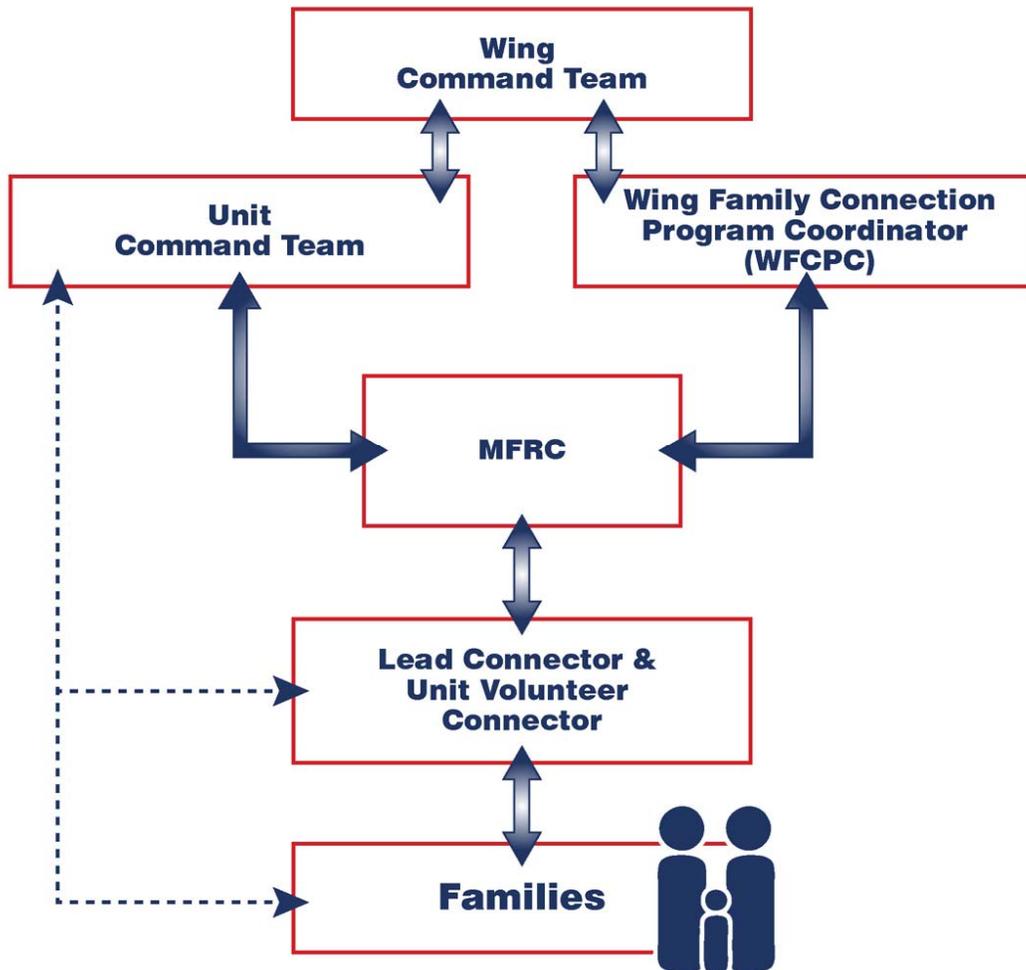




RCAF Family Connection Program
Volunteer Handbook
V 3
(February 2021)

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

RCAF Family Connection Program Network



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RCAF Family Connection Program

From the Commander

Welcome to the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Family Connection Program. Inspired by discussion with military families from Wings across Canada, this Program has been developed specifically with families in mind.

The RCAF recognizes that families are truly the strength behind our aviators. We understand that community connections are an important part of your military family experience – especially during postings and service-related separations. We also acknowledge the need for improved communication networks to ensure that all families are aware of the support and service options available to them.

For these reasons, we have created a unique way for families to connect not only with one another, but also with unit leadership, the Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) and other key family support partners within the military community.

Our success in this initiative is directly linked to you – our volunteers! Your time, effort and dedication are invaluable. Most importantly, by stepping forward, you are building a stronger community for all military families.

As a Connector or Lead Connector, this guide will help you have the best possible volunteer experience and will ensure you have the skills needed to assist other RCAF families while they navigate postings and service-related separations.

Thank you for volunteering. We are glad you have chosen to be a part of the RCAF Family Connection Program. Together, our volunteers, RCAF leaders and the MFRC can help make every family feel at home in the RCAF!

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



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RCAF Family Connection Program

Purpose

This Handbook has been produced to help you become better acquainted with the RCAF Family Connection Program (hereafter referred to as “the Program”) and to set you up for success as a Family Volunteer or as a Lead Volunteer.

This book will share some Program background information and some helpful volunteer guidelines. The *Set Up Box* at the end of this handbook contains useful information and documents to assist you as a volunteer. The RCAF has partnered with your local MFRC and their team will also provide you with additional training to ensure you have the skills needed to help families.

No volunteer handbook can answer all questions. However, throughout your training you will be introduced to others who organize and oversee the Program at your Wing and Unit. We encourage you to note their names and contact them should you have questions.

As a Family Connection Program volunteer – you are never alone! You are part of a dynamic team working to make the RCAF a better home for all families.



