



# GUARD & RESERVE SUPPORT NETWORK

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



## ABOUT

**T**he Department of Defense (DoD) Guard and Reserve Support Network (GRSN) is a DoD-wide partnership of programs supporting the needs of the National Guard and Reserve community.

Comprised of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Service Member and Family Readiness (SMFR), and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP), GRSN is dedicated to promoting Service member and family readiness, resilience, and reintegration.

GRSN connects tools, information, and partner organizations with Service members, their families, and their employers in order to mitigate and address the challenges of Reserve Component service.

Visit us online:  
[www.GUARDRESERVES.com](http://www.GUARDRESERVES.com)

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# CHANGE ADAPTABILITY RESILIENCE

*M. Alex Baird, Director of Family and Employer Programs and Policy*

**A**ny Service member will tell you that change is the one constant in the military. Whether it manifests itself through changes in mission, new leadership, training updates, changes of station, or the infamous “other duties as assigned,” change will find you.

These changes range the scale of good to bad, but the frequency of change, in and of itself, has a positive effect on our Service members and families. It builds adaptability and resilience, preparing them for the many other challenges that come along with a military life.

The Office of Family and Employer Programs and Policy (FEPP) is no stranger to change, and our programs have benefitted, adapting to new operating environments and evolving to meet new challenges. This first joint Annual Report reflects the flexibility and accomplishments of ESGR, SMFR, and YRRP during Fiscal Year 2016.

We are using our GRSN branding to present the Annual Report. GRSN represents FEPP’s mission in a relevant, relatable way,

clearly identifies our core responsibilities, and demonstrates how our programs work together to provide information and assistance to stakeholders across our portfolio of programs.

This Annual Report also serves to hail the arrival of a new organizational structure for our programs. Effective January 1, 2017, ESGR, SMFR, and YRRP joined with the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program, Federal Voting Assistance Program, and Transition to Veterans Program to form the DoD Personnel and Family Support Center. We are excited to have joined forces with these great programs that serve such a broad spectrum of quality-of-life needs.

Our ongoing success is the result of many factors, but our ability to scale our programs to prevailing needs, adapt our operations to meet current requirements, and leverage the expertise of our stakeholders to tackle new challenges cannot be overstated. With that in mind, I say, bring on the change; we are ready to make great things happen.



## OVERVIEW

**E**mployer Support of the Guard and Reserve was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers, and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

ESGR develops and promotes supportive work environments for Service members in the Reserve Components through outreach, recognition, and educational opportunities, increasing awareness of applicable laws and resolving employment conflicts between the Service members and their employers.

Members of the National Guard and Reserve and their civilian employers form an alliance essential to the security of our Nation. These brave men and women perform critical roles in disaster relief efforts at home and abroad, and continue to serve around the world to ensure our freedom. ESGR works to ensure all employers support and value the employment of Reserve Component members across the United States and its territories.

## LEADERSHIP

ESGR is a volunteer-led and volunteer-centric program within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Led by National Chair Paul E. Mock and Executive Director M. Alex Baird, ESGR operates through a network of nearly 4,000 volunteers in 54 committees located across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam-CNMI, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Our dedicated volunteers come from all walks of life. They are business executives, civic leaders, and patriotic citizens. Some volunteer activities include: Employer Outreach, Ombudsman, Public Affairs, and Military Outreach.

ESGR's volunteer Board of Directors and functional subcommittees help guide program strategy and ensure the program remains true to its grassroots heritage of community-based support to our citizen warriors, their families, and employers.



With an audience of civilian and military supporters, Alex Baird, Executive Director of Employer Support of the Guard, left, and Neil Smit, the President and CEO of Comcast Cable and Senior Executive Vice President of Comcast Corp., present a signed ESGR Statement of Support in Philadelphia, June 14. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Andria Allmond)



The 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team welcomed more than a dozen civilian employers of the Guardsmen to have a glance into the objectives, equipment, and personnel during their annual training at Fort Hood, Aug. 20. The event gives employers a brief glimpse into ongoing military commitments of Guardsmen and Reservists. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Michael Vanpool)

# EMPLOYER RECOGNITION

Recognition of supportive employers is one of the most important elements of ESGR's mission to promote a cooperative culture of employer support for National Guard and Reserve Service members. ESGR State/Territory Committees actively promote awards as a vital tool in publicly acknowledging employers' support, while strengthening relationships between Service members and employers.

## EMPLOYER AWARDS

**The Patriot Award** is the first and most prominent in ESGR's series of awards. An employee serving in the National Guard or Reserve, or the spouse of a Guardsman or Reservist, may nominate individual supervisors for support provided directly to the nominating Service member, the spouse, and his or her family.

**The Above and Beyond Award** is presented by ESGR State/Territory Committees to recognize employers at the local level who have gone above and beyond the legal requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) by providing their National Guard and Reserve employees additional,

non-mandated benefits such as differential or full pay to offset lost wages.

**The Seven Seals Award** is the broadest and most inclusive award given by ESGR, as it may be awarded to employers, ESGR staff members and volunteers, or any person or entity that significantly advances the ESGR mission. It is presented at both the state and national levels.

