

MILITARY ONE SOURCE AFFILIATE UPDATE



Keeping up with concerns of service members and their families

Chaplain-Led Programs Strengthen Relationship Skills

When civilians think of military chaplains, what often comes to mind first is a non-combatant ministering to troops on the battlefield, at sea, or in a military hospital. You might also think of ministers, priests, rabbis and imams who have been uniquely called to serve the spiritual needs of people of all faiths in ways that honor the free exercise of religion without compromising the tenets of their own faith.

You may not be fully aware of chaplain initiatives to help couples, families, and single service members improve their relationship skills and manage the challenges of military life with greater resiliency. The programs described below can be valuable resources for your military clients.

Army Strong Bonds Program

Strong Bonds is a unit-based education and skills-building program that serves as a tool for commanders to increase the readiness of Soldiers and Army families. Commanders initiate Strong Bonds events to help their troops develop and maintain healthy relationships and be prepared for the challenges of deployment. Four separate programs can be scheduled to meet a unit's needs:

- **Strong Bonds Single Soldier** focuses on the skills needed to find the right partner and build a great relationship.
- **Strong Bonds Couples** uses the PREP model to strengthen marital bonds through training for couples in communication skills, intimacy, and conflict management.
- **Strong Bonds Family** teaches families how to work together to stay close during trying times.
- **Strong Bonds Pre- and Re-deployment** focuses on skills for managing the cycle of separation and reintegration.

Chaplains with specialized Strong Bonds training facilitate programs during overnight getaways in enjoyable locations. Each Strong Bonds program follows an evidence-based curriculum and uses a variety of learning methods, especially ones that engage participants in interactive activities. Strong

Bonds programs are free for participants. The retreat format allows participants to learn in a fun, relaxed environment.

The Active Army, National Guard, and Army Reserve all offer Strong Bonds throughout the total force. During fiscal year 2009, more than 160,000 Soldiers and family members participated in over 2600 Strong Bonds events. Fiscal year 2010 is the third year of a five-year longitudinal study evaluating the effectiveness of the Strong Bonds training program. Initial results are showing a two-thirds decrease in divorce and an increase in marital satisfaction.

Your Army clients can learn about Strong Bonds and find an event at the Strong Bonds site at www.strongbonds.org. You may also encourage Soldiers and Army family members to talk to their unit chaplain about attending a Strong Bonds event or to their chain of command about scheduling an event in the unit.

Navy and Marine Corps CREDO

CREDO (which stands for Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation) has offered personal and relationship growth training in a retreat format since the 1970s. CREDO goals are very similar to those of Strong Bonds but perhaps with greater emphasis on spiritual growth, although retreats are not faith-specific. Eligibility for these CREDO programs includes active-duty military, reservists, and military retirees:

- **Personal Growth Retreats** are for individuals seeking a supportive environment to reflect on life issues and develop new personal and spiritual viewpoints.
- **Marriage Enrichment Retreats** are for couples to focus on growing together through better communication, conflict management, and greater intimacy. This is the most frequently offered CREDO retreat.
- **Family Enrichment Retreats** are for families to learn practical skills for managing conflict and solve problems as

continued on back

Did You Know?

Military chaplains are commissioned officers who are also ordained clergy of their particular denomination or faith. Chaplains must have a Master of Divinity degree or an equivalent graduate degree in theological studies. Many chaplains also have advanced degrees and experience in marriage and family counseling.

continued from first page
a family unit.

- **Single Sailor Retreats** focus on personal awareness, self management, and relationship development while having fun away from the demands of duty.
- **Warrior Transition and Integration Retreats** are for service members returning from deployment.

To participate in a CREDO retreat, service members register with one of the ten regional CREDO sites located in Groton, CT; Norfolk, VA; Bremerton WA; San Diego CA; Jacksonville FL; Camp Pendleton, CA; Camp Lejeune, NC; Kaneohe Bay, HI; Naples, Italy; and Okinawa, Japan. CREDO retreats are typically held in facilities away from installations and are cost-free for participants.

To learn about CREDO and the retreat schedule for your area, Sailors, Marines, and their family members should contact their CREDO office. You can find contact

information by going to www.chaplaincare.navy.mil and clicking on “Spiritual Fitness Divisions” (another name for CREDO). Unit chaplains can also answer questions about CREDO.

Overcoming resistance

Service members and military couples are often reluctant to take advantage of these programs despite the opportunity for a no-cost get away. Single service members can be especially uncomfortable with the idea of focusing on relationships in a group. Be sure your clients know that these programs are not therapy, and they won't be expected to talk about their problems with strangers. Confidentiality is a program requirement. You can tell your clients that feedback from Strong Bonds and CREDO participants is overwhelmingly positive and, for many, a life-changing experience.

This article was written with help from Chaplain (LTC) Carleton Birch in the Office of the Army Chief of Chaplains and Chaplain (MAJ) Quentin D. Collins at the National Guard Bureau.

Request Your Account for the Learning Management System

The Ceridian-Military OneSource Learning Management System for affiliate providers becomes active on March 1. You can request an account and get auto-approved access to the site immediately by going to <https://gm1.geolearning.com/geonext/militaryone/login.geo>. You'll be required to set your own password and user ID in a quick and easy process.

Log On

Please login with your username and password if you have one, or click on 'Request a New Account.'
Note: *Required Fields.

Sign-In Form:

*Username:

*Password:

Forgot your password?
Request a new account.

Click on Request a new account

Enter

Ceridian requires affiliate providers to complete specific training modules annually. The topics for 2010 are “Case Note Submission” and “Confidentiality.” You may also choose additional trainings. Once you've established your account with the Learning Management System and entered the site, you'll be able to see all the training modules currently available, including military-specific training.

Training Opportunity

The Second Annual Deployment Mental Health Symposium, “Serving Those Who Have Served II,” will be held June 2-4 at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. For information on course content, CEUs, and registration, go to www.ce.unf.edu or e-mail tracy.hejmanowski.ctr@med.navy.mil.