RCAF Family Connection Program

Background: The RCAF and Families

Families are important to the RCAF because they are vital to helping us accomplish our mission. The Canadian Armed Forces has long recognized the valuable role that families play and the challenges they face as they support military members in fulfilling their duty to Canada.

Here are a few important principles that guide what the RCAF does:

The RCAF's Mission is to provide the Canadian Armed Forces with relevant, responsive and effective airpower to meet the defence challenges of today and into the future

The RCAF's Vision is to be an agile and integrated air force with the reach and power essential for Canadian Armed Forces operations

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Family Covenant: We recognize the important role families play in enabling the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces and we acknowledge the unique nature of military life. We honour the inherent resilience of families and we pay tribute to the sacrifices of families made in support of Canada. We pledge to work in partnership with the families and the communities in which they live. We commit to enhancing military life.

In 2013, the Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman's released a report on the status of military families entitled *On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-Being of Canada's Military Families in the New Millennium*. In response to the report, the RCAF Family Support Team travelled coast to coast meeting with families. What we heard loud and clear was that families want the RCAF to be better at communicating with them and to help families connect with each other, with leadership and with local support partners. From this feedback, the RCAF Family Connection Program was created.



RCAF Family Connection Program

What is the RCAF Family Connection Program?

The Program will serve to enhance a sense of community and create a **family-centric, unit-specific volunteer** organization at each RCAF unit. A volunteer Family Connector will be assigned to families in need of a little extra support - especially those who are relocating or those experiencing extended service-related separation.

Here are a few key things to remember about the Program:

- All families matter and the Program is designed to be welcoming to all family structures.
- Two-way communications are very important. Connectors will provide information to families, but they can also learn from families and voice these insights to other family support partners or to leaders, if necessary.
- The Program is unit based. Each unit will have unique requirements and you can expect slight variations in how the Program runs from one unit to the next. However, the core functions of the Program will remain the same across the RCAF.

Why is the Program Important?

First and foremost, the Program is important because families have told us that they need more timely access to local information and better communication about available family support resources. However, there are other benefits for both families and the RCAF, as the Program:

- Helps families to integrate into the community sooner and build stronger connections
- Encourages grass-roots solutions
- Links families to unit leadership
- Promotes individual, family and unit readiness
- Supports resiliency in families



RCAF Family Connection Program

Why a Unit-Based Program?

Military members are taught from the minute they join about the value of *esprit de corps* and camaraderie at the unit level. Units train together to fight together and a Commanding Officer is responsible for the well-being of every member of his or her unit.

The Program builds on these strengths to help improve communications and ensure families feel at home within the RCAF. The Unit Command Team and the MFRC will build a team that provides support to families who are new to the unit and to those families experiencing service-related separation.

Representing the unit with which you are associated is important; this is why every volunteer is invited to learn about the unit in person in addition to your Family Connection Program training. This will help you understand the unique role and structure of your unit within the RCAF, as well as gain more information regarding unit social and/or family activities, and command team/volunteer relations.



RCAF Family Connection Program

The Program and You

What We Expect From Family Connection Program Volunteers:

Five specific areas of knowledge, skills and behaviors will help you be a successful Connector and contribute positively to the lives of other RCAF families. Keep these expectations in mind as you fulfil your duties as a Connector or Lead Connector.

- 1. Cultural Awareness:** The ability to look outside yourself and be mindful of the cultural values and customs of other people. What may be normal and acceptable to you may be unusual or unacceptable in another culture. Being sensitive to these differences is an essential skill and the cornerstone to success in this role.
- 2. Code of Ethics:** Adhering to the code of ethics of the military, the unit and your local MFRC is extremely important. Each MFRC has its own code of ethics, but they all conform to the *Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement: Values, Guiding Principles and Standards of Practice* (available at this link: <https://volunteer.ca/content/canadian-code-volunteer-involvement-2012-edition>).
- 3. Confidentiality:** Confidential information is sensitive data about a military or family member and is for official use only. You must honor the confidentiality requirements as stated in your Volunteer Agreement to protect the privacy of individuals and to maintain the integrity of the Family Connection Program and the MFRC.
- 4. Working effectively as a Member of a Team:** Connectors must be prepared to work with the Unit, the MFRC, other Connectors and families. Working towards a common goal of improved communication and building stronger family connections requires cooperation...a friendly attitude can go a long way.
- 5. Learning and Growing in Your Role:** The unit and the MFRC will provide you with support and tools to help you grow, but you are expected to look for opportunities to enhance and expand your skills as a Program Volunteer.



RCAF Family Connection Program

What You Can Expect From The Program

The RCAF values the time and effort you put into volunteering with the Program. To properly recognize your dedication, you can expect the following from the RCAF and the MFRC while you are a volunteer:

- 1. Training:** Through the MFRC and in collaboration with your unit, you will be given training to help you be effective as a Connector or Lead Connector.
- 2. Make a Difference:** You will have the opportunity to work as part of a team, to contribute to the welfare of the RCAF community and to be recognized for your contributions as a volunteer.
- 3. Support:** You will be given the support you need to do your job, including the most up-to-date family support information from the MFRC and your unit's Command Team so that you can help the families you are connecting to the best of your ability.
- 4. Opportunity to Contribute:** The Program will provide you with the unique opportunity to bring feedback to the MFRC and the unit Command Team about issues facing RCAF families in your area. The feedback you bring will help shape the future of the Program and other family support programs in your area and across the RCAF.
- 5. Personal Development:** The Program will give you the chance to grow and develop as a volunteer through participation in activities and training opportunities available from your local MFRC or the unit.



