

Military Community Outreach & Connection

☒ *Checklist*

Purpose

If your church is near a military installation, this tool can help you evaluate how effectively you are reaching, welcoming, discipling, and mobilizing military members to build the kingdom in your community and wherever they are sent. We believe the military population is uniquely positioned to carry the gospel across the country and around the world.

Military Community Readiness Assessment

UNDERSTAND YOUR MISSION FIELD

- ☐ Do you know all the military installations within 30 minutes of your church?
- ☐ Do you understand the major purpose of those installations (what is the mission, what military assets are located there)?
- ☐ Do you understand the normal PCS (Permanent Change of Station) and deployment rhythms in your community?
- ☐ Do you know where military families commonly live off installation?
- ☐ Have you identified schools and neighborhoods with large military populations?
- ☐ Do you know approximately what percentage of your current congregation is military-connected?
- ☐ Do you regularly ask military members in your church what challenges and opportunities they see?

BUILD A MILITARY MINISTRY TEAM

- ☐ Have you identified military-connected members who can help lead outreach?
- ☐ Have you designated a point person for military ministry?
- ☐ Have you included Veterans and military spouses in planning?
- ☐ Have you intentionally equipped members to build relationships with military neighbors and coworkers?
- ☐ Do you know the other ministries and churches serving the installation? Look for opportunities to collaborate rather than unnecessarily duplicate efforts.

BECOME A MILITARY-FRIENDLY CHURCH

- ☐ Does your staff understand the basic realities and terminology of PCS moves, deployments, Temporary Duty (TDY), military schedules, and frequent transitions?
- ☐ Do military families become meaningfully involved without needing to live here for several years first?
- ☐ Do you provide opportunities for people with unpredictable schedules to participate? Can they join a small group, member classes, or discipleship training without having to wait many months?
- ☐ How do you intentionally support spouses during deployments and extended separations? Have small groups considered having a plan for caring for families during deployments?
- ☐ How do you help newly arrived families establish relationships quickly?
- ☐ Do you celebrate sending military members to their next duty station rather than viewing their departure as losing volunteers? How do you actually send them out?

BE DISCOVERABLE

- ☐ Search “church near [installation]” and see where your church appears.
- ☐ Search “church near [major military housing area].”
- ☐ When someone asks, “What churches should we check out when we get there,” would members of the military community recommend your church? Why or why not?
- ☐ Is your Google Business Profile complete and current?

- ☐ Are service times easy to find?
- ☐ Does your website include natural references to the nearby military community and installation?
- ☐ Does your website work well on mobile devices?
- ☐ If your church has social media, is it up to date, and does it include pictures of real people?

THINK LIKE A PCS FAMILY

Ask several military families to visit your website and answer:

- ☐ Can you determine the church's theology in less than two minutes?
- ☐ Can you determine what happens with your children?
- ☐ Can you determine what people normally wear and where to park?
- ☐ Can you determine whether there are people here in your stage of life?
- ☐ Can you see what the congregation actually looks like?
- ☐ Can you easily contact a real person before arriving?
- ☐ Would anything on the website make you hesitant to visit?

A Plan for Connecting with Christian Military Families

Goal: Be Discoverable Before They Arrive

Most Christian military families begin looking for a church MONTHS before they PCS.

GET INTO MILITARY NETWORKS

- ☐ Encourage military members in your church to participate in the informal networks, like Facebook groups, where incoming military families ask questions and look for recommendations.
- ☐ Build relationships with churches near other military installations that can help connect families PCSing into your area.
- ☐ Connect with military-focused ministries and networks that can help you engage with incoming families.
- ☐ Build appropriate relationships with military chaplains so they know your church and understand who you are.
- ☐ Identify military networks you are not currently connected to and consider where new relationships would be helpful.

CREATE A PCS LANDING PAGE

Consider a webpage such as: "PCSing to [Installation]? Welcome to the Area."

- ☐ Introduce your church and what newcomers can expect.
- ☐ Introduce military-connected members of your church.
- ☐ Share information about the major communities where families live.
- ☐ Provide practical information about the local area, including schools, commuting, and housing.
- ☐ Include an easy "Connect Before You Arrive" form.
- ☐ Offer to connect newcomers with someone in a similar military or family situation.

Make the page genuinely helpful, not just an advertisement for your church.

Help Military Families Get Plugged In

Goal: Move People Quickly from Visitor to Family

Getting someone through the door is not the same as integrating them into the church. Military families may only have two or three years at an installation. You cannot take a year to get them connected.

THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

- ☐ Develop a plan for recognizing when someone is new to the military community without making them feel singled out.
- ☐ Personally follow up with military-connected visitors.
- ☐ Learn when they arrive, where they are stationed, and approximately how long they expect to be in the area.
- ☐ Create opportunities for new military families to quickly build relationships with people in your church—sharing a meal together is a great place to start.
- ☐ Connect them to a small group and help families with children get involved in children and student ministries.
- ☐ Integrate military families into the broader life of the church, not only with other military families.
- ☐ Prioritize inviting newcomers into relationships, not just programs.
- ☐ Have a plan for noticing and following up when someone stops attending.

THE FIRST 90 DAYS

- ☐ Make your membership process clear and easy to understand.
- ☐ Help military families take meaningful steps toward membership within their first 90 days.
- ☐ Give mature Christians opportunities to begin serving without unnecessary delays.
- ☐ Are there unnecessary barriers that make military members wait months before becoming involved?
- ☐ Treat mature incoming Christians as potential ministry partners, not just new attendees.
- ☐ Help newcomers develop meaningful relationships outside of the military community.
- ☐ Connect them to a small group, class, discipleship relationship, or other community.
- ☐ Make sure someone knows them well enough to recognize when they are struggling.
- ☐ Challenge mature Christians to contribute and disciple others.