**The Pro Patria Award** is the highest level award bestowed by an ESGR State/Territory Committee. It is presented annually to one small, one large, and one public sector employer in their state or territory. Recipients have demonstrated the greatest support to National Guard and Reserve employees through their leadership and practices.

**The Extraordinary Employer Support Award** recognizes sustained employer support of National Guard and Reserve service. Only prior recipients of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award or the Pro Patria Award, who have demonstrated sustained support for three or more years after receiving one of those awards, are eligible for consideration at the state or territory level.



# 2016 AWARDS PRESENTED



**Figure 1: ESGR 2016 Awards Presented**

# SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FREEDOM AWARD

ESGR's awards program culminates with the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. It is the U.S. Government's highest recognition given to employers providing outstanding support to their employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve. Since 1996, the Department of Defense has honored up to 15 of America's most supportive employers from across the Nation annually by presenting them with this prestigious award. Each year,

National Guard and Reserve employees, or family members acting on their behalf, have the opportunity to nominate their employer for the Freedom Award. The ESGR State/Territory Committees review nominations and submit recommendations to advance to the next round in each of the three categories: small employer, large employer, and public sector. In Fiscal Year 2016, 2,424 employers were nominated for this prestigious award.

## 2016 FREEDOM AWARD RECIPIENTS





# FREEDOM AWARD



Recipients of the 2016 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award pose for a picture during the ceremony with Ash Carter, Secretary of Defense, Aug. 26. (DoD photo by Steve Turner)

# ENGAGEMENT

In Fiscal Year 2016, ESGR's Engagement Directorate facilitated dynamic and comprehensive corporate, partner, employer, and military engagement throughout the 54 State/Territory Committees. Engagement works to cultivate centers of influence within industry and small business; support veterans' affinity groups and innovative relationship building; encourage support of Human Resources departments; and develop and support outreach initiatives and team building.

Employer Engagement built positive employer relations through outreach to promote and develop cooperation between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers; by providing educational opportunities to increase awareness of applicable laws associated with military service obligations; and conducting operational activities bridging knowledge gaps.

Likewise, Military Engagement focused on outreach to inform and educate military leaders, Service members, and their families on applicable laws, as well as educating them on the use of the ESGR awards program to foster constructive relationships with supervisors and employers.

The Engagement Directorate also hosted a new, volunteer-led training event called "Mission Possible." For the first time in more than 10 years, Military and Employer Outreach Directors came together to share best practices and challenges presented exclusively by ESGR's dedicated volunteers.

In addition to gaining information and materials for their toolkits, volunteers were able to create and set their outreach goals for 2017. Engagement will continue its training and operational support to assist Military and Employer Outreach Directors meet their goals.

The Partnerships team built professional relationships

with Federal partners (e.g., Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs), non-government entities (e.g., American Red Cross and USO), and military and veterans' service organizations (e.g., Reserve Officers' Association and Association of the U.S. Army) to enhance ESGR's capabilities.

# VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The Volunteer Support Directorate provided ESGR State/Territory Committees with effective volunteer recruiting, retention, and recognition assistance throughout Fiscal Year 2016. Newly developed tools included a New Volunteer Handbook, improved volunteer position descriptions, and regularly scheduled teleconferences with the ESGR State/Territory Chairs.

Volunteer Support also continued its training and operational support through standardization, consistent communication, and full-time staff/volunteer integration for approximately 4,000 volunteers.

The East and West Regional Teams provided operational support to State/Territory Committees by assisting with committee activities, staff assistance visits, training, event request approval, and budgeting support.

Over the past year, the Volunteer Leadership Training Program course was revamped to have volunteers providing instruction to nearly 90 volunteer leaders. The New Chair Training course was also revamped, with a renewed emphasis on volunteer operations vice full-time support operations. To reduce reporting requirements while ensuring effective management of resources, a new monthly activities log was created.