RCAF Family Connection Program

Program Roles and Responsibilities

Every person and each organization has a unique and important role to play in ensuring the Program is effective in supporting families. Being familiar with the key players and their responsibilities will help you better understand where to turn when you have questions or concerns.

Connector

Connectors are the heart of the Program. Connectors reach out to their assigned families to provide peer-to-peer support in the form of information and resources; they provide families with a personal connection to the unit and the larger military community.

Connectors are appointed by the MFRC in collaboration with the unit Command Team. These are the most important things to keep in mind about Connectors:

- Connectors are ambassadors for the Program, the unit and the MFRC. Their primary job is to reach out to and connect with families who are relocating or experiencing service-related separation (over 30 days).
- Connectors are part of a unit level team. That team, headed by the Lead Connector, will meet on a regular basis to get updates on local family support information, discuss challenges and to share Best Practices.
- Connectors should generally commit a minimum of one year to the Program.

Lead Connector

If Connectors are at the heart of the Program, Lead Connectors are the critical link between Connectors and both the RCAF Chain of Command and the MFRC. Lead Connectors are appointed by the MFRC in collaboration with the Command Team, and the Lead Connector works closely with the Unit Family Connection Representative (UFCPR) - a military member of the unit - 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. These are the most important things to keep in mind about Lead Connectors:



RCAF Family Connection Program

- Lead Connectors work closely with the MFRC and the UFCPR to coordinate and track Connector assignments.
- Lead Connectors will maintain the Unit Family Roster 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 should generally commit a minimum of two years to the Program.
- The Lead Connector is the first point of Contact at the unit for a Connector who has questions or concerns.

Command Team

The Program is a Commander's responsibility at every RCAF unit. Each unit has a Command Team composed of the unit Commanding Officer (CO) and the unit Chief Warrant Officer (or Master Warrant Officer in some cases).

Command Teams have a vested interest in ensuring families at their unit are supported because resilient families help ensure operational success. Command Teams are also accountable to their higher chain of command to make sure the Program gets implemented and stays up and running. This is what you need to know about the Unit Command Team:

- The CO is responsible for establishing and supporting the Program at the unit level.
- The Command Team works closely with the MFRC to recruit and manage volunteers.
- The Command Team ensures members of the unit are aware of the Program. The Command Team communicates openly about family support issues with the Lead Connector (and Connector team). The Command Team should also meet regularly with the Lead Connector and at least quarterly with Connectors.

Unit Family Connection Program Representative (UFCPR)

Commanding Officers are extremely busy so, to ensure the Program runs smoothly, each Commander Officer will appoint a Unit Family Connection Representative (UFCPR) to help nurture the Program within the unit.

On behalf of the Commanding Officer, the UFCPR will work closely with the Connector team. The UFCPR will normally be a seasoned military member. These are the most important things for you to know about the UFCPR:



RCAF Family Connection Program

- The UFCPR will assist the MFRC to recruit and orient the Lead Connector and the Volunteer team.
- The UFCPR will collaborate with the Lead Connector and the MFRC to develop a short unit-specific training package for Connectors.
- The UFCPR will ensure that the MFRC and Lead Connectors receive copies of all Posting messages for incoming and outgoing unit members, as well as information on all members who will be separated from their families for more than 30 days (service-related separations)
- The UFCPR will share timely, relevant information regarding unit events and other important matters with the Lead Connector.
- The UFCPR will provide feedback/reports to the Wing authorities regarding Connector Program statistics, observations or Best Practices, as required.
- The UFCPR is the first point of contact at the unit for the Lead Connector if she/he has unit-specific questions.

Military Family Resource Centre

Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs), located at each Canadian Armed Forces Base across Canada, are the go-to organization for military family support information and resources. To ensure the success of the Family Connection Program, the RCAF has partnered with your local MFRC.

The MFRC will be responsible for the volunteer management process and much of the day-to-day program execution on behalf of the RCAF. Connectors, who are partnered with unit families, can always reach out to the MFRC when questions about support resources arise.

The extent of MFRC involvement in the program will vary based on location; however, the responsibilities of the MFRC are as follows:

- The MFRC will assist with recruiting for the Program and be responsible for screening, training and appointing volunteers in collaboration with the unit Command Teams.
- They will manage volunteer-related record keeping (tracking criminal record and child abuse registry checks, etc).
- They will assist with advertising the Program to families.
- An MFRC point of contact will work in collaboration with Lead Connectors and UFCPRs to assign Connectors to families as required.
- MFRC staff will provide ongoing mentorship to Lead Connectors and Connectors.



RCAF Family Connection Program

- The MFRC will communicate family support information to Connectors and serve as the primary point of contact when Connectors have concerns or questions related to resources, etc.
- Working with Lead Connectors and Connectors, the MFRC will collect and relay Program feedback to the local chain of command and Military Family Services, as required.

