

## Training Tips and Updates – Command Rosters 17 October 2022

OPNAVINST 1750.1G CH-2, f. (5), *Navy Family Ombudsman Program*, states that commanders and commanding officers shall ensure that the command ombudsman receives a regularly updated command roster to include inbound personnel and families. This is not optional. Command members and their family's information must be included on the roster. Without this information, ombudsmen are unable to fulfill their assigned role, meaning that both the command and the command families will not receive the expected support. Ombudsman duties include "providing communications, outreach, resource referral, information, and advocacy to and for command families."

The Volunteer Agreement, DD Form 2793, gives ombudsmen permission to have access to the privacy information contained on a roster, per OPNAVINST 5380.1D, *Acceptance and Use of Voluntary Services in the Navy* and 5 U.S.C. §552a. The individuals listed on the roster do not need to give consent for the release of this information on the roster when the ombudsman is acting in an official capacity. Ombudsmen receive training in Ombudsman Basic Training (OBT/eOBT) on how to handle and protect the PII they have in their possession. The CO is responsible for selecting an ombudsman who is trustworthy and will honor this responsibility.

Ombudsmen should not gather the contact information of the command spouses – it is the responsibility of the command to provide that to them. Without this information, ombudsmen are unable to fulfill their assigned role, meaning that both the command and the command families will not receive the expected support. They will not be able to confirm that the person they are communicating with is actually a spouse from the command. In an emergency, the ombudsman will not be able to get help to the person on the phone. Ombudsmen do not need this information for social reason; they need it to be the resource for command families.

Occasionally, a spouse may ask to be excluded from emails that share general information from the ombudsman; that request should come from the spouse, not the Sailor. These spouses should know that if a command emergency occurs, or an official message from the CO needs to be shared they would be included in that message.

In 2017, the accidents involving the USS John S. McCain and USS Fitzgerald, illustrated how important it is for ombudsmen to have the spouse information. Thankfully, both commands had provided their ombudsmen with rosters so they were able to provide crisis support during those tragic events. The *Ombudsman Program Commander's Guide*, pages 22-23, lists the instructions that support this requirement. Additionally, several NAVADMINs have been released that reiterate this guidance.

- NAVADMIN 295/10, Family Readiness Communications Policy, states in paragraph 2, in part: Our Sailors and families must be kept informed of available services and programs systems and how to access and use them. Accordingly, we must have a communication strategy that delivers accurate, timely and responsive information to sailors and their families.
- Paragraph 3 states in part: Family readiness is a CO's responsibility, independent of the Sailor. Command authorities may contact family members, with or without the sponsor's consent, when relaying official information directly related to family readiness.
- Paragraph 5 states: CO's and other designated command members, can personally communicate with families. COs can also leverage the resources of existing readiness affiliated programs such as

ombudsmen and Fleet and Family Support Centers. The command ombudsman, formally appointed in accordance with Ref C, Navy Family Ombudsman Program, holds official command status and serves as the CO's primary advisor and assistant in ensuring families have the information necessary to meet the challenges of a military life. The command ombudsman can use command recall rosters in the performance of duties to disseminate official family readiness information.

- Paragraph 7 states: COs are permitted to collect and maintain personally identifiable information (PII), (home address, mailing address, private phone numbers, personal e-mail address, and names of family members) to properly account for Sailors and family members during routine or emergency situations and for purposes of disseminating official family readiness information. Paragraph 8 states in part: COs must protect PII at all times. Personal information obtained or maintained through official sources may not be used for unofficial purposes.
- NAVADMIN 216/17, *Ombudsman Appreciation Day*, states in paragraph 4: Commanders, you have an important role in ensuring your Ombudsmen are ready to serve and are successful. Commanders shall communicate with their Ombudsman regularly to gauge command families' morale, health, and welfare and to share command information that is relevant to our Navy families. OPNAVINST 1750.1G (CH-2) directs commands to provide an updated roster of command family members in order to relay official information directly related to family readiness. Commanders should make every effort to support their Ombudsman by fulfilling all requirements as set forth in OPNAVINST 1750.1G (CH-2).
- NAVADMIN 046/18 *Ombudsman and Family Readiness Group Emergency Readiness and Response* states in paragraph 2.b.: Ombudsmen must be able to effectively communicate with command families to provide support, especially during times of crisis. As such, per reference (a), commanders will release command rosters listing current and inbound personnel and families to their ombudsmen. Consent of the individuals listed is not required when the ombudsman is performing official duties.
- NAVADMIN 222/19: Suicide Policy Update states in 5.a.: Advertise the MyNavyFamily Application in all Welcome aboard Letters and include contact information to the Ombudsman to assist Navy families with transitioning.

Finally, CNIC JAG has provided the following statement:

- Per 10 U.S.C. 1588, subsection (d), DON volunteers such as command ombudsmen are considered DON employees for purposes of the PA. Specifically, subsection (a) permits the DON to accept voluntary services for "family support services," and subsection (d) states that such volunteers will be considered Federal Government employees for purposes of section 552a of title 5 [PA]. Subsection (d) states that volunteers of non-appropriated fund instrumentalities (NAFIs) will only be considered employees for purposes of claims for damages and work-related injuries.
- Per DoDI 1100.21, PA records may be provided to a volunteer of a DoD Component other than NAFIs. OPNAVINST 5380.1D states that a person providing "properly accepted" volunteer services to the DON will be considered a Federal Government employee to the extent specified in 10 U.S.C. 1588 and DoDI 21

