

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - Armed Forces Emergency Services

1. What is the role of Red Cross workers with the military in time of conflict?

The Red Cross mission is to keep the American people in touch with their family members serving in the armed forces. To accomplish this work, Red Cross workers frequently deploy on assignment with military forces to keep the communication link operational around the clock and around the globe. Other Red Cross services are made available to military personnel on an as needed basis just as they are in the civilian communities.

3. Does the Red Cross have financial assistance for family members of soldiers?

Yes, the Red Cross can provide access to an interest-free loan or a grant made available by the military aid society. Emergency Financial Assistance may be authorized for other emergencies as well and are disbursed on the basis of need.

4. Can the Red Cross grant leave or emergency leave?

No, only the military authorities from the armed forces are authorized to grant a service member leave or extension of leave. The Red Cross does not grant leave or extension of leave. Although there is some variation among military branches, they may provide emergency leave or extension of leave in the case of a terminally ill family member, death of a family member, serious illness or injury. Regulations of all branches of service require the service member to make his or her own request for emergency leave to his or her own unit commander.

5. Can the Red Cross assist me in requesting that my husband be granted leave for the birth of our child?

No, the Red Cross cannot request leave for a service member unless there is a medical emergency with the labor and delivery or other extenuating circumstances. However, the Red Cross is able to send a message to a service member regarding the birth of a child.

6. I am currently in the middle of a divorce with my spouse who is in the Armed Forces. Does the Red Cross offer any type of legal aid or advice?

The Red Cross cannot give any legal information or advice. If a service member is in need of legal services, they will be referred to their legal officer on their installation. A family member will be provided with information about legal resources in their community.

7. My relative is currently in the armed forces and I have not heard from him/her in over a month. Can the Red Cross help contact this person so I know everything is all right?

Yes, through the Red Cross' worldwide communication network we can communicate with the installation or ship where the service person is stationed. You can obtain a report on the service member's health and welfare to give you peace of mind.

8. My son is currently in the armed forces. He is my only son and I was wondering if any statutes exist prohibiting an only son from being deployed to a combat zone?

Only sons or the last to carry on the family name can be deployed. However they may be entitled to a peacetime deferment if there is a military death in the immediate family.

The present law provides a peacetime exemption for anyone whose parent or sibling was killed in action, died in the line of duty or died later as a result of disease or injury incurred during military service. The service person does not have to be the only son or daughter in order to qualify; if there are 4 son's in the family and one dies in the line of duty, the remaining three would qualify for the surviving son status under the present law.

This provision is applicable only in peacetime, not at times of war or national emergency declared by Congress. The fact that a serviceperson is an only child does not qualify him/her for consideration.