Other Key Players:

Beyond the individuals and organizations listed above, there are a few other key players with whom you should be familiar. While Connectors will not generally deal directly with these individuals and organizations, they are working hard in the background to oversee and manage the Program as a whole:

- **Wing Command Team:** The Wing Command Team consists of the Wing Commander and the Wing Chief Warrant Officer. They are responsible for program oversight at all RCAF units under their command.
- **Wing Family Connection Program Coordinator (WFCPC):** The Wing Family Connection Program Coordinator is a senior military member, appointed by the Wing Commander to be responsible for the overall coordination and support of the Program at all RCAF units in the Wing Command Team's area of responsibility.
- **RCAF Family Support Team (FST):** The FST is responsible for ensuring Program standardization across the RCAF as well as providing updates to the Program based on performance measurement criteria.
- **Military Family Services (MFS):** MFS manages the Military Family Services Program on behalf of the Canadian Armed Forces, which includes facilitating the delivery of community-based services and programs through local MFRCs. The RCAF has partnered with MFS to ensure the successful implementation of the Family Connection Program.

Figure 1 gives you an overview of how all the key players interact with one another to make the Program work best for you and for the families you are helping.



RCAF Family Connection Program Network

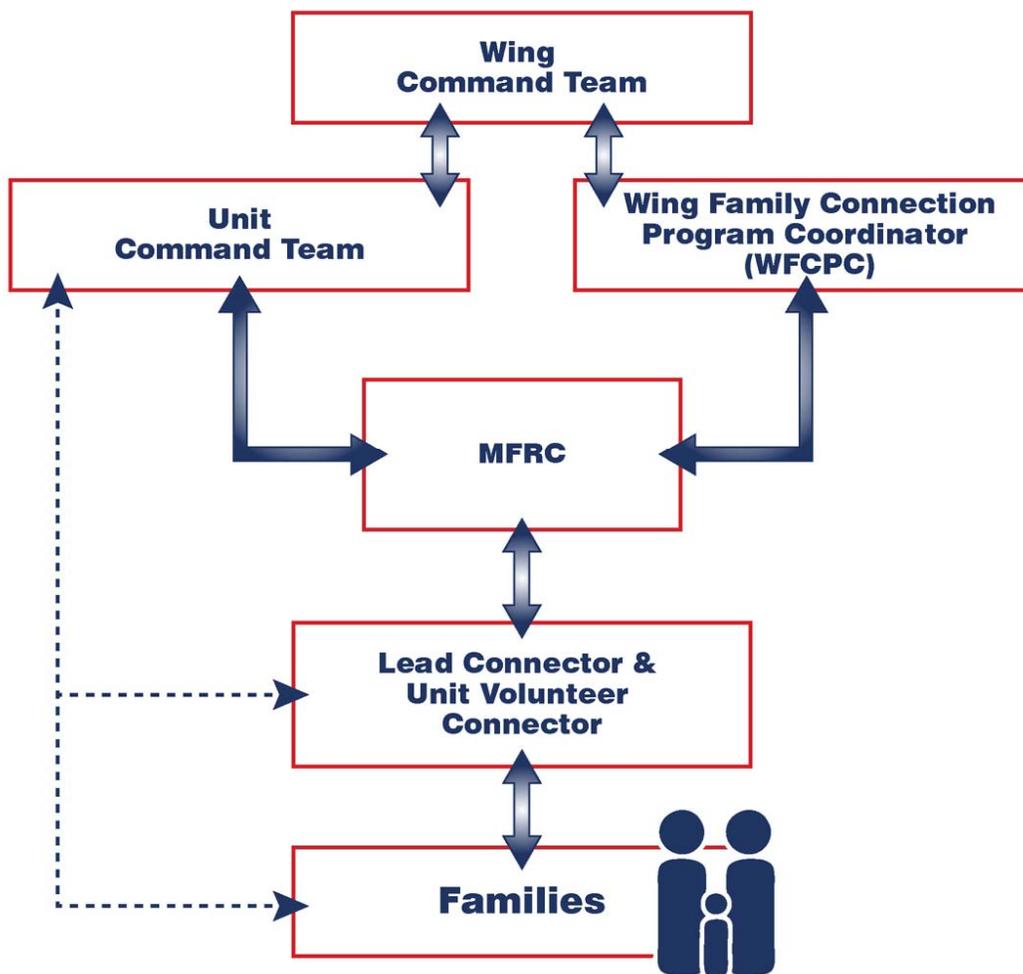


Figure 1



RCAF Family Connection Program

Reaching out to Families

At its most basic, the Family Connection Program is built on the concept of Connectors reaching out to families to establish a personal connection. Generally, you will be asked to reach out to families who are being posted to your unit, or who experience a service-related separation of more than 30 days. There may be other instances when a Connector would be assigned to a family; however, regardless of the circumstances at hand, there are a few basic principles to remember when contacting a family (especially for the first time):

- Be genuine, positive and upbeat when you greet the family. You are aiming to establish a friendly rapport rather than a business relationship, so try to be yourself. (There is a sample approach in the *Set Up Box* that will help guide you until you find your stride.)
- As a representative of the Unit and the Family Connection Program, you need to *earn* the family's attention and trust by demonstrating that you genuinely care about their upcoming posting. You are there to provide information and help connect the family to their new community.
- Close the call by encouraging the family to contact you (the Connector) if any questions/concerns arise between scheduled calls. Be sure to let the family know when you intend to reach out again, and then be sure to do so!
- If the family does not wish to participate in the Family Connection Program at this time, simply leave your contact information and the contact information for the MFRC. Make sure they know they are welcome to reach out and seek information or support at any time!
- Be sure to record the basic details of all of your calls on the Unit Family Call Log (it's in the *Set Up Box*).



