

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE FAMILY CONNECTION PROGRAM



COMMAND TEAM HANDBOOK

V 4.0 (2021)

OPI

1 Canadian Air Division (CAD)
A1 Family Support Team (FST)



RCAF Family Connection Program

Foreword

One of my key responsibilities as Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) is to generate and maintain operationally ready air forces. Our aviators and their families are absolutely critical to my ability to accomplish this task.

Canada's Defence Policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, formally recognizes that families face significant challenges associated with frequent relocations, deployments and other service-related separations. For RCAF families, stressors may also be magnified by the unique demands we place on our personnel, including shiftwork and on-call duties as well as ongoing employment in high tempo domestic operations.

The RCAF is fortunate to have access to many high quality family support resources and services provided under the overarching Morale and Welfare Services Program umbrella. However, care for our personnel and their families remains, at its core, a Command responsibility. The RCAF Family Connection Program is unique, in that it provides a tangible opportunity for all RCAF leaders to proactively contribute to an organizational culture of military family support. By emphasizing strong communications among members, families and the chain of command, you can empower families to support one another and help build a more robust sense of community within your units, your Wings, the RCAF and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

You and the rest of your leadership team play a crucial role in ensuring successful implementation of this important, family-focused Program. It is essential that you work collaboratively and in full partnership with your local Military Family Resource Centre, especially as it pertains to the management of all Program volunteers.

Remember, our RCAF team includes families. Our success in this endeavour is directly linked to the degree of support that you, as a member of a Command Team, dedicate to the Family Connection Program. You are already working hard for our families; however, we must also strive to meet and exceed families' expectations for consistent levels of family support from unit to unit.



RCAF Family Connection Program

The RCAF Family Support Team is available to assist you as you implement this unique RCAF initiative. Contact them with any questions at RCAFFamily_ARCfamille@forces.gc.ca.

A.D. Meinzinger
Lieutenant-General
Commander Royal Canadian Air Force



RCAF Family Connection Program

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RCAF Family Connection Program

Introduction

Background

Following the publication of the 2013 Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman's report: *On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-Being of Canada's Military Families in the New Millennium*, the RCAF established both the RCAF Family Support Team (FST) and the RCAF Family Advocate (Fam Adv). The FST then proactively engaged RCAF personnel, families and national/local family support partners to discuss a wide range of family support issues. The primary message families shared during those visits was clear: *We need a stronger sense of community and more family-friendly communication within the RCAF – especially at the unit level*. This desire from families was the impetus for the creation of the RCAF Family Connection Program.

Program Delivery

To ensure that all families have the opportunity to feel welcome in and connected to the RCAF community, each RCAF unit will establish a cadre of Volunteer Family Connectors who will connect with families during two key military family experiences: postings and extended service-related separations (course, TD, or deployment in excess of 30 days). The Program is enabled by vital, open partnerships between unit Command (Comd) Teams and the MFRC.

This methodology was chosen in order to effect a number of positive outcomes for both families and the RCAF at large:

- Ensure that every newly posted family is personally welcomed to the unit
- Enhance family resiliency and increase readiness and retention.
- Recognizes families as an operational enabler.
- Identify/resolve family issues related to CAF service as early as possible.
- Facilitate smoother family postings through early contact/information sharing.
- Foster ongoing communication among families and reinvigorate unit-based social networks.
- Establish a feedback mechanism for families at the local level.
- Be inclusive of ALL family structures and dynamics.
- Empower families to shape the RCAF community they live in.
- Increase awareness of existing family support programs and resources.

Program Value

The Program establishes sound building blocks for community at the unit level through proactive communications and personal connections. In doing so, it creates value for all parties involved – families and members, the local chain of command (CoC), Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs) and the RCAF as a whole.



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Value for Families and RCAF members:

- Connects the family to the community early in the posting cycle.
- Promotes information sharing early in the posting cycle.
- Ensures a consistent level of unit-based family support across the RCAF.
- Establishes an enduring link with unit leadership.
- Provides a flexible volunteer opportunity for family members with a relatively low time commitment.
- Establishes community networks that may enable successful outcomes to military family life challenges post-move (such as employment, child care and/or medical care).

Value for the CoC:

- Establishes a reliable means of communicating with unit families and creates a feedback loop through unit volunteers.
- Establishes an enduring link with the MFRC.
- Supports family resiliency by encouraging and enabling peer connections early in the posting cycle.

