



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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By Sgt. Balinda O'Neal

Partners in Care provides support to service members

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – A newly-formed partnership between the Alaska National Guard and faith-based organizations is benefiting Alaska National Guardsmen who are in need of support.

Partners in Care is a program that links faith-based organizations that provide specific services with the more than 4,000 Guardsmen and their families to address the unique challenges service in the Guard presents.

“We are building a network of support,” said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Ted McGovern, Alaska Army National Guard. “Instead of all these different agencies working independently to support service members, we are trying to synchronize the support.”

McGovern referred to the support network as a web that will hopefully catch more of the service members who fall through the cracks and do not receive help.

From grief and marital issues to financial hardships and parenting struggles, PIC facilitates an efficient referral opportunity for chaplains to help Guardsmen receive assistance. Guard members can go through their unit chaplain for support.

“The need is great and the hurt is great,” explained McGovern. “There are a lot of people who struggle with life’s challenges and we want to do everything we can to reach and help them.”

In the last seven months, chaplains have been contacted by more than 1,000 Alaska Guard members. This has generated over 100 counseling sessions.

Five faith-based organizations have signed an agreement of partnership with the AKNG since it’s inception in October 2014; Eagle River Grace Church, Eagle River Presbyterian Church, Faith Christian Community, Grace and Truth Christian Church and the Conflict Resolution Center.

To further assist efforts, PIC has linked up with the Alaska Forget-Me-Not Coalition for Service Members, Veterans and Families. The coalition's focus is on statewide collaboration, community outreach, identifying gaps in services, minimizing duplication and maximizing use of existing funding.

Some of the services that PIC can refer Guardsmen to include addiction recovery, mediation, youth and adult fellowship groups, pastoral care and counseling, grief support and conflict.

"We are really looking forward to the possibilities this program has to offer in terms of creating a mutual appreciation and growing understanding between Alaskan communities and the military members serving here," said State Command Chaplain (Col.) Richard Koch.

If you are a Guard member or their family, or you know someone in need, please contact the full-time chaplain staff:

State Command Chaplain (Col.) Richard Koch, Richard.j.koch14.mil@mail.mil, 907-428-6904
Army Guard Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Theodore McGovern, theodore.j.mcgovern.mil@mail.mil, 907-428-6547
176th Wing Chaplain (Capt.) Angela Erickson, angela.erickson.2@us.af.mil, 907-551- 0268
168th Wing Chaplain, currently in the process of hiring

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A memorandum of understanding between the Partners in Care and the Alaska National Guard was signed during a workshop at the BP Energy Center April 16. The Partners in Care program reflects the desire to link caring communities in support of more than 4,000 Guardsmen and their families who face unique challenges because of their service. In attendance were, from the left, Chaplain Ted McGovern, JP Ouellette, program administrator and family mediator for the Conflict Resolution Center, Joel Brown, family pastor at Faith Christian Community, Col. Joseph Streff, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard and Don Marson, senior pastor at Grace and Truth Community Church. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)