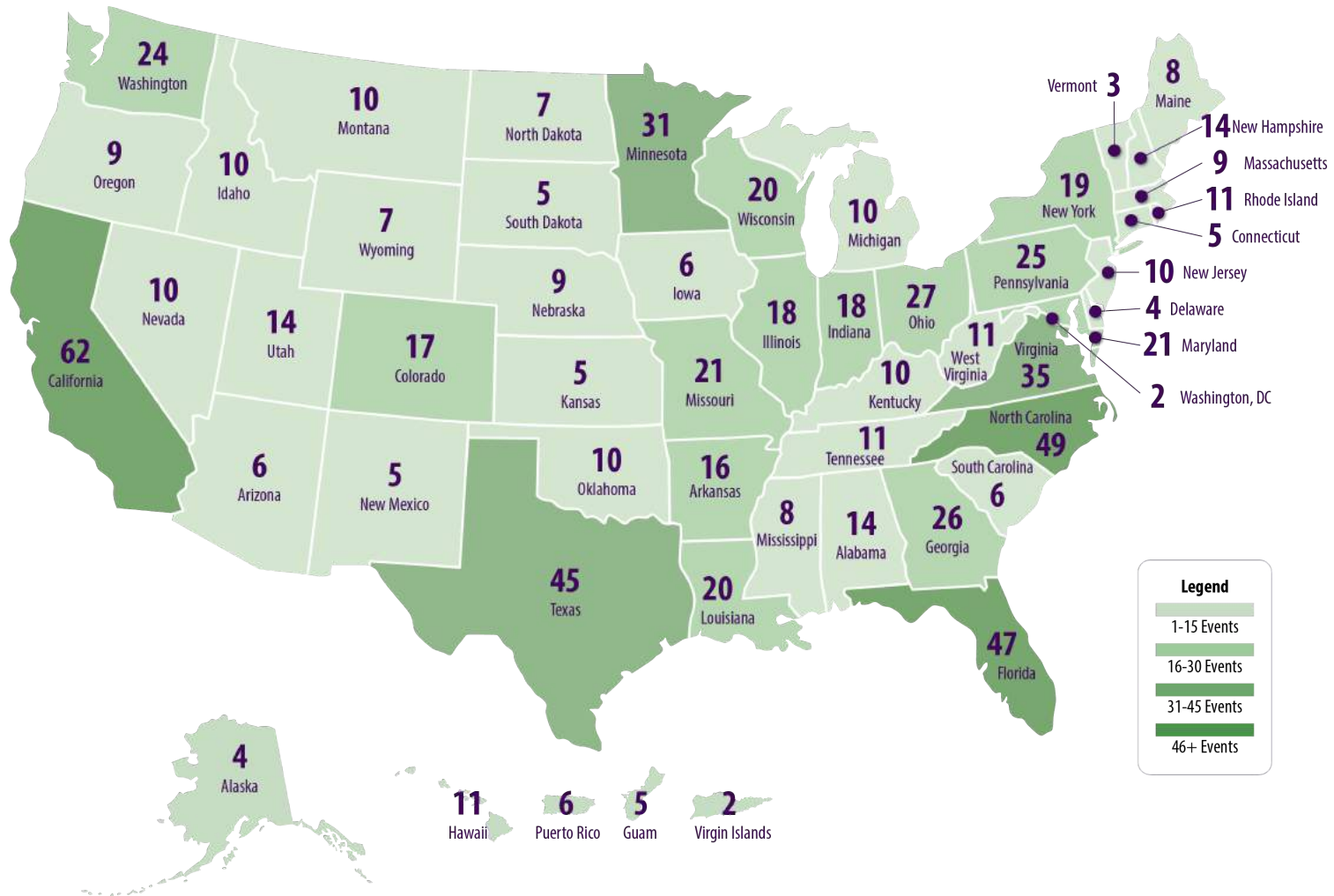


Figure 7: FY 2017 YRRP Events by State/Territory