

TIPS on Preparing Your Unit's FRG Newsletter

What is the purpose of an FRG newsletter?

National Guard units should maintain regular communication with their family members to help increase participation and promote a sense of belonging. One avenue of communication is the Unit FRG newsletter. The purpose of a newsletter is to help families understand the unit's mission and keep families informed of benefits and resources available. Newsletters promote family readiness and family camaraderie.

When you first decide to publish an FRG newsletter, you need to understand the regulations and procedures on how to publish them properly. Each unit FRG should have a Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) or Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) on preparation, printing and distribution of FRG newsletters. If not, then you can use the following information to get started.

How often should a newsletter be published?

How often you choose to publish and distribute a newsletter should be determined by the needs of the unit and level of involvement of the volunteers producing it. Once a newsletter is published establish a timely means of distribution, consistency is important.

What type of information should a newsletter contain?

Newsletters contain two types of information – official and unofficial. Official news relates to command and mission essential information that the commander believes families should have to be better informed. This includes Army/Air installation benefits, unit/FRG – sponsored activities, and resources, programs and services available. Unofficial information is non-mission related information such as recipes, coloring pages, birthdays, anniversaries and birth announcements etc...Newsletters are usually not the place to tackle tough issues; keep the content simple and to the point. The message is the important detail. (A list of suggested ideas can be found at the end of this article.)

How is a newsletter produced?

Official FRG newsletters must be printed in one color ink only and are limited to a maximum of eight pages, printed on both sides. A one or two page newsletter is often preferred as it keeps costs low and a larger audience will read newsletters if they are kept short, concise and easy to read. Basic equipment and supplies to produce a newsletter such as a computer, paper and copier can be found at the unit armory or perhaps in a volunteer's home. Coordinate with command if you should need to use equipment and supplies at the armory. Remember that although commanders are authorized to provide support to FRGs, sometimes these resources are limited.

If your FRG chooses to publish an unofficial newsletter (paid for by FRG funds, not military funds and does not include command supported information) then ink color, number of pages and content is not limited. Keep in mind that this type of newsletter should also be approved by the commander; even though it is considered "unofficial," it is still related to the Unit Family Readiness Group.

What are the guidelines for distribution and mailing of the newsletter?

FRGs may use official military mail if the newsletter contains official command/mission essential information and meets the guidelines for publishing and distribution. (See AR 25-30, *The Army Integrated Publishing and Printing Program*, for further newsletters and mailing guidance.) If the newsletter contains non-mission related/command information, it should be mailed using FRG funds. These guidelines pertain to electronically mailed newsletters also.

How do we obtain names and addresses to mail a newsletter?

FRG registered volunteers are entitled to rosters containing names, addresses and telephone numbers for official business use only. Use should be command approved and the information cannot be transferred, loaned or sold to another activity or organization.

Starting with the unit roster, you can build an FRG newsletter mailing list. You may want to add to this list by making available contact information for others to be added to your distribution list. For ideas on how to do, this contact the Family Program State Office.

Newsletters are relatively easy to produce and are limited only to the creativity and level of commitment of the volunteers. Creating a newsletter committee, setting and maintaining deadlines and having an MOI or SOP in place can help make things easier in the publication and distribution of your unit's FRG newsletter.

~~NEWSLETTER CONTENT SUGGESTIONS~~

Ideas to include:

- ✓ Notes from the commander
- ✓ FRG corner (FRG leader and/or staff quotes etc)
- ✓ Meeting information
- ✓ Upcoming event dates, reminders, schedules
- ✓ Calls for volunteers
- ✓ Benefits, resources available
- ✓ Welcome to new families
- ✓ Updates in military regulations that impact family members
- ✓ Articles on rank, insignia, acronyms, military time
- ✓ Articles on the importance of Family Readiness and what an FRG is
- ✓ KUDOs to family members
- ✓ First Sergeant notes; KUDOs to soldiers etc
- ✓ Unit statistics, facts, history, chain of command
- ✓ Pre-deployment and Deployment information
- ✓ Emergency numbers, names of contacts, FAC locations etc...
- ✓ FRG Chain of Concern
- ✓ Kid's coloring pages
- ✓ Kids corner (information relating to military kids, spotlight on youth activities etc)

- ✓ Birthdays, anniversaries, baby announcements (months and days only, no years)
- ✓ Recipes (try including a family or service members favorite recipe for a dish brought to an FRG event)
- ✓ Original works (like poems) with copyright release and historical information
- ✓ Highlights of past FRG events

Avoid including the following:

- × Want ads
- × Bowling scores, team scores etc unless the team is made up of FRG and/or the unit sponsored the members or event
- × Fundraiser announcements outside of the FRG
- × Invitations to personal events (baby showers, bridal showers, Tupperware parties etc...)
- × Do not include years on birthdays or anniversaries, or times, weights etc on birth announcements
- × Personal information such as SS#, physical addresses
- × Financial reports or dollar amounts (e.g. fund reports or fundraising profit figures)