

June 22, 2015
P&R 15-535

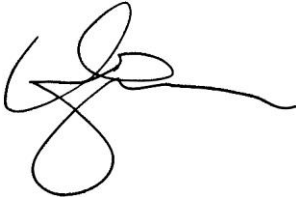
Ms. Rosemary Freitas Williams
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Military Community and Family Policy)

Contract No. W91WAW-12-C-0030

Dear Ms. Williams:

Enclosed is a project description entitled "Improving Caregiver Outcomes Through Structured Social Support Via Military Caregiver Peer Forums," with Rajeev Ramchand as the principal investigator. The work will be carried out under the auspices of the National Defense Research Institute, the OSD-sponsored federally funded research and development center at RAND. Total project funding is \$500,000. Project funding required in FY15 is \$250,000 to be provided by P&R. Funding in the amount of \$250,000 will be needed in FY16 to complete the research. The estimated level of effort for the current fiscal year is 0.7 STE.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Jack Riley". The signature is stylized with a large loop at the end.

K. Jack Riley
Vice President, RAND
Director, National Defense Research Institute

KJR:lb

Enclosure as noted

cc: Deborah Maraia
Sandra Mason

PROPRIETARY

**IMPROVING CAREGIVER OUTCOMES THROUGH STRUCTURED SOCIAL SUPPORT
VIA MILITARY CAREGIVER PEER FORUMS**

**Rajeev Ramchand
Principal Investigator**

Prepared for the
READINESS AND FORCE MANAGEMENT
AND MILITARY COMMUNITY & FAMILY POLICY

by the
National Defense Research Institute

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June 2015

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Project Description

IMPROVING CAREGIVER OUTCOMES THROUGH STRUCTURED SOCIAL SUPPORT VIA MILITARY CAREGIVER PEER FORUMS

Rajeev Ramchand
Principal Investigator

OBJECTIVES

To evaluate whether participation in Military Caregiver PEER Forums improves caregiver well-being by reducing caregiver burden and increasing knowledge about how to better provide care for service members and veterans with wounds, illnesses, and injuries. A complementary objective is to understand the specific benefits caregivers in the Military Caregiver PEER Forums derive from their participation in the program relative to the landscape of social services available to them.

BACKGROUND

There are over 5 million adults in the United States caring for a service member or veteran who is dealing with a wound, illness, or injury for which they require support and assistance. Of these, nearly 20 percent are caring for someone who served post-9/11, the majority of whom have ailments that include back pain and behavioral health conditions related to their service. Twelve percent of post-9/11 military and veteran caregivers provide 40 hours of caregiving support per week. However, such caregiving comes at a cost: nearly 40% of post-9/11 caregivers meet criteria for depression, and caregiving duties also impact their physical health, work performance, and economic and financial well-being.¹

One way to better support military caregivers is through peer support: analyses have indicated that caregivers who participate in structured support groups have improved psychological well-being, reduced depression, reduced burden, and increased social outcomes.² This is particularly relevant for post-9/11 caregivers who frequently report having nobody to help them with their caregiving responsibilities. For this reason, in its recent publication on better supporting military and veteran caregivers, RAND recommended that organizations like the DoD encourage and support caregivers by utilizing structured social support programs to mitigate some

¹ Ramchand, Tanielian, et al. 2014. *Hidden Heroes: America's Military Caregivers*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

² Chien et al. 2011. "Caregiver support groups in patients with dementia: a meta-analysis." *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 26, 1089-1098. Chien et al. 2009. "The effectiveness and active ingredients of mutual support groups for family caregivers of people with psychotic disorders: a literature review." *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 46, 1604-1623.

of the adverse consequences of caregiving. Heeding this recommendation, in 2014, the Joining Forces Initiative announced the Military Caregiver Support Initiative. As part of the initiative, the Office of the Secretary of Defense established Military Caregiver PEER (Personalized Experiences, Engagement and Resources) Forums on military bases across the country where caregivers can “convene, converse among their peers, share resources and best practices, and provide support for the challenges they face.”

