



## Pod— Veteran/Military Support and Advocacy

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# National Security

## 2011-2012 American Legion Auxiliary Plan of Action

Purpose: To maintain and promote a strong national defense by strengthening and supporting military servicemembers and their families.

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For examples on how to implement each objective in this Plan, refer to the *How To* component at the end of this section.

# National Security

## National-level Objectives

1. **Objective:** Develop, implement and monitor programs and activities that contribute to the practical and emotional well-being of military servicemembers and their families.

### Action Steps

- A. Participate in Department of Defense and other outside programs that support our military and their families throughout the entire deployment cycle.
  - a. Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program – a national combat veteran reintegration program organized by the Department of Defense to provide National Guard and Reserve members and their families with information, services, referral and proactive outreach opportunities throughout the entire deployment cycle. Potential activities that Units may undertake with a Yellow Ribbon program office of a local military Unit (Reserve or National Guard) or a state Joint Force Headquarters include demonstrating patriotic and morale support at Welcome Home events; offering hospitality, refreshment, or child and youth activities at Yellow Ribbon events; or making presentations on Auxiliary resources and services to family members of returning service members at Yellow Ribbon events.

Log on to [www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil) to learn more about this program. From the website’s homepage, click on the “for Providers” link on the left-hand side to learn how Units and Departments can become involved. Each state has unique resources and each population of service members and their families will have unique needs based on their deployment experience. Doing an Internet search by typing in “Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program” will yield numerous websites for state programs, as well as sites for various military branches and Units.
  - b. Operation Homefront – Operation Homefront, a nonprofit organization, provides emergency and morale assistance for our troops, the families they leave behind, and for wounded warriors when they return home. Operation Homefront provides aid to families struggling not only with emergencies, but also with the problems of everyday life. Potential activities that Units may undertake with an Operation Homefront chapter include assembly of servicemember care packages and family member support packages; provision of hospitality, refreshment, or children and youth activities at Operation Homefront spouse support events; or volunteering at an Operation Homefront activity.
  - c. Family Readiness Groups – Their mission is to help military families manage the challenges that are often faced following a deployment. Auxiliary Units can contact Family Readiness Groups on military installations and in Reserve or National Guard facilities to see how they can help. Since these families do not always know about the Auxiliary, it is imperative that we reach out to them. We need to let them know that we are willing and able to help. Some ways Units can help include distributing the Sesame Street Video *Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families During Deployment*, at sendoff ceremonies; holding social events for the families; and mowing lawns or fixing a leaky faucet. Units can compile a list of members and services that each can supply. The Family Readiness Group could then distribute the list so that families could initiate contact with The American Legion and Auxiliary members.

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- d. Family to Family Support – Auxiliary Departments and Units may offer practical and morale support to military families on a group level, such as matching an ALA Unit to a Family Readiness Group, or on an individual family-to-family basis. Units can contact nearby military installations or Reserve or National Guard facilities to offer assistance.
- e. USO – provides morale, welfare and recreation-type services to military members and their families. Units can contact local USO centers to learn how to get involved.

## B. Participate in the Military and Family Support programs of The American Legion

- a. Family Support Network - Provides a broad range of services to help families cope with the unique challenges of deployments. Since September 11, 2001, the nation's active-duty military has been on high alert, and National Guard and Reserve Units are being mobilized in record numbers. As a result, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly expenses, and assistance is needed for a variety of everyday chores. These tasks include grocery shopping, child care, mowing the grass, fixing the family car and other routine household jobs. To address these issues, The American Legion has a nationwide toll-free telephone number, (800) 504-4098, for servicemembers and their family members to call for assistance. They also can e-mail requests to [familysupport@legion.org](mailto:familysupport@legion.org). Auxiliary Departments and Units can work with their Legion Departments and posts to provide volunteers and other Auxiliary resources as part of the Legion Family response to requests that come through the Legion's Family Support Network.
- b. Operation Comfort Warriors – a program dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded and ill warriors, either hospitalized or in warrior transition Units, with comfort items not usually supplied by the government. Auxiliary Departments and Units can support their Legion Departments and Posts to raise funds for Operation Comfort Warriors.
- c. Heroes to Hometown – The American Legion is further assisting returning heroes through its Heroes to Hometown program which focuses on addressing issues for newly returning heroes, ranging from employment to emergency monetary assistance, to renovating homes for handicap access, to family counseling. Service members and their families seeking assistance can call (202) 621-9924 or e-mail [heroestohometowns@legion.org](mailto:heroestohometowns@legion.org). This program provides numerous opportunities for Auxiliary Units and Legion posts to work together.
- d. Gold Star Banner and Blue Star Banner Programs - The Blue Star Service Banner was designed and patented in 1917. It quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in the service. Today, Blue Star Service Banners are displayed by families who have a loved one serving in the Armed Forces including, the National Guard and Reserves. If the individual symbolized is killed or dies while serving, the star representing that individual will have superimposed on it a gold star of smaller size so that the blue forms a border. The American Legion Family is rekindling the spirit of pride in our military men and women following the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, by providing banners to families in communities across the nation. In March 2010, the Legion announced a new Blue Star Coin to honor spouses