# ENGAGING THE WORKFORCE

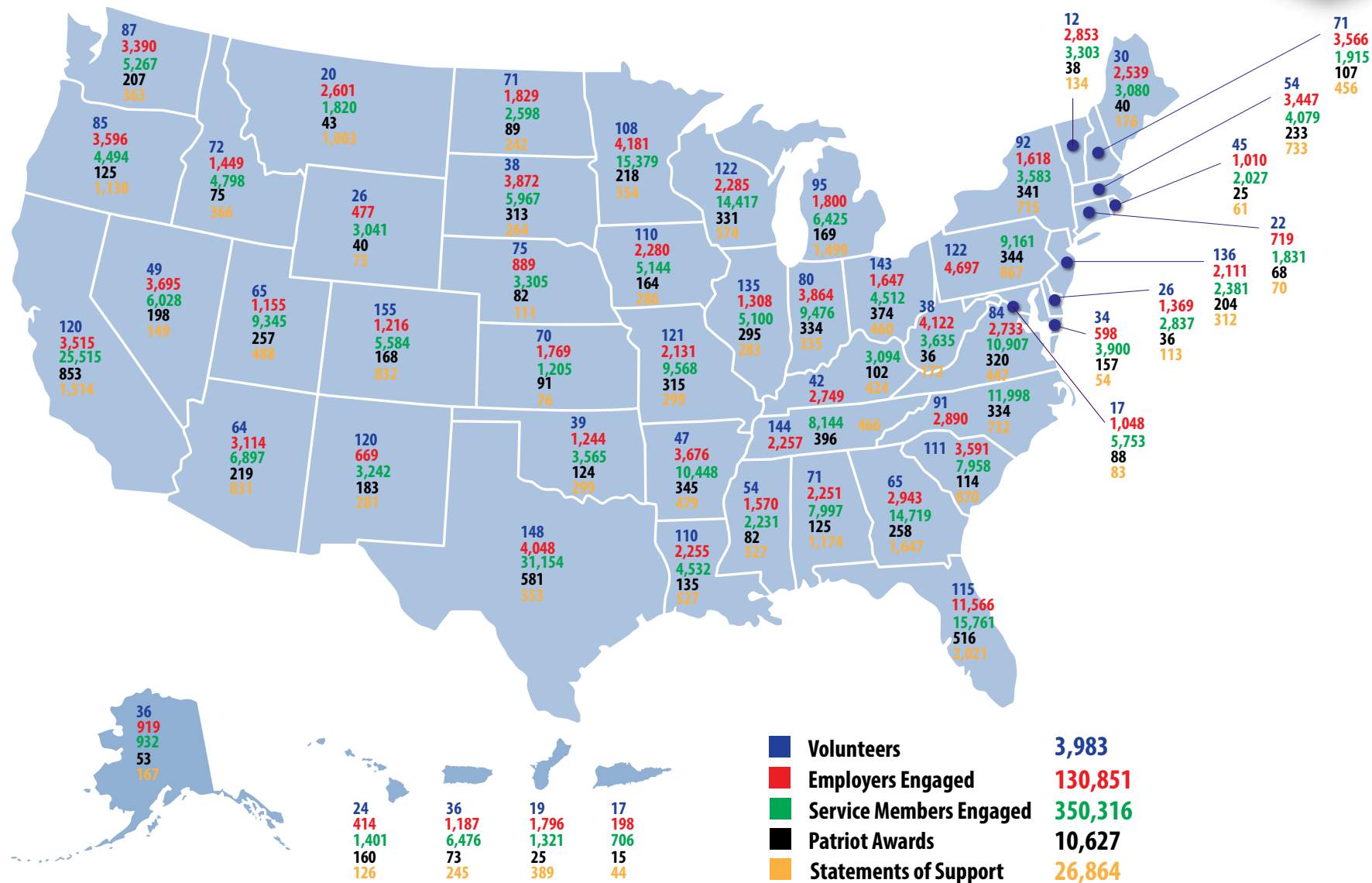


Figure 2: ESGR Engaging the Workforce

## OMBUDSMAN

ESGR's mediation efforts worked to resolve employment conflict between employers and Service members through neutral mediation. Mediation is a vitally important mission for ESGR, and its volunteer ombudsmen are trained to address USERRA-related issues through informal mediation.

During Fiscal Year 2016, nearly 700 volunteer ombudsmen across the country assisted employers and Service members on a daily basis in USERRA matters, resolving civilian employment conflicts that arose as a result of military service.

When conducting this mission, ESGR ombudsmen are neutral third parties and do not advocate for the Service member or the employer. These volunteers, along with ESGR staff, provide informal, neutral mediation, at no cost, to help Service members

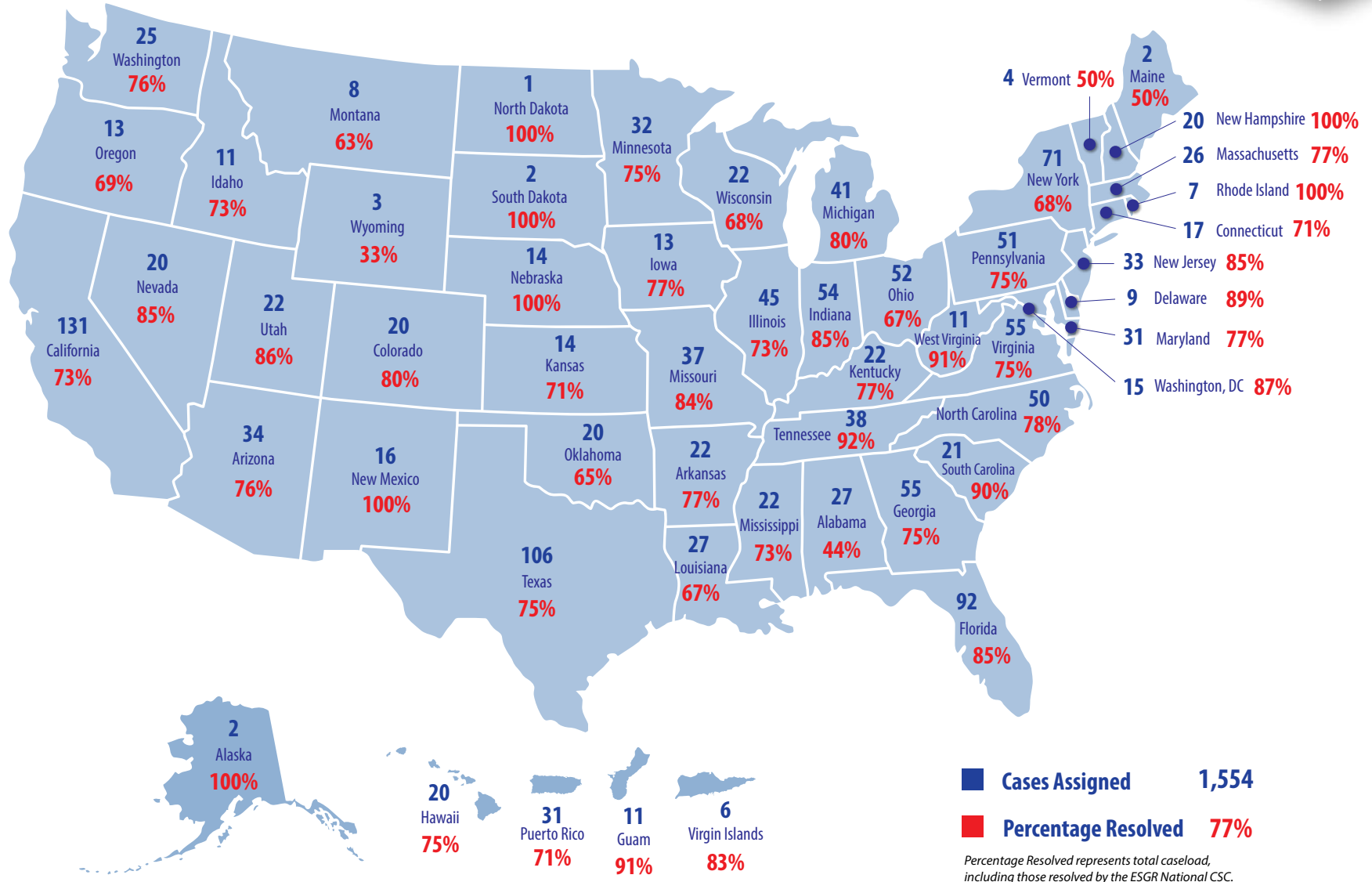
resolve workplace issues and improve relationships with civilian employers.

