

QUALITY OF LIFE

Wherever Marines are operating – in garrison, on deployment, or on independent duties – we provide them with Quality of Life (QOL) programs and services. Depending on the intensity and duration of the mission, QOL can be specifically tailored to meet mission requirements. Additionally, as Congress has recognized in the FY 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, without the continued support of military families, the nation's ability to sustain a high quality all-volunteer military force would be undermined.

During the height of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, 67% of Marines were away from their home base or station. The Marine Corps provided QOL support that Marines needed at deployed locations, and cared for the Marines and families left at home. Expanded toll-free family assistance hot-lines, centralized sources for information, and wide use of the Internet are necessary.



One example of an innovative approach to QOL support is *MCCS One Source*, a pilot program of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, for online and toll-free employee assistance for Marines and their family members. The program launched in August 2002, and was available Corps-wide in January 2003. By the end of July 2003, trained professionals had addressed more than 22,000 calls and

e-mails on topics such as parenting and childcare, education services, financial information, and information/advice on legal issues, elder care, health and wellness, crisis support, and relocation services. *MCCS One Source* is available 365 days per year via toll-free numbers, email or the Internet. By offering 24/7 round-the-clock information and referral services, we greatly expanded support of all Marines and their families, particularly reserve families who are often located away from bases and installations.

While the Marine Corps continues to focus on finding innovative ways to provide support to deployed Marines on the front lines and families at home, senior Marine Corps leadership also recognizes that extended deployments and time in combat have consequences on both the Marine and the family. Knowing the Marine Corps' specific demographics and influences in the context of mission and tempo allows our leadership to monitor risk areas and work to prevent incidents in the areas of substance abuse and domestic violence, among others, decreasing the need for intervention.

As an expeditionary force, the Marine Corps conducts frequent and sometimes lengthy deployments, and our senior leadership is focused on understanding and mitigating the effects of these separations and warrior experiences on recruitment, readiness, retention, and family life. For example, in recognition of the importance of the transition home for both Marines and their families, the Marine Corps developed a standardized return and reunion program in coordination with Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) personnel, health professionals, and chaplains. The

program was implemented in March 2003, and was specifically designed to ease the assimilation of service members back into family life following long periods of separation, as well as provide information on the additional support programs offered in support of deploying service members and their families. The program consists of a mandatory warrior transition brief for the returning Marine, a return and reunion

guidebook for Marines and family members, a caregiver brief, and briefs designed for spouses.

The Marine Corps will continue to look at our unique demographics (e.g., the youth of the force, number of children/spouses, number of single parents, number of relocations/forward deployed Marines) in a holistic manner and adjust



QOL programs to provide the counseling and support needed before, during, and after deployments. The primary focus must be on prevention so that intervention requirements are decreased.

The Marine Corps continues to monitor the attitudes and concerns of Marines and family members relative to their QOL as we provide support during the global

war on terrorism. We remain committed to improving the standard of living in the Corps and ensuring that the “QOL benefit” is clearly articulated to our Marines and families.