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and family members of service members who currently or formally served this country. The American Legion also has a special Blue Star Banner Corporate Flag for government and corporate America to show their support for employees called to active duty. Auxiliary Units can work with The American Legion to present Gold Star/Blue Star Banners to individuals and the corporate flag to businesses. Units also can hold receptions or events for Gold Star/Blue Star family members.

- e. POW/MIA Initiatives - The American Legion and Auxiliary are committed to achieving a full accounting of all POW/MIAs from the Gulf War, Vietnam War, Cold War, Korean War and World War II. This means returning living POWs, the repatriation of their remains, or finding convincing evidence why neither of these is possible. Units can join with the Legion to host a ceremony on National POW/MIA Recognition Day on September 16, 2011. This commemoration is set aside to honor the commitment and sacrifices made by this nation's prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action, as well as their families. National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies can be held on military installations, ships, schools, churches and post homes. The focus is to ensure that America remembers its responsibility to stand behind those who serve and to make sure we do all that is possible to account for those who have not returned. The POW/MIA Empty Chair Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th American Legion National Convention, calls for designating a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States. Units should follow this resolution at all official meeting and events.
- C. Support implementation of homeland security programs of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.
- a. Citizen Corps – This is the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) grassroots strategy to bring together government and community leaders to involve citizens in all-hazards emergency preparedness and resilience. Citizen Corps asks every citizen to embrace the personal responsibility to be prepared, to get training in first aid and emergency skills, and to volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief and community safety. Units should reach out particularly to military families transferring into their communities and include them in the Citizen Corps initiatives.
- D. Provide recognition and support for ROTC and JROTC groups.
- a. ROTC and JROTC provide leadership opportunities for future military personnel. Students learn firsthand what it takes to lead others, motivate groups and conduct missions. Units can support these future leaders by presenting recognition awards and by inviting them to participate in Post and Unit events.

## Additional Activities

**American Legion Auxiliary Gateway to Services** – Accessed through the Auxiliary’s website at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org), this portal contains valuable information on how to connect veterans, military servicemembers and military families to resources and support that

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enhance their lives. It is also a useful resource for Units and members to use to find more information about all of the programs identified in the National Security Plan of Action. Information is available in the following areas: family, community and social support; health and wellness; career, training and education; and financial and legal support.

**National Military Appreciation Month (May)** – Units can partner with The American Legion and other community organizations during May to increase awareness of and show appreciation for military families. To maintain a strong, all-volunteer fighting force, it is imperative for our National Security that we help to sustain our military families. *“We, as a nation, have a solemn obligation to care for those who fight and defend our way of life. When a soldier takes the oath of office, his or her family takes that oath too. Behind every soldier in uniform today is a family struggling with the stresses of war.”* –Kristina Kaufmann, an Army wife

## National Security Awards

1. Department National Security Program Award  
A citation presented to the Department Chairman in each Division who reports the Most Outstanding Overall National Security program. Entry must be typewritten in narrative form, not to exceed 1,000 words. Please include pictures and news articles to help tell your story. All entries must be postmarked by June 1, 2012, and sent by the Department Chairman to the Divisional Chairman.
2. Military Support Unit Award  
A citation presented to a Unit in each Division that reports the Most Outstanding Overall Program serving and supporting military families with special emphasis on helping them through times of family member deployment and/or injury (severely wounded). Entry must be typewritten in narrative form, not to exceed 1,000 words. Please include pictures and news articles. All entries must be postmarked by June 1, 2012, and sent by the Unit Chairman to the Divisional Chairman.
3. Yellow Ribbon Program Unit Award  
A citation presented to a Unit in each Division that demonstrates the best project incorporating yellow ribbons in support of military and military families. Please include a type-written narrative (not to exceed 1,000 words), pictures, and news articles. Department Chairmen must send all entries to Division Chairmen no later than May 15, 2012. Entries are due to the National Chairman by June 1, 2012.
4. Dorothy Pearl Civil Preparedness (CERT) Plaque  
A citation plaque presented to the Department having the greatest percentage of Units participating in civil preparedness. Entry must be a typewritten summary (narrative or spreadsheet) of participating Units, CERT training dates and number of participants registering for the program and number of participants completing the program. All entries must be postmarked by June 1, 2012, and sent by the Department Chairman to the National Vice Chairman.

