

5000-1 (RCAF Family Advocate)

29 Jan 2021

Dist List

**RCAF FAMILY ADVOCATE ACTION PLAN:
REBRANDING AND ADVERTISING FAMILY CONNECTION PROGRAM – APS 2021**

SUMMARY

1. The RCAF Family Sponsor Program (FSP), first established in 2016, will be re-branded before APS 2021 to reflect its new name, the Family Connection Program (FCP).

SITUATION

2. In reviewing metrics and feedback from APS 2020's FSP, it became clear that uptake by RCAF families for this important relocation-related program was negatively impacted by ongoing confusion between the FSP and unit (military) sponsors, whereby people did not discern between the two and thus turned down the offer of a family sponsor.

3. It is believed the name "Family Connection Program" is a more appropriate one for the following reasons:

- a. It is more reflective of what the program is actually about (building connections between RCAF families to assist in relocation transition by offering incoming families a degree of comfort and an initial social network to reduce posting friction);
- b. It will reduce confusion with unit (military) sponsors;
- c. It should feel less like "asking for help" by incoming families (who are by nature proudly independent) since it will simply reflect the acceptance of a local "connection" prior to a move; and
- d. It may increase people's willingness to volunteer to be local family connectors as the new name implies less formality and "work" for volunteers.

4. The proposal to rebrand the FSP was first broached at Commander's Update Brief in Dec 2020 and then endorsed by Comd RCAF in his meeting with the RCAF Family Advocate on 18 Jan 21.

5. This action plan directs activities and communications efforts to rebrand the program to the Family Connection Program; to increase awareness of the program and its benefits for APS 2021; and to ultimately increase uptake of the program by target families (those relocating to a new and unfamiliar location during APS 2021.) Consultation and coordination has occurred with those responsible for specific activities.

APPROACH

6. Two elements are included in this plan:
- a. Revision of documents and websites to reflect the new name (Family Connection Program, Programme de connexion familiale); and
 - b. A proactive Public Affairs approach will be adopted for communications with internal and external audiences to raise awareness of the program and to encourage posted families to accept a family connection through this program. Since the primary target audiences are both RCAF members and their families, communications cannot be exclusively conducted through channels that are available only to CAF personnel.

AUDIENCES

7. The following audiences will be targeted:
- a. RCAF members (Regular and Reserve Force);
 - b. Families of RCAF members:
 - 1) All for awareness, but in particular target families who are being posted this APS;
 - 2) Spouses well established in a location who would consider volunteering as a family connector (formerly “sponsor”)
 - c. RCAF leadership;
 - d. Wing and Unit Command Teams;
 - e. RCAF Honourary Colonels
 - f. CFMWS / Military Family Services; and
 - g. Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs) who support the program on behalf of RCAF wings and units

MESSAGES

8. General Messages. The following general strategic messages can be emphasized when communicating to RCAF members and their families:
 - a. Families are a centre of gravity for the RCAF, providing strength and support to our men and women in uniform.
 - b. The RCAF recognizes that families are an essential thread in the fabric of our ability to operate and train. To our RCAF families, we thank YOU for YOUR service.

9. Family Connection Program Messages. The following specific information will be communicated to RCAF leadership, members, and their families regarding the Family Connection Program, why it exists and its benefits:
 - a. Posting season is fast approaching, and it's no secret that moves can be both an exciting and daunting prospect for the entire family. This is particularly true if a family hasn't moved in a few years and/or if they are relocating to an unfamiliar unit and base.
 - b. Moving provides opportunities to explore and get to know a new city or province. However, moving also means that families must uproot, find a home, establish new community connections and possibly seek out employment, schools, childcare and/or a family doctor as well. Today, technology makes it easier than ever to gather information about a new location. However, not every posting challenge can be solved by the internet; which is why the RCAF implemented a program a few years ago to help assist families with this transition. It is called the Family Connection Program, formerly known as the Family Sponsor Program.
 - c. In this pandemic year, creating connections is more important than ever.
 - d. This family-centric, cooperative program aims to welcome each family and enable them to settle quickly into their new communities. It requires collaboration among the Wing and unit leadership, local MFRCs and RCAF families.
 - e. If you are posted to an RCAF unit in Canada, you will have the opportunity to be matched with a volunteer who will personally welcome you and share information to help you and your family establish new networks.
 - f. The Family Connection Program puts RCAF families front and centre - not an afterthought to the posting process.