The five most common USERRA cases include military obligation discrimination, reinstatement, vacation, initial hiring discrimination, and promotion.

A USERRA inquiry is generated when anyone has a question or needs clarification about the rights and responsibilities under the law. Inquiries sometimes turn into USERRA cases when a Service member requests assistance after receiving clarification on what the law requires (See Figure 3).

Service members may request USERRA information or mediation assistance anytime at [www.ESGR.mil](http://www.ESGR.mil), via the National Customer Service Center (CSC) at (800) 336-4590, or by direct contact with ESGR volunteers.

# USERRA CASE STATISTICS



Percentage Resolved represents total caseload, including those resolved by the ESGR National CSC.

**Figure 3: ESGR USERRA Case Statistics**

# ESGR BY THE NUMBERS

## OUTREACH MISSION

EVENTS EXECUTED	EMPLOYERS ENGAGED	SERVICE MEMBERS BRIEFED
1,399	130,851	350,316

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT	PATRIOT AWARD NOMINATIONS	FREEDOM AWARD NOMINATIONS	VOLUNTEER HOURS	RETURN ON INVESTMENT*
26,864	10,627	2,424	235,417	\$5.55M

## OMBUDSMAN MISSION

USERRA-RELATED INQUIRIES	CASES ASSIGNED	CASES RESOLVED/ % RESOLVED	AVERAGE OF DAYS TO MEDIATE	POTENTIAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COST AVOIDANCE**
15,155	1,554	1,197/77%	9.77	\$4.56M

\*Based on the 2015 Corporation for National and Community Service average for the value of a volunteer hour: \$23.56

\*\*Figure represents the potential Federal Government cost avoidance of investigations conducted by the Office of Special Counsel and/or Department of Labor, which ranges up to \$3,810 per case

**Figure 4: ESGR By the Numbers**





# YOU KNOW THEM.



PLANT SALESMAN. CHEMIST. HAIRDRESSER. POLICE. LIFEGUARD. MACHINIST. LIBRARIAN. POSTAL WORKER. RADAR TECHNICIAN. PUBLIC RELATIONS. SOCIAL WORKER. MECHANIC. DOCTOR. TRAFFIC CONTROLLER. TEACHER. LAWYER. CONSTRUCTION. ACCOUNTANT. ART DIRECTOR. ACTOR. FARMER. ENGINEER. ANTHROPOLOGIST. CEO. PLANT OPERATOR. SALESMAN. STUDENT. CHEMIST. CHILDCARE. HAIRDRESSER. POLICE. LIFEGUARD. MACHINIST. LIBRARIAN. POSTAL WORKER. RADAR TECHNICIAN. PUBLIC RELATIONS. SOCIAL WORKER. GUARDSMAN. STEEL WORKER. TRUCK DRIVER. ZOOLOGIST. WELDER. VISUAL DESIGNER. NURSE. MUSICIAN. RESERVIST. MASSAGE THERAPIST. LOCKSMITH. JEWELER. INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGER. CFO. INSURANCE AGENT. WEB DEVELOPER. FLORAL DESIGNER. CHIEF FLIGHT ATTENDANT. EDITOR.



