Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

What is a Yellow Ribbon Community?

A Yellow Ribbon Community unites key areas within a community to create a comprehensive network that connects and coordinates agencies, organizations, resources and employers for the purpose of creating access to resources that meet the needs at the local level of Service Members, Veterans and Military Families across the state of Minnesota.

Why Become a Yellow Ribbon Community?

By developing a Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee and partnering with local military leaders a commitment is made to taking action. Communities unite to honor, support and embrace those affected by past and present military service. The outward showing of support enables synchronization of local resources and strengthens the partnership with service providers and military entities. The community's effort transcends the military to any group in need and builds a stronger, more compassionate community.

How to become a Yellow Ribbon Community?

In partnership with a Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee, each community will develop a sustainable Action Plan that is demonstrating their commitment to Service Members, Veterans and Military Families. The community will identify and connect leaders in key areas across the community, leverage existing support activities, meet specific needs of Service Members, Veterans and Military Families and build awareness and commitment throughout the community and take action.

*Yellow Ribbon Community Key Areas: (*Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee represented in all areas.)*

- City Leadership/Veterans Organizations/Civic Organizations/Local Military Entities
  - Mayor and City Council
  - Local military leaders/recruiters/unit representation
  - City Administrator and Staff
  - State Legislators
  - VFW, American Legion and Auxiliary
  - County Veteran Service Officer and other county partners
  - Vietnam Vets/Paralyzed Veterans of America/Disabled American Vets/Purple Heart/Blue Star Mothers
  - Local VA Programs/Organizations
  - Rotary/Jaycees/Knights of Columbus/Kiwanis/Lions/Masons
  - City Royalty/Ambassadors
- K-12 Education/Youth Programs/Community Ed
  - Superintendant and School Board (Public, Private and Charter Schools)
  - Youth Sports Programs/Community Youth Programs
  - Community Ed Leaders and Staff
  - Boy/Girls Scouts
  - County Library Leaders and Staff
  - 4H Clubs
  - YMCA/Boys and Girls Club
- Public Safety/Judicial
  - Police Chief and Staff/Fire Chief and Staff/Emergency Services
  - EMT Leaders and Staff
  - Prosecutors/Defenders/Judges/Lawyers
  - Legal Associations
- Businesses/Employers
  - Community business partners
  - Local Business Associations
  - Chamber of Commerce/Rotary Clubs/Networking Clubs
- Faith Based/Medical/Social Services/Volunteer Groups
  - Church/Synagogue Representatives/Ministerial Associations
  - Military Chaplains
  - American Red Cross/United Way Associations
  - Community Action Council/Community Support Organizations
  - Medical and Mental Health Providers/Associations

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

CITY LEADERSHIP

Minimum Service	Best Practices/Suggestions
Ongoing public support of Yellow Ribbon Community Program efforts	• Updated on all aspects of support activities • Communicate and recognize support activities at city meetings/events • Prominent presence of support efforts on city website/communication venues • Connect military families to the Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee-carry contact card • Volunteer at Yellow Ribbon events • Participate on YellowRibbon Steering Committee as city representative • Provide admin support from staff to Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee • Provide city benefits (waiving fees for activities, providing print services, waiving fees or providing discounts to military families for city services, etc.) • Create volunteer opportunities for city staff to support military connected residents • Create military-friendly employee support and recruiting policies for city employees • Ensure all city leaders and staff are informed about Yellow Ribbon Community efforts • Create plan of support to local businesses impacted by deployed employees • Hold regular meetings with local military leaders to identify partnership opportunities • Create process for new residents to learn about military support efforts • Create annual recognition events for veteran employees (Veterans Day, Memorial Day) • Partner with school district to showcase military support in the schools
Annual city leadership update of Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee goals and objectives	• Special council meeting to receive annual update of Steering Committee progress • Request annual report on committee initiatives • Provide input into annual goals and objectives based on community needs • Recognize key Yellow Ribbon Volunteers
City leader participation and awareness of military-specific Crisis Intervention and Wellness Processes and Resources.	• Create military-specific Crisis Intervention process for all first responders and leaders • Add military resources/support processes to existing community crisis plans • Invite Veteran Services to give updates to staff • Host an educational seminar for the community, city staff and leaders on crisis intervention and military resources • Develop a city crisis intervention process • Provide access to local counseling resources • Create crisis resource cards for all city leaders • Identify and build relationships with local mental health professionals