Value for MFRCs:

- Helps connect more families with the MFRC early in the posting cycle.
- Establishes enduring links to units and unit Comd Teams.
- Provides flexible, low time-commitment volunteer opportunities and builds volunteer pool.
- Provides additional means of communicating with families and members.

Value for the RCAF:

- Supports member and family retention.
- Actively demonstrates RCAF leadership cares for and is investing in family support.
- Establishes a feedback loop for family-related issues.



Program Function and Structure

Organization and Information Flow

Each individual and organization involved in the Program has a unique and important role to play in ensuring the Program's success. Figure 1 provides an overview of the general flow of information within the Program.

RCAF Family Connection Program Network

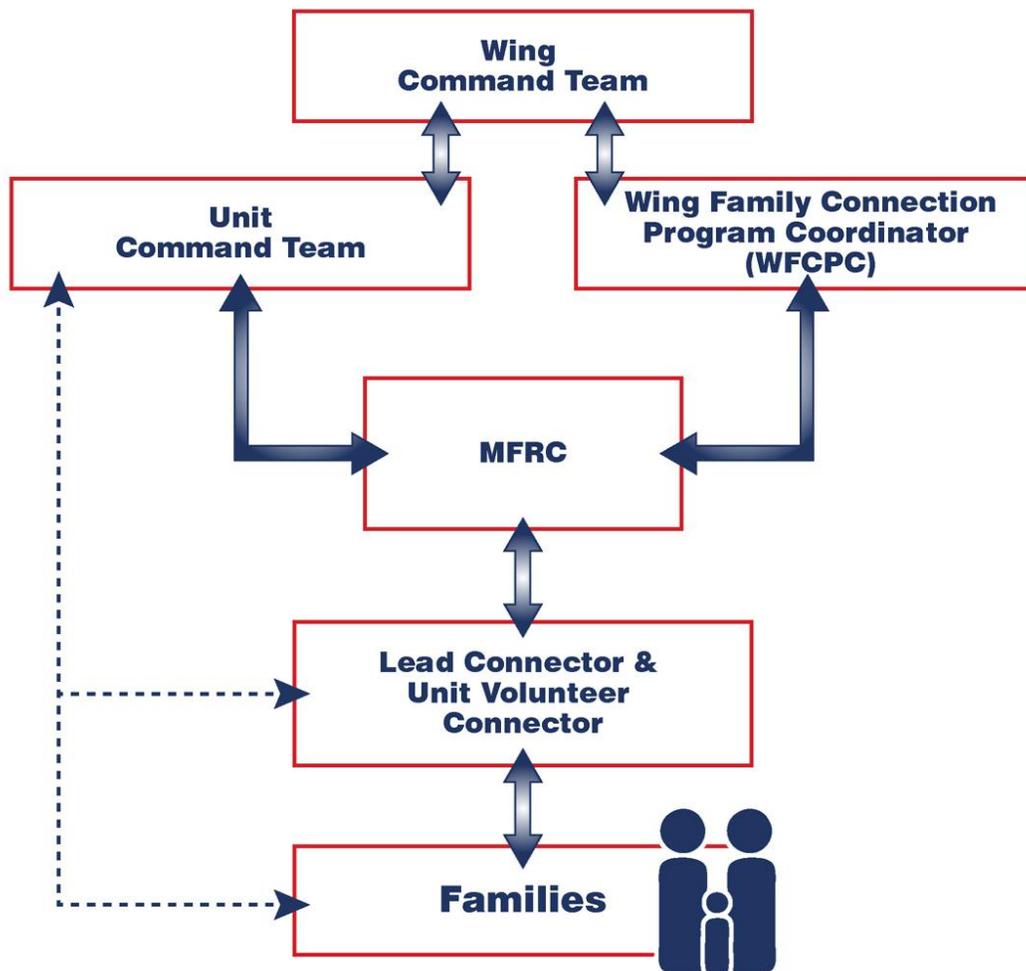


Figure 1



RCAF Family Connection Program

Wing/Unit Family Connection Team Dynamics

Figure 2 provides a quick overview of the primary role of each individual/organization that makes up the Program Team at the local level.