## OVERVIEW

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is a joint-Service effort led by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and administered by the Office for Reintegration Programs. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to establish YRRP in 2008 in Section 582 of Public Law (PL) 110-181 in direct response to the Nation's recognition of the unique challenges facing the Reserve Component community. These challenges include:

- Understanding and accessing benefits earned as a result of activation
- Geographic isolation
- Disparate or sparse access to military family support groups in local communities
- Continued and repeated deployments (as of September 27, 2016, more than 27,500 Reserve Component members were activated, and more than 933,000 have been activated in the past 14 years)

- Unemployment and underemployment of returning Reserve Component members

Section 582 of PL 110-181 also directs YRRP to:

- Provide education and ensure the readiness of members of the unit, their families, and affected communities for the rigors of deployment
- Implement reintegration curriculum throughout the deployment cycle that builds resilience for current and future deployments
- Educate Service members and their families about the resources available and connect members to service providers who can assist them in overcoming the challenges of reintegration





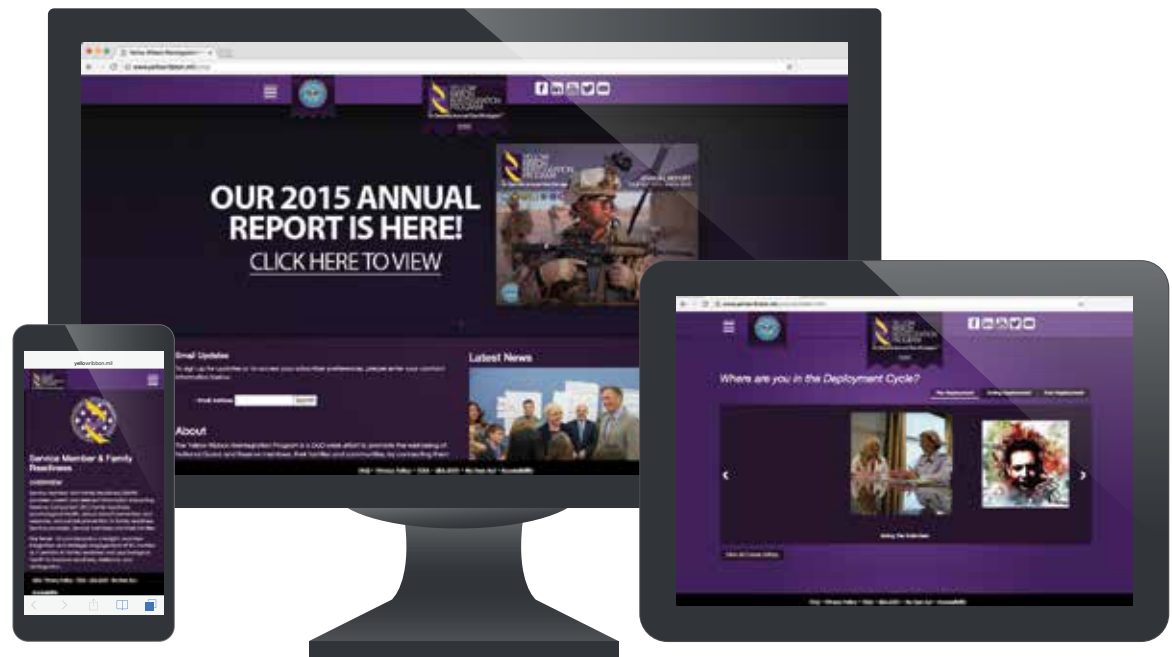
DEPLOYMENT-CYCLE SUPPORT.  
**WHENEVER,  
WHEREVER.**

# PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## ONLINE PRESENCE

The new YellowRibbon.mil went live on March 1, 2016, after more than a year of planning, designing, and programming efforts between YRRP and our partners at Joint Knowledge Online. The enhanced functionality and responsive design of the new site had an immediate impact on usage rates. Although the new site did not launch until nearly halfway through Fiscal Year 2016, YRRP saw an average monthly increase of 1,412 sessions and 1,131 users over Fiscal Year 2015. The site's search ranking on Google also improved, moving from eleventh to first.

Beyond the improvements to the “front” of the YRRP website, additional interactive, online courses were added to YRRP's learning management system, bringing the total to more than 85. The courses contain videos, animations, and knowledge checks that effectively impart information and are the cornerstone of YRRP's flexibility in providing assistance when and where Service members and families need it most. In Fiscal Year 2016, Service members and families enrolled in 12,424 online courses and completed 8,682, resulting in a completion rate of 70 percent.





## COLLABORATION

During Fiscal Year 2016, YRRP successfully conducted two Joint Working Groups consisting of YRRP staff from DoD and each of the Reserve Components. Some of the outcomes include:

- A joint review of the new YRRP website, its layout, and its functions resulting in updated content, a more intuitive design, and enhanced support for YRRP field staff
- Shared best practices amongst the Reserve Components
- Increased awareness of support provided to the Reserve Complements by DoD (e.g., metrics analysis, longitudinal studies, cadre of speakers, marketing and training materials, and youth programs)

Based on successes within YRRP, FEPP began expanding YRRP Center for Excellence capabilities to support ESGR. Support provided includes metrics/survey development and analysis, curricula development/standardization, process standardizations across programs to support various stakeholder groups, and methodology to demonstrate program effectiveness. Initial results

have been positive and led to a request by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to create an interactive finance course for delayed-entry Service members in the queue for initial entry training. The Defense Human Resource Activity has also partnered with the Center for Excellence to develop a new, web-based, interactive ethics training course.