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What exactly is a Connector?

A Connector is there to help direct families to resources when required. But you don't need to BE a resource for families. Leave the heavy lifting to the people trained and paid to provide the services required. To confidently establish boundaries when dealing with families, here is a good list to keep in mind:

Connectors are:

- Volunteers
- Trained
- Active
- Visible
- Available
- Team Players
- Conduits of Information
- Official unit representatives

Connectors are not:

- Counselors
- Referral agents
- Personal chauffeurs
- Babysitters
- Fundraisers
- Gossips
- Working alone
- To assume leadership authority

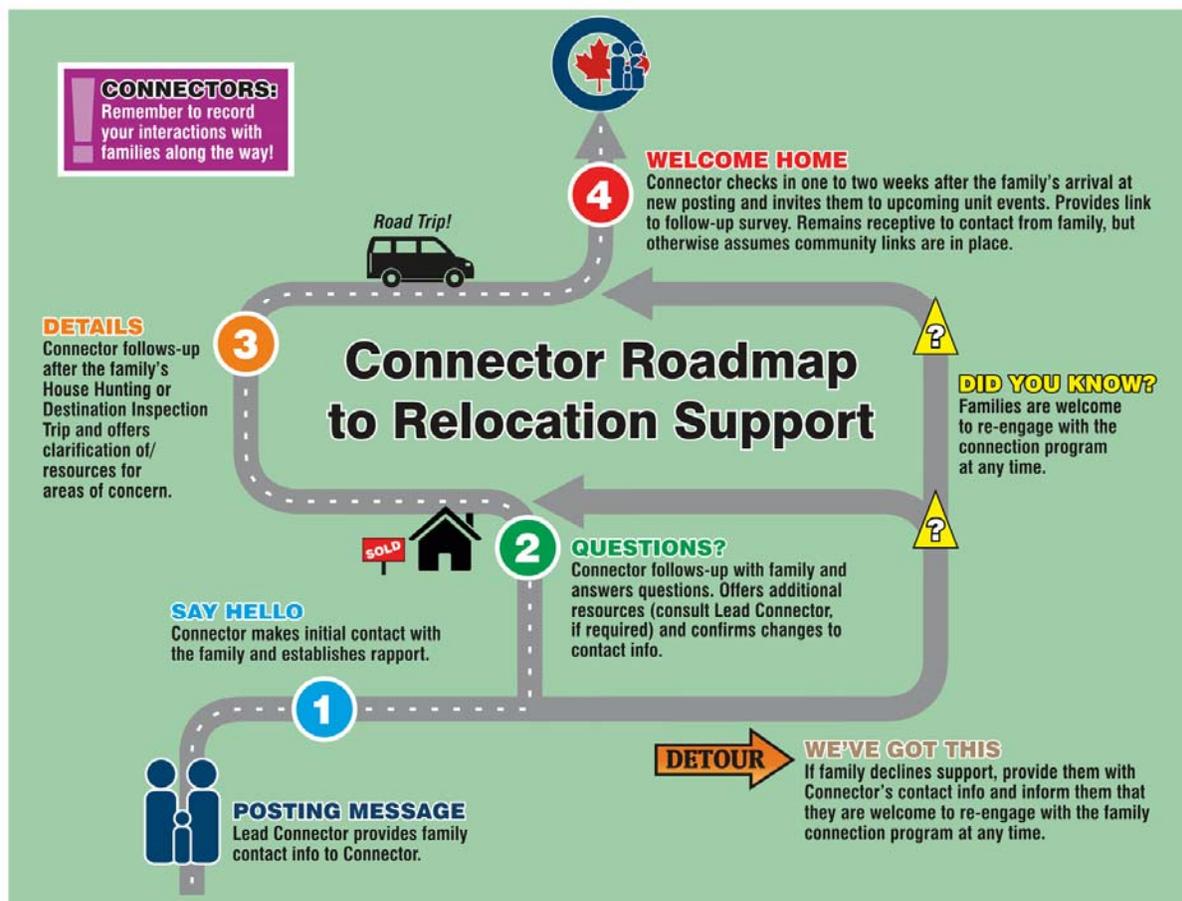


Figure 2



RCAF Family Connection Program

Relocation Support:

There are four basic steps to supporting a new family posted into your unit:

Step 1: Use the contact information provided to reach out to the incoming family. Use the tips in *Making the Call: Contacting the Family* (it's in the *Set Up Box*) to guide you as you get more comfortable reaching out and connecting with families you've never met before.

Step 2: Follow-up with the family prior to their House Hunting Trip (HHT) or Destination Inspection Trip (DIT) as promised. By this time, they may have more specific questions for you and you can help by putting them in touch with the MFRC/other service provider, or sharing other relevant information about the local area.

Step 3: Check in once more with the family following their HHT or DIT. This is a great time to get their new contact information if available, so you'll be able to get in touch with them after the move. Once they know where they will be living, they may have more detailed questions for you. Be sure to take note of their planned arrival date.