Position	Role
Wing Command Team	Is responsible for overall Program execution at all RCAF units in their area of responsibility.
Wing Family Connection Program Coordinator (WFCPC)	The WFCPC is responsible for overall coordination and enduring support of the Program at all RCAF entities in the WComd Team's area of responsibility, including RCAF lodger units. Issues with the Program writ large from a unit Comd Team perspective should be raised to the WFCPC for consideration and action.
Unit Command Team	Establishes and supports the Family Connection Program at the unit level, including outreach to unit families and connecting with Program volunteers. Works collaboratively with the MFRC to ensure effective Program execution and volunteer recruitment. Meets with Lead Connector on a regular basis and Connectors occasionally. Recognizes all volunteers at least annually.
Unit Family Connection Program Representative (UFCPR)	The UFCPR works on behalf of the Comd Team to manage the Program at the unit level. Tasks may include: assisting the MFRC with recruitment and orientation of the Connectors and the Lead Connector; providing the MFRC with Posting/Deployment/TD instructions; and assisting the MFRC in orientation training for Connectors. UFCPR is the primary Point of Contact for unit-specific Program questions/concerns. They may also coordinate Comd Team/volunteer interactions.
Lead Connector	A volunteer family member connected to the unit. Assists MFRC with Family Connector assignments and assists the Comd Team and UFCPR with family-centric outreach and communications. Coaches/mentors Family Connectors. Is the primary Program POC for MFRC.
Connectors	A volunteer family member affiliated with the unit. Connectors act as a personal connection to the unit and larger military community for her/his/their assigned families. They proactively welcome new families and provide peer-to-peer support in the form of information and referrals.



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MFRC	The go-to organization for military family support outside of the unit. Working in close collaboration with the Unit Comd Team, the MFRC is responsible for Program volunteer management and facilitates Program execution. They are an invaluable resource for Volunteers and a key partner in ensuring the overall success of the Program. Each MFRC will designate a staff member to act as the primary POC for program volunteers to reach out to when resource-related assistance is required. The extent of MFRC involvement in the program will vary slightly based on location.
Families	Participate in the Program if desired. Interact with Volunteers, MFRC and the Unit Comd Team.

Figure 2

Roles and Responsibilities

Command Team

The Program is a Commander's responsibility at every RCAF unit and Comd Teams are accountable to the CoC for Program implementation and durability. Specifically, each Comd Team is responsible for:

- Establishing and supporting the Program at the unit level.
- Encouraging members and families to participate in the Program.
- Working cooperatively with the MFRC to recruit and appoint Program volunteers.
- Welcoming new volunteers to the unit (see sample welcome letter at Annex C).
- Establishing and maintaining open channels of communication with the Lead Connector and the Connector cadre.
- Meeting regularly with the Lead Connector and at least quarterly with Connectors.
- Providing guidance to Lead Connector and Connectors regarding direct communications with the Comd Team (i.e. Commander's Critical Information Requirements, contact information, after hours contact, etc)
- Formally recognizing/thanking unit volunteers.
- Appointing a Unit Family Connection Program Representative and providing unit specific Program guidance to that individual.
- Coordinating the collection of family contact info for Program purposes (see Annex A – Reaching out to Families).



RCAF Family Connection Program

Military Family Resource Centre

MFRCs are provincially incorporated, federally funded not-for-profit organizations that hold liability for the volunteers they manage. MFRC's have rules and regulations in place to protect the MFRC volunteers and these rules need to be respected. Based on the terms of the Partnership Agreement between the RCAF and Military Family Services (MFS), MFRCs are responsible for Program volunteer management. In addition, the MFRC is well positioned to match volunteers with families on behalf of the RCAF. This allows the RCAF to leverage the MFRCs expertise in delivering the existing Military Family Services Program. However, close collaboration between the MFRC and Comd Teams is critical to ensure Program effectiveness. Specifically, the MFRC will be responsible for the following aspects of the Program:

- Advertising the Program within their respective areas of responsibility.
- Ensuring volunteers are screened (including Criminal Record and Child Abuse Registry checks).
- Recruiting volunteers through a general advertising/communication campaign.
- Appointing Connectors and Lead Connectors in collaboration with unit Comd Teams.
- Delivering the mandatory Program Orientation and other optional training to all volunteers, including any MFRC-specific volunteer training.
- Assigning Connectors to families in collaboration with the Unit Lead Connector and/or Unit Family Connection Program Representative (UFCPR).
- Providing ongoing mentorship and support to Connectors and Lead Connectors.
- Maintaining volunteer records.
- Collecting, reviewing and submitting local, Program-related "best-practices" to MFS and to local WFCPC.
- Encouraging and facilitating appropriate local grassroots initiatives related to the Program.