## NEW, SPECIALIZED CURRICULA

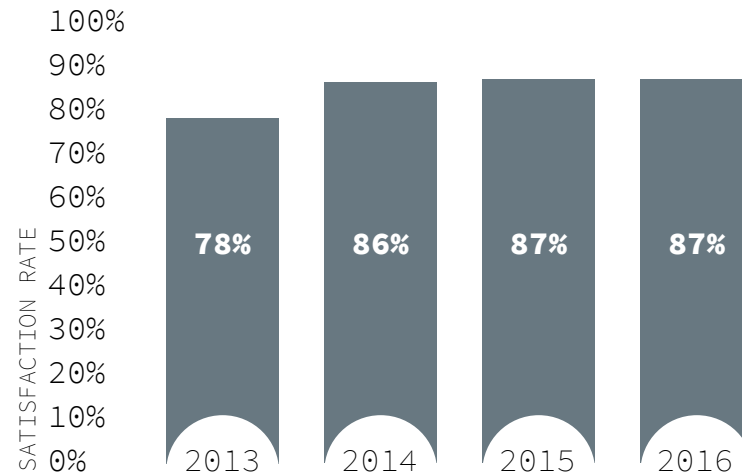
YRRP held discussions with the Reserve Components on how to enhance and supplement existing curricula to serve previously-underrepresented demographic groups at YRRP events, to include single Service members, members of the LGBTQ community, and youth. This resulted in a follow-on working group composed of DoD staff, experienced YRRP cadre speakers, and chaplains to ensure YRRP remains relevant to a wide variety of audiences.

## SURVEYS & SATISFACTION

YRRP received approval for an updated Post-Event Survey, and implemented the survey in the YRRP EventPLUS system. This improved survey is now being used by the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve, providing valuable data across multiple components to allow for in-depth analysis of program impacts and potential areas for improvement.

Post-event survey results continue to show consistent satisfaction with YRRP, maintaining a program-high 87 percent satisfaction rate through Fiscal Year 2016 (See Figure 5). The current level of satisfaction represents continued, steady improvement over the past several years; 2013 (78 percent), 2014 (86 percent), and 2015 (87 percent).

YRRP continued its work with Penn State University's Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness (CMFR) to evaluate and improve its offerings. Working with the Army Reserve, YRRP and CMFR launched a longitudinal study to follow a unit throughout the entire deployment process and gather feedback at multiple points along the timeline. YRRP and CMFR staff will continue to support this effort until the unit has returned from deployment and completed its reintegration activities. The Army Reserve has also decided to follow a second unit starting in early 2017. After briefing the other Reserve Components on this effort, the Navy Reserve and Air Force Reserve volunteered to implement their own longitudinal studies for upcoming deployments in 2017.



**Figure 5: YRRP Event Satisfaction**

## POLICY UPDATES

Based on approved program changes in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016, YRRP began formally staffing proposed changes to the YRRP governing policy, DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1342.28. Highlights of the update include:

- Striking the phrase “combat veteran” from the existing DoDI language, allowing the Department flexibility in applying YRRP to a variety of mission types (e.g., theater security operations and humanitarian missions)
- Amending the number of YRRP phases from four (Pre/During/Demobilization/Post) to three (Before/During/After) to simplify and streamline service delivery
- Modifying the timeline for completing post-deployment events from the previous 30/60/90-day requirement, to a minimum of one event within the first 180 days after the member demobilizes, and a second event as late as one year after the member demobilizes
- Providing more flexibility to the Reserve Components to decide the most effective way to deliver information and resources for their Service members and families

Pictured: Lt. j.g. Lashanda Holmes is the first female African-American helicopter pilot in the Coast Guard. “It never crossed my mind to go aviation,” said Holmes, “but after meeting Lt. Jeanine Menze (the first female African-American Coast Guard pilot), I knew I had to be a part of the aviation community.” (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Adam Eggers)



## SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

The Air National Guard (ANG) continues toward its goal to increase regional and joint events in order to maximize resources and cross-Service collaboration. To this end, the ANG hosted its second regional event in Kansas City, Missouri, in Fiscal Year 2016. Thirteen states (27 Wings), the Army National Guard, and the Marine Corps Reserve were supported at this event.