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

YELLOW RIBBON STEERING COMMITTEE

Minimum Service	Best Practices/Suggestions
Creation of Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee with representation from all key community areas	• Ensure ongoing representation from all key areas responsible for communication and input of support activities/events • Communicate meeting minutes and agenda to key city leaders and the public • Full partnership with local military leaders, Family Readiness Group Leaders, Family Assistance Center Specialists, County Veteran Service Officers and local Employment Reps
Regular meetings with annual goals and objectives to meet community needs	• Set standard day, time and location for meeting • Professional organization of meetings; consistent meeting time and location, meeting agenda, meeting minutes, effective time management • Create sustainability of coordination of support efforts throughout community • Create ongoing communication processes with local military leaders • Set annual goals and objectives to meet needs in the community • Invite community partners to meetings to hear about needs in the community
Continuous commitment to identify, support and meet the needs of service members, veterans, military families in local area	• Host info booth at all community events • Develop a communication/marketing plan specific to reaching military families • Identify volunteers to work community events • Develop process to identify specific needs of military connected residents • Synchronize volunteer groups within the community to activate support • Create community events for military families/veterans to come together • Create data base of all military in community • Create call lists to check in with identified families-be proactive in support offers (call before the snow falls to get snow shoveling set up, arrange raking before the leaves fall) • Partner with all areas within community to provide support activities/events • Create support groups for veteran/military families • Establish partnership with local media • Regular baseline needs review with local military leader • Ongoing plan to assess needs of local employers impacted by military deployments • Partner with local licensed childcare providers to offer assistance/back up care • Host monthly veteran dinners • Create mentorship program for veterans • Host military spouse gatherings-provide childcare

Annual review of Yellow Ribbon Community Action Plan	• Review with city leaders or at town hall meetings • Create written annual report to track progress and measure success • Publish successes to military families to highlight commitment and demonstrate sustainability • Create annual focus areas and objectives based on needs. • Create annual goals and objectives based on the needs determined within local community
Continuous commitment to create community awareness and to increase community acceptance and involvement with service members, veterans and military families	• Host veteran or military family member speakers to educate on reintegration/military family issues • Host local military leader speakers to update on military service member and family needs, status of military deployments, identified military needs/challenges • Host social service professionals to educate on identified military needs/challenges • Group viewings of applicable media (IE: military specific movies) • Host Town Hall discussion forums /expert panels • Invite local Family Assistance Center Specialists or County Veteran Service Officer to educate on military family needs and ways to assist • Ensure library has print resources available on military family and reintegration issues • Establish visible signs of support throughout the community (flags,shop window clings,etc) • Communicate resource needs of local military • Regular info articles in local newspaper • Steering committee float or booth at city celebrations • Post YR contact information in water bills • Partner with local Veteran/Nursing Homes to recognize veteran residents • Recognize volunteers who support committees' mission
Create a process to "Welcome Home" all Service Members	• Plan a community Welcome Home ceremony • Sponsor picnic/party for families • Incorporate service members in City Celebrations (IE:Grand Marshall) • Community representation at Welcome Home ceremony or airport • Welcome home card from City Leaders, the public and Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee • Host community picnic to recognize those who have come home • Host belated Welcome Home event (IE: parade, party) for Vietnam Veterans

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

PUBLIC SAFETY/JUDICIAL

Minimum Service	Best Practices/Suggestions
Representation of public safety on Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	Representatives committed to Yellow Ribbon Community responsible to engage all public safety personnel within the community either by representation or communicating Steering Committee activities.
Ongoing public commitment to identify and support service members, veterans and military families	• Hold public safety Open House for military families • Incorporate military family identification and support plan in National Night Out activities • Develop public safety mentors for military children • Attend military support groups in the schools to develop relationships with military children • Mentor veterans interested in public safety careers • Participate in Welcome Home ceremonies • Support our Troops decal or license plates on all public safety vehicles. • Provide public safety volunteers for support events/military family assistance • Provide drug/alcohol education to military families • Offer free birthday parties for children of deployed service members at fire or police station • Develop plan for School Resource Officer support to military children in schools • Offer "safety checks" of houses prior to a deployment to ensure family safety
Defined, sustainable and ongoing training/awareness program for all public safety personnel	• Annual formal, POST board certified training on reintegration issues • Maintain local military referral resource list • Maintain relationship with local County Veteran Service Officer-invite to meet public safety team and educate on issues/trend across the state • Maintain relationship with local armory leader to be educated on issues/trends • Participation in Midwest Community Policing, "Veterans in Crisis" Training • Educate all employees on veterans court program in county
Ongoing process to respond to service member, veterans and military family issues within the community	• Educate public safety personnel on issues unique within the community • Train personnel on crisis intervention • Develop or become aware of specialized Veteran Court programs • Share identified needs with YR Committee • Become involved in Veterans Courts-mentor through court process • Create a condolence care plan to assist a military family with the loss of a loved one • Ensure knowledge of military resources