Unit Family Connection Program Representative (UFCPR)

Each Comd Team shall appoint a UFCPR. On behalf of the Commanding Officer, the UFCPR is the principal military POC for the Program at the unit level and is responsible for establishing and maintaining positive connections with unit Family Connectors and the MFRC. The UFCPR should be a seasoned, senior military member. The UFCPR works closely with the Lead Connector and is responsible for the following:

- Liaising with Wing staff for all Program related needs and linkages to higher headquarters.
- Facilitating the MFRC's volunteer recruitment efforts at the unit level as-required.
- Assisting the MFRC with unit-specific orientation of the Lead Connector, as well as assisting the Lead Connector in providing unit specific training to connectors.
- Ensuring the MFRC receives copies of all Posting In/Out messages as well as notification regarding all deployments/training/TD of 30 days or more.
- Communicating timely, relevant information regarding unit events, family support partner activities and other important matters to the MFRC and the Lead Connector.
- Assisting the MFRC with the mentoring of the Lead Connector if/as required.



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- Meeting with the Unit Comd Team and the Lead Connector regularly and with Connectors at least quarterly (or more frequently as directed by the Comd Team).
- Providing feedback/reports to Wing authorities regarding Program statistics, observations or Best Practices, on an as required or on-demand basis.

Lead Connector

Lead Connectors are volunteers and the link between Connectors and both the RCAF CoC and the MFRC. Lead Connectors are appointed by the MFRC in collaboration with the Comd Team. To be selected as a Lead Connector, an adult family member connected to the unit must demonstrate to the CoC that she/he is capable of carrying out the connector duties in a way that credits the Program, unit and RCAF.

At the unit-level, the Lead Connector works closely with the UFCPR to ensure that the Program runs smoothly and meets the specific needs of unit families. The Lead Connector will help recruit new Connectors as needed, mentor existing Connectors alongside the MFRC, and coordinate Program activities for the unit and its Connectors-

- Lead Connectors are essentially the team lead for the Program within the unit; they are volunteers and we must ensure that they are not overtasked.
- Lead Connectors will work closely with the MFRC and the UFCPR to coordinate and track Connector assignments, they also maintain a direct link to the Comd Team for family support issues.
- Lead Connectors may maintain a contact list for participating unit families and share information with Connectors and families as necessary and appropriate.
- Lead Connectors are the primary Program point of contact for the unit with the MFRC.
- Lead Connectors would ideally commit a minimum of two consecutive years to the Program.
- The Lead Connector is the first point of Contact at the unit for a Connector who has questions or concerns.

Connectors

Connectors and the families they support are at the heart of the Program. Connectors provide families with a personal connection to the unit and the larger military community. By proactively reaching out to assigned families Connectors provide a warm welcome as well as peer-to-peer support in the form of information and resources. Connectors are appointed by the MFRC in collaboration with the unit Comd Team. To be selected as a Connector, an adult family member connected to the unit must demonstrate to the CoC that she/he are capable of carrying out the connector duties in a way that credits the Program, unit and RCAF.

At the unit level, Connectors work closely with the Lead Connector.

- Connectors are ambassadors for the Program, the unit and the MFRC. A Connector's primary job is to reach out to and connect with families who are experiencing relocation or service-related separation.



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- Connectors are responsive to, but not responsible to the unit Comd Team.
- The MFRC ensures that all Connectors are screened as volunteers; however, Connectors do not have a government security clearance and therefore should only be provided with contact information for families who have consented to participate in the Program.
- Connectors are MFRC volunteers and therefore are not part of the CoC. If there are concerns about the continued suitability of a Connector to represent the unit, and/or the RCAF, those concerns should be discussed directly with the MFRC.
- Connectors would ideally commit a minimum period of one year to the Program.

Remember This About Connectors and Lead Connectors

Lead Connectors and Connectors are:

Volunteers
Trained
Active
Visible
Available
Team Players
Conduits of Information
Official Unit Representatives

Lead Connectors and Connectors Are NOT:

Counselors
Referral Agents
Taxi Drivers
Baby Sitters
Fundraisers
Gossips
Working Alone
To assume leadership authority

Communication and Connection

Communication

Program success depends heavily on the Comd Team's ongoing engagement and communication with Connectors and families. Efforts to advertise the Program to both unit members and families and to actively encourage new families to volunteer with the Program will require ongoing collaboration with the MFRC as well as effective use of family-friendly communications. Reaching out early in the posting cycle to incoming members and families is also an important Comd Team activity.

