

**Oregon House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Family Advocacy Issue HB 2930**

Testimony

by Mark San Souci

March 28, 2017

Madame Chair Keny-Guyer and Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide information on a Department of Defense quality of life issue from 2015 that is about making efforts to determine the military status of parents whose children are subject to abuse or neglect allegations, and to notify the department of defense family advocate program and chain of command that relates to the military parent or guardian.

My name is Mark San Souci, Department of Defense (DoD) Regional State Liaison for the Northwestern states, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Military Community and Family Policy.

First, I want to say this issue is not a reflection of a known problem with any Oregon state agency having to do with children and families and the military in this state.

What this is, however, is a recognition that the **DoD has found problems in states because of the present system that often relies on individual, local MOUs to deal with it.** or none at all. And because of that, this issue has risen to make our annual list of pressing concerns to work with legislators at the state level to try and address.

The Secretary of Defense is required by Section 1787 of Title 10 US Code to coordinate with civilian child welfare to obtain information on allegations of child abuse and neglect involving children in military families.

If this issue becomes a bill, it will help us address those issues by providing **a consistent and uniform state statute into law that will allow the military installation to know this unfortunate situation has occurred.** It lets the chain of command know, and allows a family to seek the medical and counseling services the military installation

provides. **And prevent anyone from slipping through the cracks, so to speak.**

70% of military families live off a military installation and in our communities. And considering the lack of military installations in Oregon, that percentage is no doubt higher.

The military services offers excellent investigative, intervention, and rehabilitative support resources that can assist the state child welfare system in addressing allegations.

While the current DoD policy described in the Family Advocacy Program is to establish MOUs to operationalize communication and cooperation, we are asking for **specific state level guidance that directs information sharing with the military will provide consistency and complements the language that directs action by the SecDef.**

Because we have been working on this issue only since 2015 for the Personnel and Readiness Directorate of Department of Defense, we now have 9 states (ID, IL, IN, MT, NJ, OK, SC, VA, WA), doing what HB 2930 asks you to consider, with another 7 states (AL, AR, CO, CT, GA, MD, TX) plus OR taking it up in 2017, spreading their best practice language to other states.

We know Oregon is not a huge **active duty** military state, but as of September 2016, according to the Defense Management Data Center (DMDC), has a total active military of 933 military members, 381 spouses, and 1,563 children 5-18. I am still trying to get the number to include 0-5 because of course lots of abuse victims are in that age group too.

The latest DMDC data I can find for Select Reserves indicates 10, 455 military members, 5,343 spouses, and 5,112 total dependents. Unfortunately, with this many people in both components, occasionally child abuse happens.

An August 2016 DoD Family Advocacy Program report of fiscal year 2015 data (the latest), indicated that the DoD rate of individual child

victims remains approximately half of the rate of the US civilian population. That known, DoD **remains focused on military-specific risk factors and associated prevention strategies that best serves the military family.**

In FY15, while incidents decreased 1.4% from FY14, an upward trend from FY09 to FY 14 prompted an enhanced focus on the prevention of child neglect in 2015. Neglect actually continues to comprise the majority at 58% of incidents reported.

I think you would agree with me that regardless of the numbers, every child's life is worth this effort.

Thank you for taking up this issue, and please move HB 2930 forward to implement improvements to your current law to help save every child.

I stand for any questions.

Mark

Mark San Souci,
Northwest Defense State Regional Liaison,
mark.b.sansouci.civ@mail.mil
571-309-4622

Point of contact for to report allegations of child abuse in a military family in Oregon will be:

Joint Forces HQ Resources
3225 State St., PO Box 14350
Attn: State Director for Oregon
Salem, OR 97309-5047
Email Oregon State Director
Phone 503-584-2245

Family Advocacy Program Managers by Installation (Active) is:

US Army
USAREC, Portland Battalion
US Army Recruiting Battalion HQ

1220 SW 3rd Ave
Portland, OR 97204
Phone 503-256-1431, 503-256-2572
<http://www.usarec.army.mil/6thbde/6hbn/>