



*Service to the Armed Forces
National Headquarters*

Service to the Armed Forces

The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization founded on the battlefield by Clara Barton, has provided continuous support for more than 125 years to the Armed Forces of the United States, veterans and their family members. The foundation of our work stems from the 1905 Congressional Charter, which issues this call to the American Red Cross:

“To provide volunteer aid in time of war to the sick and wounded of the Armed Forces...”

Thousands of Red Cross volunteers and employees are answering that call on military bases throughout the world, hospitals and through a network of approximately 700 Red Cross chapters across the United States. These dedicated Red Cross personnel are deployed alongside troops in Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq to provide services to men and women in uniform and their families.

As the nation’s military and their families deal with the demands of increased deployments, we are committed to continuing our long history of dedicated service to those who have and continue to serve our country.

Emergency Communications and Financial Assistance

Military Aid Society Referral Program

During times of an emergency, families often incur unexpected expenses. The Red Cross Military Aid Society Referral Program is a partnership between the American Red Cross and the four military aid societies to provide access to emergency financial assistance to current and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their eligible family members. Emergency financial assistance is considered for emergency travel (i.e. transportation to and from the location of the emergency, food and lodging while traveling), basic maintenance (i.e. essential monthly expenses such as rent, utilities, food, etc.), and other extraordinary circumstances (i.e. funeral expenses, exceptional medical or dental expense, emergency vehicle repair, or return to duty station).

Red Cross Emergency Communication Messages

Red Cross Emergency Communication Messages relay verified confidential information about emergency situations involving service members and their immediate families. Messages provide information to service members, their families, and Commands pertinent to situations that are urgent and often time-sensitive; such as death, serious illness, a life-threatening situation involving immediate family, as well as the good news of the birth of a service member’s child. Emergency Communication Messages are independently verified reports that enable service members and their commanders to make informed decisions about leave and other matters in order to prevent, prepare for, and respond to a family emergency.

Requests for Emergency Communication Messages may be initiated by anyone and will normally be one of the following types of issues:

- **Birth:** To share the good news of the birth of a service member’s child, grandchild, brother or sister. It also allows service members and their command to possibly schedule leave with the anticipated delivery date or enables a service member to arrange with his command to view the birth of his child by webcam technology.
- **Death:** To inform a service member or a family member of the death of an immediate family member.
- **Casualty Information Check:** To request the status of a wounded, injured, or ill service member.
- **Alive and Well:** For mortgage closings when service members are stationed aboard ship or in remote locations and the closing attorney or loan company requires a statement from the service

member or his/her commanding officer indicating that the member is “alive and well” at the date and time of closing.

- **Illness/Injury:** To inform a service member of a critical medical situation involving an immediate family member.
- **Child/Dependent Care Plan Breakdown:** To report a disruption in plans for dependent care that has resulted in an emergency situation that needs the service member’s immediate attention.

Other types of emergency communication may include the need to obtain authorization for a medical procedure or medical power of attorney; reporting domestic physical or sexual abuse; reporting an incident that has resulted in or may result in an emergency situation; provide verification of the emergent circumstances prompting a service member’s request for extension of leave; information to meet a legal requirement or report a change in scheduled court date/hearing; and to notify military or civil authorities of a potential suicide.

Witnessing the birth of a child, being granted leave to be with grieving family, and knowing that families have someone to turn to in a time of need helps our service members and their families stay the course of deployment, faithfully serving our country.

Support for Military Members and Families Overseas

Situated on military installations around the world and alongside deployed troops in Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq, Red Cross staff serve military members in several ways.

As an integral part of our Emergency Communication Program, deployed Red Cross staff deliver round-the-clock emergency communication services. Many offices operate a lounge where troops can come and relax, use Internet cafés equipped with computer stations and webcams, and utilize canteen services offering beverages, snacks, personal hygiene items and calling cards. Some locations operate a morale phone bank.

In addition to serving as part of the integrated Emergency Communications network, Red Cross staff on military installations overseas provide Health and Safety training courses such as CPR, First Aid, and Water Safety, Healthy Pregnancy-Healthy Baby and Babysitting training to service members and their families. They also provide training to help community members prepare for and respond to disasters, and provide emergency assistance during times of crisis.

On military installations, deployed family members have opportunities to volunteer with the Red Cross, visiting with patients at military hospitals, managing and running the morale carts, and managing pet therapy programs. The Red Cross provides funds to offset the child care costs that military spouses may incur while volunteering, increasing the spouse’s ability to have an impact on the community and to learn new skills. Teenaged military dependents also have an opportunity to participate in summer volunteer programs, which provide fun, enriching experiences. These programs place youth volunteers at their base aquatics facilities, libraries or medical clinics.

Educational Outreach

Coping With Deployments

The Red Cross *Coping with Deployments* course is a new course that provides military and veteran family members with information on resiliency strategies and psychological first aid steps that enables them to help themselves and others. The four hour course was designed specifically for military family members including not only spouses and older children but parents, siblings and significant others of service members. *Coping with Deployments* is free to all family members of a service member or veteran and each participant receives an 80 page handbook that includes a significant resource and referral section.

Get To Know Us before You Need Us Briefings

The *Get to Know Us before You Need Us* briefing was developed by the Red Cross to ensure that community based military (Active, Reserve, National Guard, Veterans) and their families are aware of assistance, resources and opportunities available to them, regardless of their geographic location. The briefings are led by Red Cross staff and volunteers at Red Cross Chapters across the country. The briefing ensures that all military populations get to know their local Red Cross chapter and the services it provides.

Deployment Briefings

Red Cross personnel and volunteers provide briefings to deploying service members and their families. These briefings provide an overview of Red Cross services, including how to initiate emergency messages and possible volunteer opportunities for spouses with the Red Cross. Deployment Briefings are held in conjunction with other military service providers including family support groups, relief societies and official Department of Defense support offices. Red Cross briefings of this type are offered on military installations worldwide.

Support for Military and Veterans Hospitals

The 21st century brings new needs as America welcomes home its latest generation of wounded service members and veterans. The Red Cross stands ready to help fill those needs. To meet this challenge, Red Cross volunteers work in military and veterans hospitals and clinics, transport patients to and from treatment sessions, facilitate referrals to community resources, assist with nursing duties, provide office support, deliver books, write letters, make phone calls, run errands, or just visit with patients and their family. Red Cross services provided to wounded, ill, or injured service members and veterans begin with their hospital stay, through rehabilitation, until they return to military service or are discharged from active duty. The Red Cross is with them every step of the way.

Red Cross volunteers serve in 112 VA medical facilities around the nation. Each year, more than 600 American Red Cross volunteers of all ages proudly give more than 80,000 hours to help veterans in VA medical facilities. They work in libraries, bringing magazines, books, and comfort items to patients, provide companionship and personal services to patients, manage volunteer programs, and participate in outreach opportunities in community-based outpatient clinics, nursing homes and home visitations.

American Red Cross support in military and veteran hospitals includes:

- Improving morale, welfare and general quality of life of hospital patients and providing family members with peace of mind by recruiting, training and placing volunteers in health care facilities, in particular as personal service volunteers, to assist service members and their families during lengthy recovery periods;
- Identifying the needs of service members and their families and coordinating Red Cross assistance with those needs;
- Purchasing and distributing needed and often-requested material items to service members and their families and wounded warrior units;
- Ensuring continuity of programs when service members transition home or to new duty stations; and
- Providing airfare, meals and lodging for family to travel to the bedside of a service member severely injured in combat or to attend a funeral or memorial service for a service member.