In order to assist you in your communications efforts, Annex A provides further guidance for reaching out to families, including sample correspondence. Annex F provides a basic primer on social media usage for the RCAF.



RCAF Family Connection Program

Connecting with Families

Building connections with existing unit families is a vital aspect of ensuring the longevity of this Program for the RCAF and RCAF Families. Each unit is unique; consider what the best way is for you to communicate with families in your unit on a regular basis. As you build the Program within your unit, it is recommended that you use the consent form at Annex D to gather contact information for families. Once completed by the family, this consent form should be forwarded to the MFRC Program POC.

Once you start connecting with families, let them help you determine how best to continue to engage with and communicate with them more effectively. Whether you use e-mail, speak to families personally at unit events or utilize social media to connect with families, the important point is that there is a reliable way to share important information with families as well as opportunities for families to connect with each other.

Connecting with Volunteers

The Program relies on volunteer family members to connect with new families and families experiencing service-related separations. A strong volunteer cadre will help ensure that the Program is self-sustaining. There are a number of proactive steps that Comd Teams can take to support and connect with unit volunteers.

Welcome Volunteers. Ensure that each volunteer receives a personal welcome from the Comd Team, acknowledging your appreciation for their commitment to the Program. A sample volunteer welcome letter is included at Annex C.

Provide proper training. Make sure your volunteers have the knowledge they need. If volunteers don't have the information they need, they may become frustrated or burn out more quickly. The MFRC will provide basic volunteers training as well as Program specific training. Annex E outlines the type of information the unit should share with volunteers to ensure they are able to do their best work on behalf of the RCAF. Experienced volunteers and MFRC staff can assist the Comd Team with building this unit-level training.

Help volunteers feel included. As soon as new volunteers join your organization, introduce them to other volunteers and key staff so that they get to know everyone. As they feel settled in their roles, involve them in unit activities when possible, so that they feel personally invested in the unit and Program.

Communicate Regularly. Work with your volunteers to determine the best means of sharing information with them. A key role of volunteers is to connect and share information with other unit families. Being clear and forthright about the information volunteers can and can't share is vital to Program success. It is also important that volunteers know who they can reach out with unit-related questions and that they are able to get prompt responses.



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Share accomplishments and milestones. Volunteers want to know they are making a difference. Keep them updated on progress toward the Program's goals, and share achievements and success stories. Let them see how their contribution is translating into real results.

Reward and recognize volunteers. Give your volunteers personal praise and public thanks so that they feel acknowledged for the hard work they are doing. Showing how you value volunteers will help ensure the Program will continue to have volunteers well into the future.

Recruiting Volunteers. Working with volunteers is a cyclical process that begins and ends with recruiting. MFRCs will assist with general Program marketing that may attract volunteers. Annex D also includes a sample recruiting/participation letter that Comd Teams can use. Once you have recruited initial volunteers and established a solid Program that values and recognizes all families, finding replacement volunteers should be straight forward.

Consistency of Programming

Units must ensure that the Program is offered consistently to families across the RCAF. Families have repeatedly identified that they want consistent availability of services as they are posted. As the Program gains momentum across the RCAF, families will expect to be offered a connector when posted or experiencing extended service-related separation. Units are counted on to meet these expectations as part of the RCAF's commitment to families.

Privacy Issues

Comd Teams have a responsibility to ensure that the personal information of RCAF members and families is collected and safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act, the Privacy Code for Military Family Services Program (MFSP) and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). Doing so not only shows respect for members and families, but also protects the credibility and integrity of the RCAF leadership, the Family Connection Program and the MFRC and minimizes risk to the RCAF as a whole.

Connectors will be privy only to specific information for the family they have been assigned, such as names, addresses (physical and email) and phone numbers. Lead Connectors may have access to contact information for multiple families. During training all volunteers will be taught that personal information must be secured at all times and may only be used for Program purposes (i.e. information may never be divulged to a third party or used for personal gain). During training, Connectors are also advised to refer third party or media inquiries to the Comd Team or MFRC.



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As volunteers work closely with families to help them access resources and navigate challenges, families may confide in them and share personal information. As a commander, you should understand that Connectors may **only** disclose information about to others (i.e., the MFRC or the CoC) with the family's express permission. The importance of confidentiality and the Privacy Act should be reinforced during Comd Team discussions with new volunteers.

Failing to appropriately protect private information is grounds for immediate dismissal of volunteers from the Unit Family Connection Program.