Step 4: Finally, touch base a week or so after the family moves to welcome them to your location! This is a great chance to remind them to stop in to the MFRC, to make sure you have their new contact information and to invite the family to any planned welcome activities at the unit, Wing or Mess.

Bonus! Ask the family if they are willing to complete an anonymous follow-up survey to help evaluate and improve the Family Connection Program for other families.

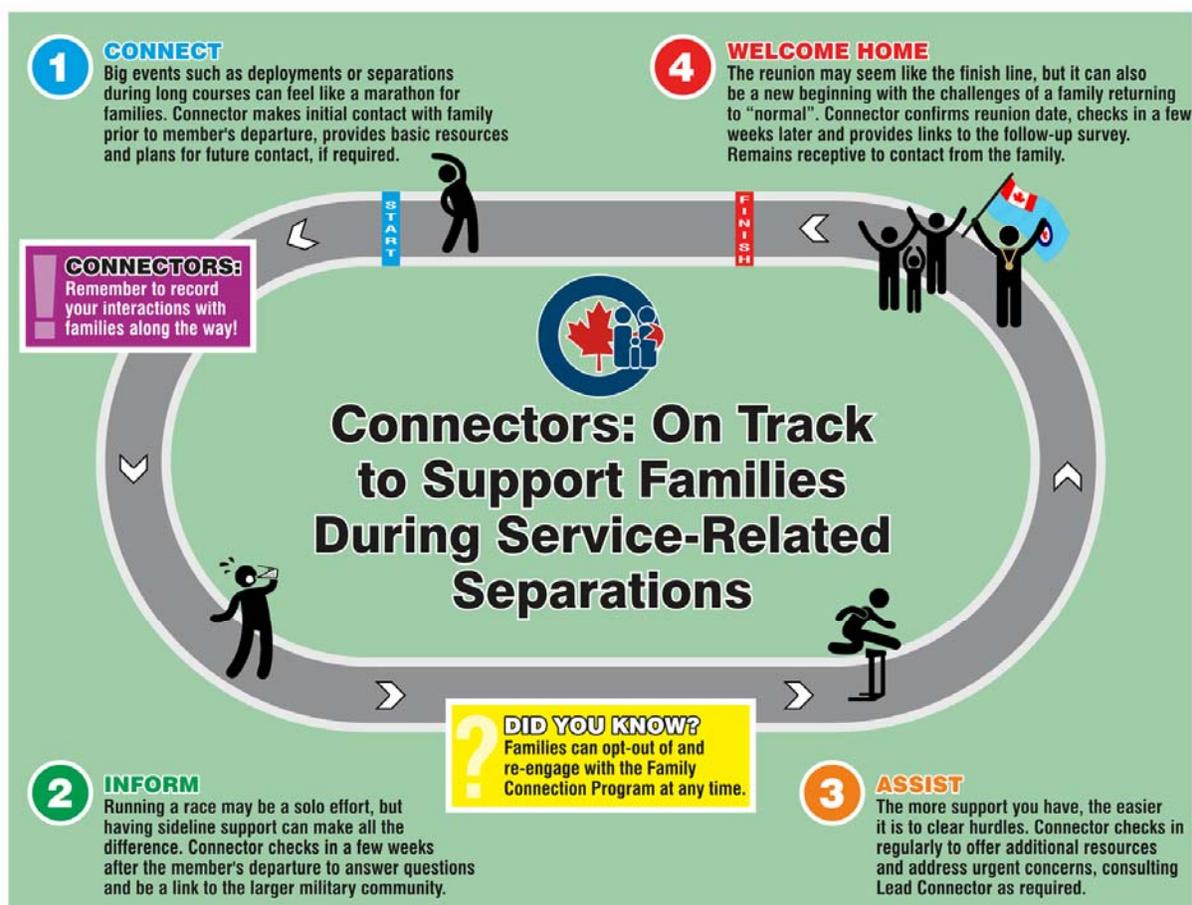


Figure 3

Service-Related Separation:

It is common for military members to be away from their families for service reasons. Whether the separation is due to deployment, temporary duty or training, this can put extra strain on families, especially when the member is away for 30 days or more.

For service-related separations anticipated to last more than 30 days, a Connector will be assigned to ensure that the family remains connected to their community and has the information they need about support resources while the member is away.

There are four basic steps to supporting a family when the member is away for an extended period:

Step 1: Use the contact information provided to reach out to the family prior to the departure of the member. Introduce yourself and share some basic information about the Program so they understand what they can expect from you. Discuss the best



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method and time for you to reach the family in the future as well as how frequently they would like you to touch base.

Step 2: Follow-up with the family as agreed. Be sure to pass on information about unit or Wing/Base activities. Answer any specific questions they may have and confirm they are in contact with the MFRC (if required).

Step 3: Check in with the family shortly before the member is due to return. This is a great time to remind the family of the emotional cycle of deployment and answer any last minute questions. You should also try to confirm the return date of the member (if known).

Step 4: Finally, touch base a week or so after the member returns. Check in to see how the family is adjusting to the member being home again. Be prepared to provide information about resources that are available locally in case the family requests them.

Bonus! Ask the family if they are willing to complete an anonymous follow-up survey to help evaluate and improve the Family Connection Program for other families.

When and Where Do You Volunteer?

