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## Veterans and Military Families Corps (VetCorps)

### VetCorps Fact Sheet

#### **Background:**

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, nearly 2 million Americans have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (OIF/OEF). Among those, 65% have been deployed once, 24% twice and 12% three or more times. Members of the National Guard Reserve (NGR) have deployed in unprecedented numbers. Between 2001 and 2007, 254,894 NG and 202,113 reservists were deployed. During this same period, 2,736 members were deployed on extended missions within the United States. Effects of extended deployments to combat zones, time away from work and family and transition back to community life are impacting negatively the lives of our nation's National Guard Bureau (NGB) members and reserves.

Recent studies by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the U.S. Army focused on an alarming increase in suicide among military members. One suicide is reported every 36 hours and more than 1,100 military members took their lives between 2005 and 2009. The NGB reported a 50% increase in suicides from 2009 to 2010.

Fifty-five percent of military members are married and 40% have two children; 63% of military families live in over 4,000 communities nationwide. Approximately 1.1 million military spouses and more than 700,000 children have experienced spousal/parental deployments. Currently, about 200,000 children have a parent deployed. A 2010 White House report indicates an 11% increase in outpatient visits for behavioral health issues among a group of 3- to 8-year-old children of military parents and an increase of 18% in behavioral disorders and 19% in stress disorders were observed when a parent was deployed.

Additionally, the DoD's Millennium Cohort Study found that NGB members who deploy are significantly more likely to abuse alcohol than their non-deployed peers. Data from the DoD indicate that in 2008, alcohol abuse was at 22%. Heavy alcohol use was nearly twice as high among younger military members than civilians and rates were similar for male and female military members.

From September 2008 to October 2009, 13,119 NGB members in 23 states were surveyed. Data indicate: 22% were problem drinkers, 19% reported driving under the influence, 29% experienced financial problems, 21% did not trust their chain of command, 4% physically abused

their spouse/partner, 38% were dissatisfied with military life, 12% reported feeling lonely, 5% had suicidal thoughts with 33% of those with suicidal thoughts reporting they had a suicide plan.

For the NGR, deployment stresses have an even greater impact due to disparities in available services. Because of the dual military and civilian coexistence of the NGR, their problems are unique and pose greater challenges. When not deployed, the NGR do not have access to the full range of medical services available to the regular military. For example, Veterans Administration (VA) benefits for health coverage have not been adjusted to accommodate the needs of a "part-time" NGR members now called to active duty for long combat operations. Further, VA benefits end five years after release from active duty. This results in veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome and Traumatic Brain Injury needs having no access to military health care.

Unlike their active duty counterparts, NGB members do not benefit from the services readily available on military bases: family support centers, chaplain and counseling services, emotional health campaigns, child care, youth and recreational programs, etc. The community climate of a military base is designed specifically to care for active duty military members and their families before, during and long after deployment.

The faltering economy has exacerbated problems for veterans and military families (VMF). NGR members frequently return home to find their pre-deployment job is no longer available and prospects for finding new employment are dismal. Financial problems multiply resulting in foreclosure or eviction leaving families homeless or living in substandard or inadequate housing.

### **VetCorps Goals:**

- Increase the number of veterans and military families (VMF) receiving services and assistance by establishing partnerships and developing collaborations with communities to help create a network and safety net of support similar to that of military bases;
- Increase the capacity of community institutions and civic and volunteer organizations to assist local VMFs in several areas:
  - Enhance opportunities for healthy futures for VMF focusing on access to health care and health care services, with an emphasis on substance abuse prevention, treatment and outreach;
  - Facilitate the provision of and access to social, mental and physical health services to VMF;
  - Enhance economic opportunities for VMF (focusing on housing and employment); and
- Increase the number of veterans engaged in service opportunities.

### **VetCorps Method:**

- CADCA, in partnership with the National Guard Bureau, will recruit veterans to serve as AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members in coalitions throughout the United States. Members will assist local coalitions in developing and carrying out strategies to

address critical gaps in service for returning veterans and their family members. AmeriCorps members will focus on providing referrals to local services while VISTA members will concentrate on building the capacity of community coalitions to address the issues affecting veterans.

- By 2012, 100 CADCA VetCorps members will be in coalitions in 28 states and territories throughout the United States. The project will expand to additional states and territories by 2013.

**Becoming a VetCorps Member:**

To apply to VetCorps, please log-in or create an account by click on the following link:

<https://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do>

**VetCorps Contact:**

Coalitions interested in hosting a VetCorps member and individuals who would like to learn more about becoming a VetCorps member are asked to contact:

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