Annex A: Reaching Out to Families

Introduction

Communicating with families is one of the most significant factors in the success of any family support effort in today's RCAF. Families have repeatedly raised communications as a point of frustration; thus, units must be proactive in their efforts to connect and share information with families. This should include reaching out as early as feasible in the posting cycle to members and explicitly including families as part of those communications whenever possible. The following guidelines should assist you in your efforts to connect with families and build community within your unit.

Connecting with Families (Postings)

Making an initial connection with new families is a mission critical aspect of the Program. In order to encourage participation from the largest number of families possible, while still adhering to Privacy Act regulations, it is highly recommended that the following approach be utilized.

- **First** – As soon as a member's posting message is received, e-mail the incoming member at his/her forces account. Whether the e-mail comes from the gaining unit UFCPR or the member's new supervisor, the e-mail should encourage the participation in the Program. It should specifically Program information that is family friendly and the members should be encouraged to share it with his/her spouse or loved ones. Including the uniformed member's losing unit CO or U/SWO on this e-mail may also encourage a response while also raising awareness of the new Program. A sample e-mail is included at Appendix I.
- **Second** – If the member has known dependants, mail a formal, written letter to the member's home address. The letter should be addressed to "Cpl Bloggins and family". This letter should also explain the intent of the Program in simple, family friendly language. The letter should be on unit letterhead and signed by the CO or the Comd Team jointly. A sample letter is included at Appendix II.

Although samples are included for your use, you are encouraged to personalize the text. However, please keep the following guidance in mind as you make modifications:

- BOTH the e-mail and the letter should include an e-mail address for the family to reply to (UFCPR or generic unit e-mail). A telephone number and mailing address should be included. **The intent is to make it as simple as possible for families to participate in the Program.**
- Once a family has responded and either requested or declined a connector the family's contact information will be forwarded to the Lead Connector and/or MFRC Program POC.



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Note: E-mail alone will usually suffice for single members and should be modified slightly to ask if they would appreciate a Volunteer Family Connector (in addition to any military sponsor the unit provides).

Connecting with Families (Service-Related Separation and/or existing unit families)

Connecting with the families of those members already posted to your unit – for the purposes of supporting families during a service-related separation or in order to build a family-centric communications network for your unit – is relatively straightforward. You can choose from a number of options in order to reach out to the families and remain within the regulations of the Privacy Act.

- E-mail to member requesting that this information be forwarded to the family.
- Letter to the member's home address (address to "Cpl Bloggins and family", etc).
- By personal request/invitation at Unit family events.
- Program advertising utilizing existing social media accounts (MFRC Facebook page or Twitter Account, informal "spouses" Facebook groups, etc).
- Providing member with a consent form for his/her family to complete (eg. Via Unit Orderly Room during in-clearance).

Ideally, families should complete a formal Consent Form (see Annex B). Completed Consent Forms are to be forwarded to the MFRC Program POC, who will retain them for future reference.



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Annex A – Appendix I – Sample Email to Member and Family

*It is recommended that you forward this email to incoming CAF member's 'Forces' account and encourage them to forward it to his/her/their family/loved one. Ensure that you Carbon Copy the losing Unit Chain of Command and the gaining unit UFCPR and MFRC POC. (Remove this text along with **highlighted** sections below that require custom inputs. Please also confirm that the embedded links are still active, if not you may remove or replace them). **This is only a template and you are welcome to customize this as you see fit for your unit.***

Dear **[Insert Military Member's Name Here]** and Family,

I want to take this opportunity to welcome you and your family to **[Insert Unit or Wing Here]** and to your new community.

[Insert short para about new posting here] For example:

4 Wing Cold Lake is the busiest fighter base in Canada. It provides general purpose, multi-role, combat capable forces in support of domestic and international roles of Canada's Air Force. **4 Wing Cold Lake** is, without question, the home of the fighter pilot. It not only hosts Canada's world-class tactical fighter force training, but also deploys and supports fighter aircraft at a moment's notice to fulfill the domestic and international roles of Canada's Air Force.

I would also like to ensure that you are aware of the RCAF Family Connection Program. This Program was designed, based on consultations with military families at RCAF Wings and units across the country, specifically with RCAF families in mind. At your request, a Family Connector volunteer will reach out to your family to ensure they get a warm, personal welcome to our community. A connector can also make sure you get all the up-to-date info you need (and didn't even know you needed!) about our community – which may help make your move a little smoother. Opting in to the Family Connection Program will also ensure you continue to receive important information about our unit-based activities. **I encourage you to share this email with your family.** You can get more details about the Family Connection Program [here](#). You can also [hear for yourself](#) from a family member who has benefitted from the Program already!

