

# AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK



The American Legion's Family Support Network is ready to provide immediate assistance to service personnel and families whose lives have been directly affected by Operation Iraqi Freedom and America's war on terror.

Since Sept. 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. Applicants can apply online by clicking the assistance form at the top of the page. Calls are referred to The American Legion department, or state in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The local post then contacts the servicemember or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network during the first Persian Gulf War, thousands of posts have responded to meet these families' needs.

Posts are reminded that families in financial need with minor children are encouraged to call on the Temporary Financial Assistance program at National Headquarters to assist. Otherwise, it is

up to local posts to provide or develop the resources necessary to meet the need.

As our forces pursue the enemies of freedom in Iraq and around the globe, The American Legion supports our men and women in uniform and their families with the Family Support Network.

The American Legion post, in its infancy, was very much a "community" post.

Made up of friends and neighbors, members knew everyone else in the post, their families and friends. The post knew immediately when a veteran or family member was in trouble, and help was always ready and available to everyone associated with the organization. The post existed as a network of friends and comrades who cared for one another and responded when a need was known.

The Family Support Network is much the same. The difference lies in the expanding population and the loss of the close neighborhood relationships that defined the posts of yesterday. The Family Support Network developed during the early days of Operation Desert Shield, and later Operation Desert Storm and the Persian Gulf War. For the first time in American history, the "total force concept" was activated without advance notice or preparation. While National Guard and reserve units activated were equipped for the military mission ahead, the military was not adequately prepared to deal with or support the thousands of families left behind during the mobilization. Paychecks were often lost, not forwarded to the family or not even generated. This was especially true for the families of reservists and National Guardsmen.

The Family Support Network works when Legionnaires at the post level respond to the increasing needs of comrades and their families. As the nation's largest veterans organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families never wavers. Together, we must act to ensure that no family endures hardships caused by military service. By doing so, we ensure that The American Legion is "Still Serving America."

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