Your work as a Program volunteer is very flexible. You can choose where and when you do your work.

- Home office
- Unit office (where available and accessible)
- Local MFRC
- Formal/informal unit meetings and unit social events
- *Anywhere* as the opportunity/need arises (like a local coffee shop or community centre if it's convenient.)

You can also spread the word at unit meetings/events and anywhere you happen to be. Share your excitement for the Program!



RCAF Family Connection Program

Program Resources and Administration

Volunteer Resources

As a volunteer, you have a number of valuable resources at your disposal. When it comes to understanding support resources or programs, your first stop should always be the MFRC.

For a general overview of what's available to most families, visit www.cafconnection.ca. Another resource – particularly during off hours – is the Family Information Line (1-800-866-4546), which is staffed 24/7 by trained, bilingual counsellors with access to a wealth of information about military family and local support services. Other resources you may find useful are listed in the *Set Up Box*.

Local is always best, so never hesitate to reach out to your Lead Connector, your MFRC point of contact, a local Padre or the UFCPR for specific questions.

Record Keeping

As a volunteer, it is important that you keep basic records of the work you do for the Program. In the *Set Up Box* at the end of his handbook, you'll find the following documents:

- A Unit Family Connector Assignment Tracker that will be maintained by each Lead Connector.
- A Unit Family Information Sheet for Connectors to jot down necessary information about each family.
- A Unit Family Call Log for Connectors and Lead Connectors to keep a record of calls to families and other Connectors.

When you have completed your term as a volunteer, or are leaving the Program for some other reason, you will be asked to submit any written records to the MFRC for retention/destruction as appropriate.

You should also take note of contact information for the following people:

- Lead Connector
- MFRC point of contact
- UFCPR
- Unit Command Team
- Unit Padre



RCAF Family Connection Program

A Word on Privacy

Interactions with RCAF families are governed by the Privacy Act. Safeguarding the personal information of RCAF families shows respect for a family's privacy and protects the credibility and integrity of the RCAF Family Connection Program.

As a Program volunteer, you will have access to contact information for your assigned families. A Lead Connector will have access to a complete list of families who have agreed to participate in the unit's Family Connection Program. This will generally include names, addresses (physical and email) and phone numbers.

This information must remain protected at all times and is to be disclosed on a need-to-know basis only. All information collected by the Unit Family Connection Program must be used solely for that specific Unit's Family Connection Program purposes, under strict confidentiality in compliance with the Privacy Act, the Privacy Code for Military Family Services Program and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act.

Lead Connectors and Connectors are prohibited from divulging names, phone numbers, addresses or any contact information for any family on the Unit Family Network database/roster for purposes other than those intended by the Program. Personal family information may *never* be used for personal gain.

On occasion, as you work closely with families to help them access resources and navigate difficult family situations, you may have access to very personal information. Connectors may **only** disclose information about their supported families to either the Command Team or to the MFRC with the family's permission. So be sure to specifically ask if you are allowed to share details of the family's situation and clarify with whom you may share. If you are ever contacted by an outside agency or the media, you should always refer queries to the MFRC or the UFCPR.

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



Making the Call: Contacting the Family

The following is a suggested format which a Connector may follow when initiating first contact with a family.

- ☺ Hello, this is _____. May I speak to _____.
- ☺ State that you are a Family Connector from _____ (Unit).
- ☺ Provide an overview of the Unit's Family Connection Program and what areas of assistance you are able to provide. Here are some ways to describe the Program:
 - The Family Connection Program is about creating a better sense of community in the RCAF – especially at the unit level.
 - Families like yours that are coming into our unit are assigned a Connector who will help you settle into your new location.
 - Family Connectors are typically experienced military spouses who are trained by the local MFRC. They will direct you to local programs or services that meet your family's needs.
 - Shortly after you arrive, your Family Connector will also introduce you to other families that are in your unit.
- ☺ Feel free to use the first person (I/we) when you are talking to families about Connectors! Try to keep things simple so you don't overwhelm the family – especially the first time you talk.
- ☺ Share a little bit of information about how long you have been in the area, at the Unit and how (if applicable) a Family Connector was helpful during your relocation/service-related separation experience.
- ☺ Let them know you can assist them by offering resource information and links to various local/regional/national family support organizations as well as information about the "Unit family" you represent.



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- ☺ Ask if they are willing to participate in the Family Connection Program, become part of the Unit Family Network and for you to be their Connector. You can say something like this:
 - There is no requirement or pressure to participate and you can withdraw from the Program at any time. If you think that having a contact in your new community will be helpful, we hope you will take advantage of this opportunity!
- ☺ If they do NOT wish to participate, thank them for their time in speaking with you, and provide an open-invitation for the family to call you or the MFRC should they change their mind or have any specific questions. Provide them with your contact information and wish them well regarding their upcoming relocation/service-related separation.
- ☺ If they wish to continue with the Connection program, ask them for the information required to complete the Unit Family Information Sheet (see *Set Up Box*). Reassure them that the information is protected and all information collected by Connectors is used solely for the Unit's Family Connection Program purposes and that it is kept strictly confidential in compliance with The Privacy Act and the Privacy Code for Military Family Services Program.
- ☺ Ask if they have any immediate questions or need for information regarding the local area or new Unit or deployment support services.
- ☺ Confirm that they have been contacted by the MFRC. If not, ask if you can initiate a request with MFRC to contact the family.
- ☺ Ask them if they mind a follow-up call, email or text.
- ☺ Provide them with your contact details: telephone number(s); email; and links to unit/Wing/MFRC social media pages/accounts.