If you would like to request a Family Connector, our Unit Family Connection Representative **[insert name here]** can be reached by email at **[insert e-mail here]** or by phone at **[insert phone number here]**. You can also opt-in at a later date if you change your mind.

In addition, our [local MFRC](#) is available to support you and your family as you learn more about your new community. You can find them **[insert link to MFRC or MFRC contact information here]**.

We're stronger when we stand together than when we stand alone, so I encourage you to reach out to us and get connected today!

Sincerely,

//Unit CO Signature Block//



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Annex A – Appendix II – Sample Letter to Family

*You should mail this letter directly to the member's home address. (Remove this text along with **highlighted** sections below that require custom inputs. Please also confirm that the embedded links are still active, if not you may remove or replace them). **This is only a template and you are welcome to customize this as you see fit for your unit.***

Dear **[Insert Member's Name and Family Member's First Name Here]**,

I want to take this opportunity to welcome you to **[Insert Unit or Wing Here]** and to your new community.

[Insert short para about new posting here] For example:

4 Wing Cold Lake is the busiest fighter base in Canada. It provides general purpose, multi-role, combat capable forces in support of domestic and international roles of Canada's Air Force. **4 Wing Cold Lake** is, without question, the home of the fighter pilot. It not only hosts Canada's world-class tactical fighter force training, but also deploys and supports fighter aircraft at a moment's notice to fulfill the domestic and international roles of Canada's Air Force.

I would also like to ensure that you are aware of the RCAF Family Connection Program. This Program was designed, based on consultations with military families at RCAF Wings and units across the country, specifically with RCAF families in mind. At your request, a Family Connector volunteer will reach out to you and to ensure you get a warm, personal welcome to our community. A connector can also make sure you get all the up-to-date info you need (and didn't even know you needed!) about our community – which may help make your move a little smoother. Opting in to the Family Connection Program will also ensure you continue to receive important information about our unit-based activities. You can get all the details about the Family Connection Program [here](#). You can also [hear for yourself](#) from a family member who has benefitted from the Program already!

If you would like to request a Family Connector, our Unit Family Connection Representative **[insert name here]** can be reached by email at **[insert e-mail here]** or by phone at **[insert phone number here]**. You can also opt-in at a later date if you change your mind.

In addition, our [local MFRC](#) is available to support you and help you find out more about your new community. You can find them **[insert link to MFRC or MFRC contact information here]**.

We're stronger when we stand together than when we stand alone, so I encourage you to reach out to us and get connected to your new community!

Sincerely,

//Unit CO Signature Block//



Annex B: Consent Form



RCAF Family Connection Program

Annex C: Sample Welcome Letter to Unit Connectors/Lead Connector

Dear **[Insert Connector Name Here]**;

Thank you for volunteering as a Family Connector volunteer for **[Insert unit name here]**. I am confident that your positive contributions to the Program will help make the RCAF a better place for our members and their families!

Our Unit Family Connection Program Representative (UFCPR), **[Insert UFCPR name here]**, will be in touch with you soon. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your upcoming role as a Family Connector, please do not hesitate to contact him/her at **[Insert contact info here]**. Our Lead Connector, **[Insert Name here]**, will also contact you shortly to provide you with more information about your role. He/she may be reached at **[Insert contact info here]**.

Until then, I thank you once again for stepping forward and being willing sharing some of your valuable experience with others. I look forward to working with you in this endeavour.

Yours truly,

//Unit CO Signature Block//



RCAF Family Connection Program

Annex D: Sample Volunteer Recruiting/Participation Letter

The RCAF Family Needs YOU

The voices of RCAF families have been heard. Your message is clear: We need a stronger sense of community to help families connect with what's important: people and support.

We are committed to making the RCAF a better home for families, but we need YOUR help.

The RCAF has launched a new way of creating a better community: The *Family Connection Program* will ease the process of loved ones getting settled into their new surroundings and help them connect with other families in the unit.

Here's where you come in. **We're looking for family members to get involved.** This is your chance to build the RCAF community you've been looking for.

As a Family Connector, your most important task will be to personally welcome new families, connect them with the resources they need and introduce them to other families within the community. You'll may also be asked to reach out to family members affected by duty-related separations, such as long courses, deployments or experiencing Imposed Restriction.