To better understand how the PEER Forums are performing, the RAND National Defense Research Institute (RAND NDRI) proposes a study to assess how participants are using the PEER Forums, how participating in the PEER Forums benefits them, and the role that PEER Forums play in the landscape of social support services available to caregivers. RAND NDRI will use existing data (e.g., participants’ comments about the PEER Forums from existing evaluation forms; service members’ case files from Recovery Care Coordinators) to evaluate caregivers’ needs and perspectives on the program – data that will be complemented with additional, primary data that RAND NDRI proposes to collect through discussions with key stakeholders (e.g., caregivers participating in the PEER Forums, caregivers who do not participate in the PEER Forums, Recovery Care Coordinators, and others). In support of continuous quality improvement of the program, RAND NDRI will provide recommendations for creating an evidence-based data collection tool for the DoD to use to monitor and track relevant outcomes among participants. In addition, RAND NDRI will consolidate findings from this effort in a report prepared specifically for R&FM/MC&FP and work with the sponsor to create a strategic dissemination plan that ensures relevant DoD officials, policymakers, clinicians, and the scientific community are aware of the evaluation findings.

APPROACH

RAND NDRI will perform the following five tasks.

Task 1: Conduct information-gathering discussions with key stakeholders. RAND NDRI will work with the sponsor to identify the key and most relevant stakeholders and conduct information-gathering discussions with them. The goal of these interviews is to better understand the primary objectives of the PEER Forums, how they complement other social services offered by the DoD, VA, or other outside organizations, how the PEER Forums operate in practice, why caregivers participate in the Forums and how such participation benefits them. As such, key stakeholders may include policy officials, Recovery Care Coordinators, caregivers, and others. In addition, we plan to reach out to caregivers who do not participate in the PEER Forums either because they do not choose to participate in those that are available to them or because the installation they are affiliated with does not yet offer the PEER Forums.

Task 2: Identify and analyze existing data. RAND NDRI will work with the sponsor to identify existing data that may provide additional insight about the PEER Forums. This could be in the form of actual datasets or aggregated data for select items used to compile monthly reports, etc. We anticipate that this will include comments that participants provide on the evaluation forms they complete when they participate in the PEER Forums as well as aggregated data on attendance at the forums, demographic characteristics of participants, and topics that were discussed. This may also include aggregated data collected by Recovery Care Coordinators. The purpose of this task is both to gain existing insight from forms that do exist, but also to examine the type of content available that can help inform the development of more structured feedback forms, described in Task 4.

Task 3: Observe monthly Military Caregiver PEER Forums. RAND NDRI will work with the sponsor to identify when and where monthly peer forums occur and attend a handful of such forums to observe who participates and what is discussed. Discussions between RAND, the sponsor, and the forum facilitators will guide when and how these observations are conducted. Although such observations will not be representative of all such meetings, observing these forums provides rich contextual information that can aid in understanding program benefits and make realistic recommendations for improvements, if needed.

Task 4: Identify relevant tools for monitoring program outcomes, and provide recommendations for a standard template DoD could administer to PEER Forum participants for continuous quality improvement. With better understanding of program goals and operations provided from Tasks 1-3, RAND NDRI will identify the most relevant and practical outcomes the DoD should monitor to continuously track the performance of the PEER Forums. RAND NDRI will review existing measures for capturing these outcomes, weigh the benefits and limitations of candidate measures (e.g., length, validity), and provide recommendations on the set of measures that it believes would be most useful for measuring outcomes. In conjunction with Task 3, RAND NDRI may be able to test the measures we identify with program participants to ensure that it is simple to complete and easy to understand, as well as provide a snapshot of the type of information DoD can expect to gain from administering the tool to participants.

Task 5: Describe and disseminate results. RAND NDRI will work with the sponsor to identify optimal strategies to disseminate results and recommendations. In addition to the final report, this can include briefings to present to DoD officials and/or at scientific conferences. It can also include peer-reviewed publications, op-eds, blog posts, or commentaries.