Unit Family Information Sheet

Family Information

<i>Information</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Spouse/Loved One</i>
Name		
Military Rank		
Home Phone		
Work Phone		
Cell Phone		
E-mail		
Special needs		

Children

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>School/Daycare</i>	<i>Special Needs</i>

Other Household Members

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Relationship to Household</i>	<i>Special Needs</i>

Pets

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Type of Pet</i>	<i>Special Needs/Other</i>

Notes

Note¹: Complete only as much information as is necessary to assist the family. Families are not obligated to share any of the above information and any information collected is to be used **only** for the purposes of the RCAF Family Connection Program.

Note²: Unit Family Information Sheets must be returned to the MFRC at the end of your tenure as a Family Connector.



Volunteer Resource Guide

Program Information:

- FST Webpage www.canada.ca/rcaf-family-connector

General Information:

- Family Information Line 1-800-866-4546
- Military Family Services Program information (including links to all MFRCs) www.cafconnection.ca
- Canadian Armed Forces Morale and Welfare Services Information www.cfmws.com
- A Family Guide to the Military (available in printed format from your MFRC or online at www.cafconnection.ca)
- Family Separation and Reunion resources are available at www.cafconnection.ca.
- SISIP Financial Services www.sisip.com

Topic Specific Information:

- You Are Not Alone: Connecting Military Families to Mental Health and Social Wellness Programs (Available in hardcopy or at www.cafconnection.ca)
- Preparing for Deployment Stress (available at www.cafconnection.ca)
- Children's Education Management, information on education resources both in Canada and for OUTCAN postings is available at www.cafconnection.ca
- Public Service Health Care Plan <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/psm-fpfm/benefits-avantages/health-sante/index-eng.asp>
- Dependants' Dental Care Plan <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-benefits/dependants-dental-care-plan.page>
- Operational Stress Injury Social Support peer support - www.osiss.ca



Abbreviations and Acronyms

Military families learn very quickly that acronyms and short forms are a fact of life. Some are very common and easy for families to understand – others are a less common or may need a little more explanation. We've gathered up some of the acronyms and abbreviations that you are likely to come across in your work as a volunteer (especially those related to the Program, positions in the unit, postings and deployments) so that you'll feel more confident helping families understand them too!

APS – Active Posting Season

Branch – a collection of small units or sections on an Air Force Wing; the Branch Head has the same powers as a CO. Typically on a Wing there are three (3) Branches: Wing Administration, Wing Operations and Wing Logistics and Engineering

Brookfield – The contractor that currently delivers the Integrated Relocation Program (i.e. arranges moves for members and families)

CA – Canadian Army

CAF – Canadian Armed Forces (recently replaced CF for Canadian Forces)

CEM – Children's Education Management

CFHA – Canadian Forces Housing Agency

CFMAP/EAP – Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program/Employee Assistance Program. These refer to the same service provided to CAF members and civilian employees of the federal government. A toll-free phone number provides access to confidential counselling and referral services.

CO – Commanding Officer

CoC – Chain of Command, describes who reports to whom within the organization

COS – Change of Strength, the date when a member "officially" belongs to a new unit, this is listed on the posting message and much move planning revolves around this date.

DCO – Deputy Commanding Officer

DIT – Destination Inspection Trip (a shorter version of an HHT when a residence has already been secured at a new posting location)

FCP – Family Care Plan

FIL – Family Information Line, 24/7 telephone access to trained bilingual counsellors

FLO – Family Liaison Officer

FST – RCAF Family Support Team

HHT – House Hunting Trip, travel undertaken to secure a residence when you are posted

HLTA – Home Leave Travel Assistance, a benefit available for some deployments that facilitates a mid-deployment reunification of the member and family or mid-deployment leave for the member.



RCAF Family Connection Program

HMCS – Her Majesty’s Canadian Ship (Naval term)

Integral Unit – a Unit on the Wing that does fall within the chain of command of the Wing Commander (because they have different Commanders, rules and regulations for integral and lodger units may vary slightly, and that can be challenging for families to understand)

IR – Imposed Restriction

IRP – Integrated Relocation Program, the set of regulations regarding moves at public expense when a member (and family) are posted.

Lodger Unit – a Unit located on the Wing that does not fall within the chain of command of the Wing Commander

Mess – each military member belongs to the ‘mess’ appropriate to his/her rank. The mess is a social gathering place for members and their guests.

MFRC – Military Family Resource Centre

MFS – Military Family Services

MPPR – Military Personnel Resume Record

PMC – President of the Mess Committee

POC – Point of Contact

RCN – Royal Canadian Navy

RFDD – Report for Duty Day, members first official day at a new unit

SLT – Second Language Training

Sqn – Squadron

SWO/SCWO – Squadron Warrant Officer/Squadron Chief Warrant Officer (both pronounced “swo”)

TD – Temporary Duty, generally used to refer to any travel away from the unit

UFCPR – Unit Family Connection Program Representative

WFCPC – Wing Family Connection Program Coordinator