The MFRC will provide some initial volunteer training and ongoing volunteer support to ensure you have the skills and information you need to connect families with people and resources in our community.

It's a relatively simple task, but it will make a world of difference to families in our community!

Get involved by contacting our local Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by sending the RCAF Family Support Team an email at: RCAFFamily_ARCfamille@forces.gc.ca.

You have every reason to feel proud of your military adventure, and now you can have more power than ever to shape the RCAF into the home you want it to be.

Please call me personally if you have any questions!

//Unit CO Signature Block//



RCAF Family Connection Program

Annex E: Unit Specific Volunteer Orientation

As a Comd Team, it is your responsibility to develop a short orientation package for the volunteers attached to your unit. This package should include a written summary and a face-to-face presentation. A PowerPoint template has also been created to facilitate this process and is available on the [RCAF Family Connection Program page](#) (hosted on the MFS website).

Suggestions for content of the orientation package (at a minimum) are:

- Welcome from Command Teams (in person)
- Unit Mission Overview
- Unit Org Overview
- Unit Policies (Conduct, Media etc)
- Unit Social/Family Activities
- Unit communication processes
- Tour of Unit lines (if required)
- Command Team/Volunteer Relations
- Volunteer Hours of operation
- Place of Work/Parking
- Confidentiality - Reminder
- Communications Procedures (Internal/External)
- Use of Long Distance (if required)
- Dealing with Media - Reminder
- Buddy System/Mentoring of new Connectors
- Resignation/Leaving the Program Connector cadre



RCAF Family Connection Program

Annex F: Social Media Primer for Command Teams

Reference: [CANAIRGEN 03/14 – RCAF GUIDANCE ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA](#)

Many families today rely heavily on social media and web-based technology when gathering information about their new communities. While social media can be a simple way to spread information to large groups of interested individuals, significant public affairs and security implications surrounding its use by DND members means that caution is essential when utilizing social media.

Currently, D Air PA manages the RCAF national social media accounts, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts. The FST works with various public affairs staff to market and advertise the Family Connection Program to members and families via official RCAF social media accounts.

Most MFRCs also have an active social media presence. Military Family Services recently published a [Practical Guide to Social Media Use](#) which may be helpful for Comd Teams and UFCPRs, as these are the guidelines within which the MFRC operates.

Comd Teams should be aware of the following when considering using social media platforms for sharing information with families and/or advertising the Program:

- [CANAIRGEN 03/14](#) outlines key guidelines for ensuring that social media activities fall within existing regulations and minimize risk to the RCAF and its personnel. Para 4 (6) of the CANAIRGEN states “Refrain from establishing Social Media sites that represent or appear to represent DND, the CAF, or the RCAF.” This means, for example, that your unit or squadron cannot set up a publicly visible Facebook page associated with your RCAF unit.
- You, your staff or your Lead Connector/Family Connector may choose to use personal accounts and existing local groups/sites to share Program information with your unit families, including the sharing of official RCAF or MFRC social media content. For example, many units or Wings have a generic “spouses/families” Facebook group which may have a significantly larger reach than more traditional communication methods such as newsletters, Wing newspapers, MFRC welcome packages, etc.
- Your Unit PA Rep and Wing PAO are excellent sources of information regarding social media engagement. They can provide advice that will ensure the content you are looking to share on existing groups/pages is optimized for social media and for families. It is recommended that you connect with them prior to sharing on social media.
- Operational Security is a top priority for the RCAF, and should therefore be periodically addressed by the unit Comd Team. This includes ensuring that your volunteers are aware of what they should and should not share online.
- The MFRC is an excellent resource on basic social media guidelines. The MFRC will also train Family Connection volunteers who will share this guidance with families.



RCAF Family Connection Program

Annex G: Resources

[RCAF Family Connection Program Information Resources \(hosted by CFMWS\)](#)

[Family Support Team Internet Site \(Public\)](#)

[FST DWAN Page](#) (Navigate to: 1 Cdn Air Div/DComd/A1/A1 Family Support)

[DAOD 5044-1 Families](#)

[CAF Family Covenant](#)

[Privacy Code for Military Family Services Program](#)

[CANAIRGEN 03/14 – RCAF GUIDANCE ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA](#)

[DAOD 2008-8 – Official Use of Social Media](#)

[Practical Guide to Social Media Use](#) – Military Family Services