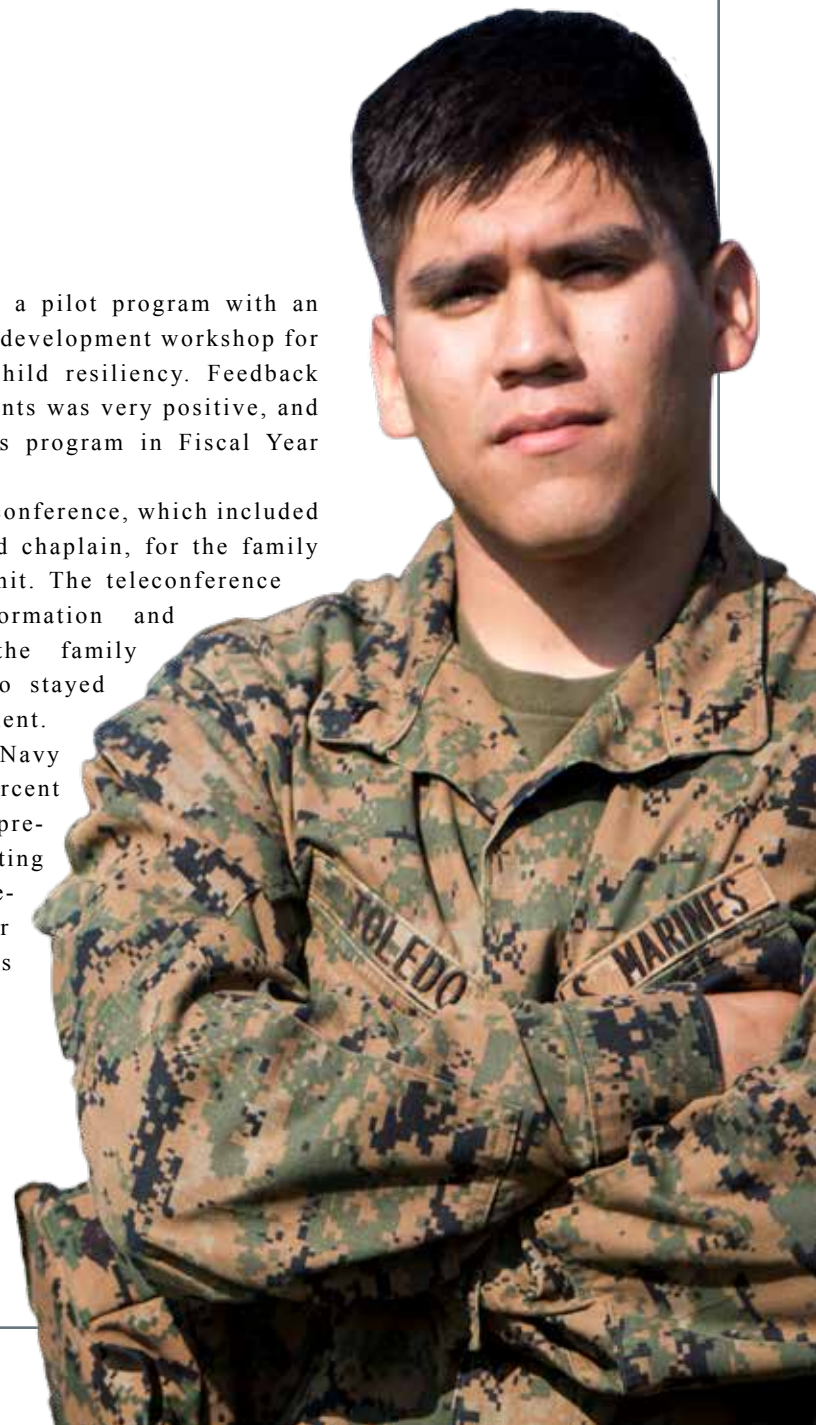
ANG's in-garrison Intelligence and Remotely-Piloted Aircraft missions pose unique challenges. ANG YRRP has been working with these Service members and their families by offering sessions that provide information on how to identify trouble areas and where to get help if needed with issues related to sleep, finances, resiliency, and coping strategies. Goals for Fiscal Year 2017 include further development of YRRP programs for U.S.-based missions to best meet the needs of these Service members and their families.

The Coast Guard Reserve (CGR) began offering dedicated breakout sessions at YRRP events for single Service members. Their surveys indicate these breakout sessions are very popular and provide the individualized services and information that many single Service members need.

CGR YRRP conducted a pilot program with an American Red Cross child development workshop for 12 children to promote child resiliency. Feedback from the children and parents was very positive, and CGR plans to expand this program in Fiscal Year 2017.

CGR YRRP held a teleconference, which included a YRRP cadre speaker and chaplain, for the family members of a deployed unit. The teleconference provided resiliency information and coping strategies for the family members and parents who stayed behind during the deployment.

In addition, the Navy Reserve saw a 39 percent increase in attendance at pre-deployment events, resulting in greater access to resources for Sailors and their families during all phases of the mobilization cycle.





## SERVICE MEMBER & FAMILY READINESS

The Service Member and Family Readiness team, in partnership with the DoD Office of Family Readiness Policy (OFRP), reviewed, edited, and revised the Council on Accreditation national standards as they apply to National Guard and Reserve family readiness programs. This enabled the Reserve Component to achieve accreditation for a total of 38 National Guard programs and 436 sites, as well as two Army Reserve programs and two sites. The National Guard has 15 programs and 126 sites still seeking accreditation, while the Army Reserve has 17 programs and 102 sites seeking accreditation.

Working with OFRP, SMFR helped revise and update DoDI 1342.22, “Military Family Readiness,” and DoDI 1100.21, “Volunteer Coordination.”

SMFR also represented the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs during the DoD Financial Education Working Group, ensuring all Reserve Components were represented during the development of the Blended Retirement System program and education tools.

In addition, SMFR assisted the Emergency Family Assistance Working Group in creating the Joint Forces Headquarters-National Capitol Region Memorandum of Understanding. The memorandum codifies shared family support amongst local, state, and Federal agencies in the event of another disaster on the scale of the 9/11 attacks.