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Minimum Service	Best Practices/Suggestions
Representation of faith based organizations on Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	Representatives committed to Yellow Ribbon Network responsible to engage all faith based organizations within the community either by representation or communicating Steering Committee activities.
Continuous, ongoing partnership and participation with Yellow Ribbon Community Program	• Create volunteer corps in individual faith based organizations that can be called upon for support • Create data base of specialized skills that can be made available for "chore support" (handymen, professionals to help with job prep, plumbers, electricians, etc) • Host veteran or military family events/meals • Host childcare events for military families or create access to licensed child care • Provide marriage and family counseling to military families • Provide proactive financial planning classes to military families • Provide free transportation to military children for youth events, bible studies, vacation bible schools • Provide marriage and family retreats • Waive church fees for events, classes, activities • Host Family Readiness Group meetings and provide childcare • Use faith based networks to provide meals to military families/veterans • Hold military appreciation and recognition services. Create visible signs of support internally and externally • Adopt a local unit and support them and their families • Host military family speakers to share stories • Create a condolence care plan for families impacted by a military loss • Market local military support efforts in all church communication methods • Form prayer groups for military families • Host bible studies for military families and provide childcare • Create mentor program for military youth • Create military appreciation bulletin boards or space in church communications • Provide employment counseling and resources and/or proactive career planning/job seeking skill classes to Veterans and military families • Provide opportunities for free legal support/advice • Provide clergy training on military support issues and resources • Develop relationships with local military units

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUED

Minimum Service	Best Practices/Suggestions
Plan to identify military families within the faith-based community and connect them to the Yellow Ribbon Network	• Develop an identification process to faith base staff • Promote Yellow Ribbon Network in church bulletins and other communication methods • Create a bulletin board in church entry with information about the Yellow Ribbon Network • Invite a Yellow Ribbon Network Committee Member to give an update to all church members annually • Promote Yellow Ribbon Network events during church announcements • Host Yellow Ribbon network events • Create volunteer corp among staff and members to assist at Yellow Ribbon Network events or need requests • Create ongoing "Yellow Ribbon" corner in communications/bulletins • Invite local military leaders to speak at services • Host support groups for military spouses, veterans or military parents • Host networking events for unemployed veterans • Create contact information cards to be visible throughout organization • Host military appreciation services • Create Veteran or Military Spouse support groups • Partner with local senior citizen homes to recognize veterans • Host a military specific movie night for families with facilitated discussion groups • Host recognition event for Yellow Ribbon Community volunteers

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS/CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Minimum Service	Best Practices/Suggestions
Representation of veteran organizations on Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	Representatives committed to the Yellow Ribbon Community Program responsible to engage all veteran organizations within the community either by representation or communicating Steering Committee activities.
Recognition and honor events in partnership with Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	• Incorporate local Yellow Ribbon efforts in all veteran recognition events • Offer educational opportunities to honor and recognize • Invite steering committee to planning meetings
Full support and participation in Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program	• Host fundraisers to support YR Network • Communicate any veteran issues/trends to Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee to address • Incorporate Steering Committee updates at regular meetings and publications • Offer food/beverage discounts to military families/veterans • Build ongoing relationships with local armory full time staff and drill units • Communicate veterans benefits and services to local veterans and YR Steering Committee • Provide financial assistance to support military support network events • Create network of volunteers to assist military families • Host Family Readiness Groups and provide child care • Educate and engage all post members on support efforts • Connect all support programs to YR effort • Create community volunteer opportunities to help Veterans/Military Families • Host a BBQ or breakfast at local armory during drill weekend • Partner with local recruiters to recognize citizens who enter military service • Keep local military leader updated on issues/trends within the community
Process for identification of service members, veterans and military families within the community	• Develop veteran mentor program • Connect to YR Network at all events • Create plan for identifying all local military • Host military date night or veteran dinner • Partner with local armory for events/gather ideas to support • Work with state veteran organization leaders to gather identification information • Create self-identification option on registration form for new members • Create space for YR Network booth at all events • Connect any identified military family to YR Network