SCHEDULE AND DELIVERABLES

The period of performance for this effort is 24 months from contract execution.

The following table outlines the anticipated deliverables and timeline. Progress reports and interim results will also be provided to OSD sponsors as requested. RAND NDRI anticipates regular and frequent communication with the project monitor throughout the performance of this project.

Deliverable / Related Task	Format	Due Date+
Work Plan	Project Memorandum	1 month following award
Interim Briefings	Briefing	Upon Request*
Interim Annotated Briefing	Annotated Briefing	12-months following award
Publish reports and conduct briefings**	TBD	18-24 months following award

+Note: Meeting these deadlines is contingent upon timely receipt of needed regulatory approvals, data **and FY16 funding**.

* Interim briefings will be limited to two per year.

** The final deliverables and briefings will be agreed upon between the Project Officer and RAND NDRI and will include opportunity for technical review and approval by the sponsor. All publicly releasable documents will be submitted for public affairs clearance before publication and/or submission to peer-reviewed journals; these documents will have not have gone through copyediting or proofing upon submission, but will go through these processes before final publication.

CORE STATEMENT

This research is consistent with RAND NDRI's mission and purpose. It will support specific analytic requirements of the sponsor and assist the sponsor in its policy development efforts, as well as help develop analytical capabilities required by the sponsor community. The research draws upon RAND NDRI's core competencies in military health care and mental health care, as well as specific knowledge and experience with evaluation methodology. It will benefit from and contribute to the long-term continuity of RAND NDRI's research program in forces and resources policy. It depends in part on the special FFRDC-sponsor relationship that affords special familiarity with the sponsor's mission and a close working relationship with the sponsor.

PROJECT MONITORS

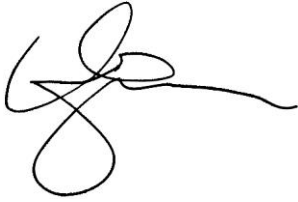
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FUNDING AND LEVEL OF EFFORT

This is a directed research project award under the RAND NDRI Studies and Analyses Center FFRDC contract, which was awarded by DoD in 2005 for a period of five years with a five year option. Prior to contract award, and again prior to the option being exercised, a comprehensive review was conducted by DoD and approved by the USD(AT&L). The RAND NDRI FFRDC contract is subject to the Cost Accounting Standards (CAS) for government contracting and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), with resident DCAA auditors. RAND has a currently approved CAS disclosure statement and has certified that costs estimated for this effort are consistent with established practices and procedures.

Total project funding is \$500,000. Project funding required in FY15 is \$250,000 to be provided by P&R. Funding in the amount of \$250,000 will be needed in FY16 to complete the research. The estimated level of effort for the current fiscal year is 0.7 STE. The sponsoring office has reviewed the detailed cost breakout provided separately and evidenced by the signature on this document has found it to be reasonable for the work to be performed.



Date: 22 June 2015

K. Jack Riley
Vice President, RAND
Director, National Defense Research Institute

Date: _____

Rosemary Freitas Williams
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Military Community and Family Policy)

Date: _____

Robert M. Flowe
Contracting Officer's Representative
OSD Studies and FFRDC Management
OUSD(AT&L)/ARA



National Defense Research Institute

Contract #: W91WAW-12-C-0030

Budget Estimate

22-Jun-15

PD#: P&R 15-535

Project Title: Improving Caregiver Outcomes Through Structured Social Support Via Military Caregiver Peer Forums

Project Leader(s): Rajeev Ramchand

Sponsor Funding Requested: 250,000

	Budget Estimate
Labor	238,321
Travel	3,121
Computing	7,558
ODC	1,000
Publications	-
Survey	-
Subcontract	-
Total Estimate	250,000

This proposal budget estimate reflects our estimating and/or actual costs as of the date of this submission based upon an analysis of the work to be undertaken and the cost experience of similar RAND NDRI projects.