## Resources

1. American Legion Auxiliary Gateway to Services
  - [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org)
2. Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program
  - <http://www.yellowribbon.mil/>

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- [www.jointservicessupport.org/YRRP](http://www.jointservicessupport.org/YRRP)
3. Operation Homefront
    - <http://www.operationhomefront.net/>
  4. Family Readiness Groups (FRGs)
    - [www.armyfrg.org/skins/frg/home.aspx](http://www.armyfrg.org/skins/frg/home.aspx) - United States Army FRG homepage
    - <http://www.hooah4health.com/4life/hooah4family/frg.htm> - includes FRG Handbook
    - <http://familyreadinessgroup.org>
    - [www.navyfrg.com](http://www.navyfrg.com) – Navy Family Readiness Groups
    - Many States have National Guard Family Readiness Groups which can be found by doing an Internet search using “National Guard Family Readiness Groups.”
  5. USO
    - [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org)
  6. ROTC/JROTC
    - [www.goarmy.com/rotc](http://www.goarmy.com/rotc)
    - [www.afrotc.com](http://www.afrotc.com)
    - [www.nrotc.navy.mil](http://www.nrotc.navy.mil)
    - [www.mcjrotc.org](http://www.mcjrotc.org)
  7. American Legion Programs – [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)
    - Family Support Network - [www.legion.org/familysupport](http://www.legion.org/familysupport)
    - Operation Comfort Warriors - [www.legion.org/troops/operationcomfort](http://www.legion.org/troops/operationcomfort)
    - Gold Star and Blue Star Banner Program - [www.legion.org/troops/bluestar](http://www.legion.org/troops/bluestar)
    - POW/MIA Initiatives - [www.legion.org/powmia](http://www.legion.org/powmia)
    - The American Legion Publications for National Security – [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)
  8. POW/MIA
    - [www.dtic.mil/dpmo/](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/)
  9. National Military Appreciation Month
    - [www.nmam.org/](http://www.nmam.org/)
  10. Citizen Corps/CERT Training
    - [www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training\\_mat.shtm](http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training_mat.shtm)
    - [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov)

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**Committee:**

## National Security

**Submitted by:**

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**Objective:**

#1 Develop, implement and monitor programs and activities that contribute to the practical and emotional well-being of military service members and their families.

**Step-by-Step Instructions:**

- A. Participate in Department of Defense and other outside programs that support our military and their families throughout the entire deployment cycle.

Yellow Ribbon Project

- Invite unit members to meet and make yellow ribbons and display them throughout your communities to show support for the troops.
- Approach the local Chamber of Commerce or other nonprofits (example: Yellow Ribbon Program) to help promote welcome-home events.

Adopt a Military Family

- Look for contacts who know of active-duty military families.
  - Contact your Family Readiness Group.
- Send handwritten notes or emails inviting families to functions.
- Offer help with household chores (lawn mowing, babysitting, grocery shopping, handy-man needs, etc).
- Contact local discount department stores to see if they will donate gift cards.

- B. Participate in the military and family support programs of The American Legion.

- Utilize networking opportunities to find families who have active military.
- Take care of the wounded warriors and their families once they get home by collecting family comfort items.
- Suggest they go to the local VA office in their county and get signed up in the VA system.
- Host job fairs.
- Present Blue Star Banners to the families in honor of their soldier.
- Present Gold Star Banners to the families in memory of their soldier.

Join with The American Legion and Sons of The Legion to host a ceremony on National POW/MIA Recognition Day on September 16, 2011, to honor the sacrifices made by this nation's Prisoners of War and those still Missing in Action.

- Abide by The American Legion's POW/MIA empty chair Resolution 288, with a display at all official meetings and events.
- Write letters/emails to your state legislators supporting The American Legion Family's commitment to achieving a full accounting of POWs and MIAs from all wars.

*continued*



*National Security How To (Objective #1) continued*

Set up webcams in your Legion Home so family members can actually see their soldier.

- Acquire necessary hardware (up-to-date computer, fast Internet connection, Skype or other similar software, webcam).
- Advertise the opportunity to use computer/webcam to community (newspaper or local news station).
- Create events with this opportunity.

C. Support implementation of homeland security programs of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

- Have a training exercise in your post home to give training in first aid, CPR, or any other type of emergency skills.
- Collect supplies for emergency preparedness kits and distribute them in your community.
- When a disaster strikes, be there to volunteer as a unit.

D. Provide recognition and support for ROTC and JROTC groups.

- If you have a JROTC unit at your local high school, have them post colors at various functions.
- Reward them by having dinners and recognizing their accomplishments; after all, they will be future leaders of our military.