- g. All RCAF personnel and families who are posted this year are encouraged to request a Family Connection through their gaining unit or Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) at their new base. Every attempt will be made to match a newly-posted family with a volunteer connector that shares similar family circumstances (children’s ages, special needs, etc.)
- h. For our RCAF families who are staying put this year – and who would like to welcome another family into their community and share their valuable experience to ease military transitions – they are urged to consider volunteering for the Family Connection Program through their local MFRC.

10. Rebranding Messages. The following messages will be communicated about the name change from Family Sponsor Program to Family Connection Program:

- a. This program, unique to the RCAF, was started a few years back and was called the Family Sponsor Program; however, it has recently been renamed the “Family Connection Program.”
- b. “Family Connection Program” better reflects the purpose of the program, which is to enhance connections between RCAF Families as well as to encourage communication and connection between military units’ chains of command and their members’ families.
- c. The new name “Family Connection Program” is also expected to reduce confusion with military “unit sponsors.” These are separate and distinct. The Family Connection Program is a family-centric, cooperative program that aims to offer a personalized welcome to each family and enable them to settle quickly into their new communities. Conversely, unit sponsors are focused solely on the military member’s integration into their new place of work.

EXECUTION

11. Rebranding. The following documentation, presentations and /or websites have been identified as requiring amendment prior to end March 2021 in order to rebrand the program. OPIs for the amendment are included in the table below:

Document / Website / Presentation	OPI
Command Team Handbook	1 CAD Family Support Team (FST)
RCAF Order 5000-1 Family Sponsor Program	FST
MFRC Handbook	FST

Document / Website / Presentation	OPI
Volunteer Handbook	FST
RCAF website (Family Support Team page / FSP and FAQ pages)	D Air Pers Strat Comms Adv coord with D Air PA
Op TALENT Quality of Life / Quality of Service website	D Air Pers Strat Comms Adv coord with D Air PA
CFMWS website locations (multiple references)	RCAF Family Advocate
Training Orientation Powerpoint presentation for MFRCs	FST
Media posters that MFRCs print locally	FST

12. Program Communication. The following internal and external communications vehicles and initiatives will be used to advertise the program to RCAF members and their families. OPIs are included in this table:

Communications Vehicle	Intended audience	OPI
PERSpectives article	RCAF members	RCAF Family Advocate
Series of articles for Wing Newspapers	RCAF members and their families	RCAF Family Advocate
CF Family Magazine	Military Spouses	RCAF Family Advocate
RCAF Family Advocate letter to CFMWS / Military Family Services (MFS)	CFMWS, MFS, and all supporting MFRCs' Executive Directors and FSP Coordinators	RCAF Family Advocate. MFS to distribute to MFRCs
RCAF Commander and RCAF CWO Letter to posted families	RCAF members and their families	RCAF Family Advocate via: -RCAF Social Media channels via D Air PA -Direct to members being posted via (TBC – orderly rooms or D Mil C
CANAIRGEN	RCAF units and personnel	RCAF Family Advocate

Communications Vehicle	Intended audience	OPI
Email direct to all members of every wing	RCAF personnel	A1 email to WComds for internal dissemination to all their respective wing personnel
Wing Websites	RCAF personnel and their families	D Air Pers Strat via 1 CAD PA to Wing PAOs
Updates to Honourary Colonels	RCAF Honourary Colonels	RCAF Family Advocate via Special Adv to Comd RCAF
Town Hall briefings on Op TALENT	Wing membership	RCAF Family Advocate and D Air Pers Strat Comms Adv

CO-ORDINATION

13. Contacts:

- a. RCAF Family Advocate: Col Lynne Chaloux, lynne.chaloux@forces.gc.ca
- b. RCAF Family Advocate Planning Advisor: Holly Bridges, holly.bridges@forces.gc.ca
- c. RCAF Family Advocate CWO: MWO Trevor Bull, trevor.bull@forces.gc.ca
- d. 1 CAD Family Support Team: CWO Christine McDermid, Christine.mcdermid@forces.gc.ca
- e. D Air Pers Strat Comms Adv: Maj Holly Brown, holly-anne.brown@forces.gc.ca

14. Evaluation. The success of this Action Plan will be evaluated through:

- a. Monitoring the feedback received by the Chain of Command and the FST regarding awareness and uptake of the Family Connection Program in APS 2021;
- b. Monitoring RCAF and spousal social media feedback; and

c. Family Connection Program feedback surveys.

<< *original signed by* >>

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Distribution List

Action

RCAF Family Advocate
D Air Pers Strat / Comms Adv
1 CAD / A1 / FST

Information

DG Air Strat
D Air PA
CFMWS / MFS