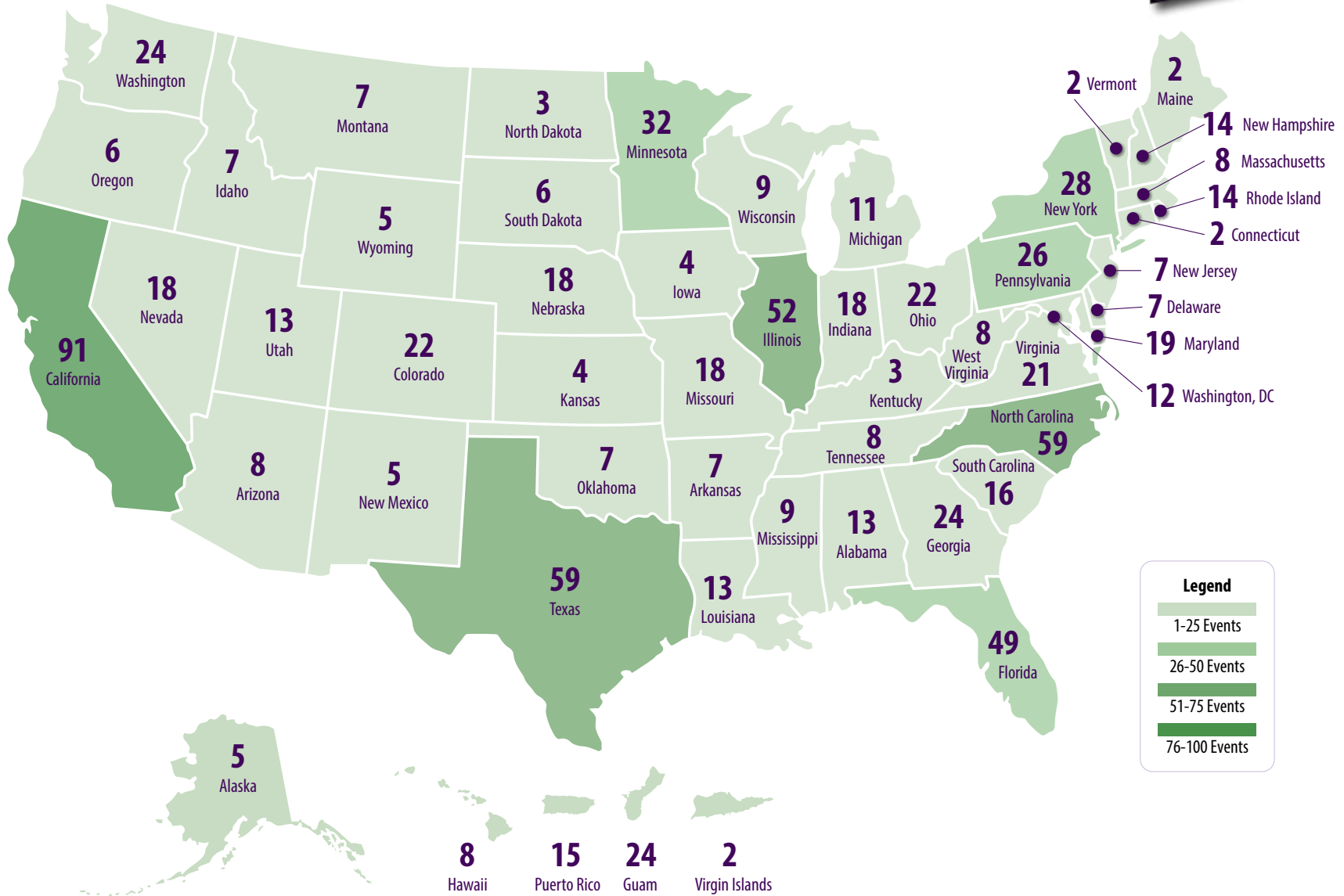
Pictured: Lance Cpl. Justin Toledo, a reproduction specialist with Headquarters Company, Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Haidarali Saad)

## YRRP BY THE NUMBERS

	Army National Guard	Army Reserve	Marine Corps Reserve	Navy Reserve	Air National Guard	Air Force Reserve	Coast Guard Reserve	Total
<b>Total Number of Attendees</b>	33,187	22,352	347	3,614	20,141	7,632	416	87,689
<b>Service Members</b>	16,028	9,122	204	2,223	11,369	3,833	255	43,034
<b>Family Members</b>	14,470	10,321	128	1,172	7,892	3,026	109	37,118
<b>Designated Representatives</b>	2,689	2,909	15	219	880	773	44	7,529
<b>Total Number of YRRP Events</b>	315	151	49	41	250	54	7	867
<b>Total Number Activated (as of September 27, 2016)</b>	8,342	8,430	767	3,078	4,267	2,369	322	27,575
<b>Projected Events for Fiscal Year 2017</b>	350	112	100	39	275	51	6	933
<b>Projected Total Attendees for Fiscal Year 2017</b>	42,000	20,000	1,000	3,800	20,342	6,800	1,744	95,686

**Figure 6:** *YRRP By the Numbers*

# 2016 YRRP EVENTS



**Figure 7: YRRP Events by State/Territory**





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