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

BUSINESSES/EMPLOYERS

Minimum Service	Best Practice/Suggestions
Representation of businesses/employers on Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	Representatives committed to the Yellow Ribbon Community responsible to engage all businesses/employers within the community either by representation or communicating Steering Committee activities.
Full support of service members, veterans and military families	• Offer discounts, space or free services • Partner with local community leaders to support businesses impacted by a deployment • Provide quality employment opportunities • Ensure all HR staff and leaders are updated on USERRA laws and regulations • Create corps of volunteers who can be called upon to aide service members, veterans and their families • Offer networking, proactive career planning and job seeking skills training • Create strong veteran recruiting programs • Train HR personnel on military issues/hiring • Provide Job Coach Mentors to returning veterans • Create military appreciation events and partner with others in the business community to do the same • Partner with local colleges or career centers to support military job seekers • Offer volunteers to local workforce centers • Create veteran retraining/vocational programs
Full support of service members, veterans and military family employees	• Create military-friendly policies and procedures for employees impacted by a military deployment • Create support groups for military families • Extend bereavement leave policy for Gold Star Families • Create military-friendly community outreach opportunities for employees • Create vacation donation program for employees or spouses impacted by a military leave or injury • Develop support plans for employees impacted by a military deployment • Educate managers on best practices for full support of an employee impacted by a military deployment and awareness of USERRA laws • Create Veteran hiring/recruiting and retaining programs • Design a company Wall of Heroes • Create military appreciation events throughout the organization • Partner with other businesses and local colleges to host a job fair for returning veterans • Partner with community on recognition events

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

SOCIAL SERVICE/MEDICAL PROVIDERS

Minimum Service	Best Practice/Suggestions
Representation of social service/medical providers on Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	Representatives committed to the Yellow Ribbon Community Program responsible to engage all Social Service/Medical providers within the community either by representation or communicating Steering Committee activities.
Identify Tricare mental health providers within local community	• Identify Primary Care Clinics and mental health professionals enrolled in Tricare • Provide training to potential Tricare providers • Community recognition and marketing of participating providers to military families • Partnership with local counseling resources to be made available to veterans/military families • Medical provider represented on committee
Full support of service members, veterans and military families	• Provide ongoing training to medical staff on unique challenges of military residents • Offer free or reduce services • Offer counseling services to employers impacted by a military crisis • Improve access to counseling for drug or alcohol abuse, marriage counseling, parenting and relationship issues • Create corps of volunteer employees who can be called upon to assist military families • Provide free psychological and social service support services • Provide proactive education to military families prior to deployment • Train local public safety and city leaders on crisis intervention techniques/resources • Participate in the Give an Hour organization • Create military-friendly policies and procedures • Create veteran recruiting/retaining programs • Provide resource list to city leaders • Partner with community to create crisis plan • Donate counseling services to families dealing with a military injury or death • Partner with local armory leaders to hold counseling sessions during drill weekends • Create resource list for public safety • Post Yellow Ribbon Network info at site and encourage employees/clients to connect • Connect with veterans in senior/assisted living environments to provide counseling
Identify resources to provide financial literacy assistance to veterans and military families	• Identify all free or low cost financial literacy resources in community • Connect military families to resources • Host a class on financial literacy/budgeting • Mentor single or newly married military couples on financial planning • Assist elderly veterans with financial planning

Minimum Services and Best Practices for Yellow Ribbon Recognition Program

EDUCATION/YOUTH

Minimum Service	Best Practice/Suggestions
Representation of school district on Yellow Ribbon Steering Committee	Representatives committed to the Yellow Ribbon Community Program responsible to engage all schools and school leaders within the community by communicating Steering Committee activities.
Plan to identify military families within the school district	• Invite YR Network to host informational booth at all school events • Host military family events • Hold military appreciation at sports events • Create check box in registration materials • Advertise local Yellow Ribbon support efforts within school communications
Full support of service members, veterans and military families	• Offer Community Education classes on financial planning, career planning or parenting • Provide communication opportunities for families to connect with deployed family members (ie; video conferencing, Skype) • Engage school groups to provide volunteers • Participate in patriotic youth programs through local veteran organizations • Enhance curriculum to include military deployment impact on families • Student groups participating in local community recognition events • Waive or reduce fees for military families • Provide transportation to military children for free library programs/military support camps/local sports camps • Develop military teen support group with focus on community service and leadership • Invite local military to teach classes in geography, physical education, history, etc
Full support of service member, veterans and military family employees	• Create military-friendly policies and procedures for employees impacted by a military deployment • Create military-friendly community outreach opportunities for employees • Create veteran recruiting/hiring programs • Train HR on military specific issues
Defined, sustainable and ongoing training/awareness program for all school personnel	• Offer CEU credit training on military issues • Speakers or support organization booths at staff events • Educate staff on military support resources • Increase awareness of school staff on military family support issues • Create condolence care plan •

August 2014

Annual recognition for graduates entering the Armed Forces	• Recognize at annual end of year events • Red, white and blue tassel on mortar board • Recognize at final football game • Invite older veterans to recognition events • Connect new military families to YR Network and resources
Military K-12 Toolkit introduced and implemented throughout school district	• Toolkit introduced annually at administrative events • Scheduled time throughout the year to apply curriculum to military youth • Meet with MN Youth Programs representatives for updates on youth specific resources and curriculum feedback • Create ongoing support groups for military youth to apply curriculum • Train high schoolers or community volunteers to teach curriculum