

SOFAR: STRATEGIC OUTREACH TO FAMILIES OF ALL RESERVISTS

SOFAR is a pro bono project of the Psychoanalytic Couple and Family Institute of New England (PCFINE), a 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of SOFAR is to provide free, confidential, credentialed counseling and support services to the extended families of reservists, National Guard members, and veterans who are stationed in or have returned from Kuwait, Afghanistan, or Iraq.

THE NEED

Family members at home experience severe stress when coping with a loved one's deployment. While the stresses families face during deployment are well-known, the difficulties they encounter when soldiers return are often just as profound. Without treatment and support, this stress can lead to divorce, substance abuse, unemployment, behavior problems in children, and other related issues that can have a lasting impact on family life.

SOFAR'S PURPOSE

SOFAR's purpose is to help families develop and maintain coping skills before, during, and after a deployment. SOFAR coordinates the delivery of counseling and support services to families by licensed professionals including psychologists, psychiatrists, psychopharmacologists, psychiatric nurses, and social workers. These volunteers lead family support sessions, provide individual counseling services, and refer family members to other licensed professionals outside the SOFAR network if additional assistance is required.

RANGE OF SERVICES

SOFAR volunteers, while maintaining strict confidentiality, provide individual therapy as well as support groups for families on topics such as stress management, anger management, and general coping skills. Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, SOFAR volunteers place a particular emphasis on the needs of children, who are often ill-equipped to understand and cope with the temporary absence of a parent. Consistent with its commitment to helping children, SOFAR has published the *SOFAR Guide For Helping Children and Youth Cope with the Deployment of a Parent in the Military Reserves*.

CONTINUING OBJECTIVES

Expanding opportunities -- Building on its success in New England, SOFAR seeks to expand its program nationwide. SOFAR has already established partnerships with 27 local chapters of the Division of Psychoanalysis of the American Psychological Association and 31 institutes of the American Psychoanalytic Association, as well as many state psychological associations and groups of clinical social workers. As SOFAR hopes to expand its community-based model on a nationwide scale, it needs to develop similar relationships with Army personnel in new service areas.

Raising funds -- Although SOFAR's counseling and support services are provided free-of-charge, SOFAR needs funds to pay for administrative expenses associated with facilitating and promoting the services. These expenses

include salaries for administrative personnel, travel to train volunteers in new communities, telephone and mailing costs, and organization of training workshops for volunteers.

For additional information: <http://www.sofarusa.org>