

25 Questions and Answers Regarding the Wounded Warrior Regiment

Q 1. What is the philosophy of the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR)?

A 1. The Marine Corps' greatest assets are our Marines; as such taking care of our wounded, ill, and injured (WII) and their families is a responsibility the Corps takes seriously. The WWR provides and facilitates assistance to WII Marines, sailors, attached to or in support of Marines units, and their family members, throughout the phases of recovery.

Q 2. Does the WWR only assist those injured in combat?

A 2. No. The WWR provides non-medical care to all WII Marines. Whether a Marine is injured in a car accident in California, contracts an illness while stationed in Europe, or is wounded during combat operations in Afghanistan, the WWR stands ready to provide non-medical care and assistance throughout the phases of recovery.

Q 3. How does the WWR manage its operations and outreach?

A 3. The WWR has three main resources that it relies upon to manage its daily operations and its Wounded Warrior outreach.

- The Regiment's Wounded Warrior Operations Center was established to provide oversight to a global injured support network. The Center oversees the Regiment's operations and resolves individual problems reported by Wounded Warriors and others who may contact the Operations Center on behalf of a WII Marine.
- The Marine Corps Wounded, Ill and Injured Tracking System facilitates accountability and case management. This system is continually updated and enhanced to ensure thorough tracking of individual cases.
- The Sergeant Merlin German Call Center, named after a Marine who died of injuries sustained during combat in Iraq, enables the WWR to coordinate care and reach out to Marines and their families on a 24/7 basis. Marines and families (active duty, reservists and veterans) can contact the Call Center with questions regarding non-medical care issues. The Call Center also makes proactive outreach calls to offer assistance on a wide range of issues including service disability ratings, medical care, employment, counseling and charitable organizations.

Q 4. Does the Marine Corps have a Recovery Coordination Program?

A 4. Yes. The Marine Corps has a fully operational Recovery Coordination Program (RCP) in accordance with public law and Department of Defense Regulation. The RCP is available to WII Marines and their families whether they are assigned to the Wounded Warrior Regiment or remain with their operational units. A fundamental component of the RCP is the WWR's Recovery Care Coordinators, who serve as the primary point of contact for WII Marines and families to help them throughout the phases of recovery.

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Q 5. How is the Marine Corps using Recovery Care Coordinators (RCCs)?

A 5. RCCs help our Marines execute their individual Comprehensive Transition Plans and define their personal goals for recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. There are 42 fully operational RCCs with plans to increase to 47 RCCs in FY 2010. The RCCs identify and understand the services and resources needed to achieve the defined goals of our Wounded Warriors and provide support until WII Marines and their families are capable of either returning to the military ranks or successfully transitioning back into the civilian community.

Q 6. In addition to RCCs, how does the WWR coordinate its non-medical care for its Wounded Warriors during initial phases of treatment?

A 6. The WWR's care coordination structure facilitates personal contact when providing support to Marines. While recovering at military treatment facilities (MTFs), Marines are supported by Wounded Warrior Battalion Detachments that coordinate various non-medical issues (i.e., pay and entitlements, travel and transportation, temporary lodging). For those Marines who must receive rehabilitation after leaving MTFs, the WWR provides USMC liaisons to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers and Naval Hospitals to ensure continuity of non-medical care.

Q 7. How does the WWR ensure Marines, who are receiving care, do not lose access to medical care when they are discharged from active duty?

A 7. Current Navy policies ensure that there are no gaps in medical benefits. Marines receiving medical treatment for an injury will follow the normal Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board process. If found unfit for continued military service, the Marine will be either separated with severance pay or medically retired to either the Temporary (TDRL) or Permanent Disability Retired List (PDRL). Marines placed on the TDRL or PDRL receive the same medical benefits as those retiring based on their length of service. If medically discharged for injuries or illness, they may be eligible to receive VA medical benefits in addition to any DoD benefits.

Q 8. How does the Marine Corps and WWR assist Marines who are processing through the Department of the Navy Disability Evaluation System (DES)?

A 8. The Marines Corps has Regional Limited Duty Coordinators monitor Marines reported as being on limited duty. They ensure local commands and MTFs have the information necessary to monitor their Marine's status and that the required paperwork has been submitted for the PEB if necessary. Additionally, DES Attorneys provide legal counsel to Marines in the DES to ensure they understand the implications of accepting their disability findings provided by the PEB. The WWR has developed and distributed a DES Pilot pocket guide that Marines can refer to for detailed information on how the process works. Marines referred into the DES will be provided a personal copy by their Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers (PEBLOs). Others can obtain a copy on line by visiting www.woundedwarriorregiment.org website.

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Q 9. After finishing treatment and rehabilitation, how does the WWR extend support to its geographically dispersed Wounded Warriors?

A 9. The Regiment has District Injured Support Cells (DISCs) and Marine For Life Hometown links to support Marines and their families throughout the country after Marines leave the MTFs and rehabilitation clinics. DISCs are mobilized reserve Marines who are located throughout the country to conduct personal visits and telephone outreach to reserve and veteran WII Marines in need of assistance. Hometown links provide transition support to WII Marines and their families when they transition back to civilian life throughout the United States.

Q 10. What is the Marine Corps doing to promote a seamless transition to the VA system?

A 10. In addition to VA liaisons at Wounded Warrior Battalions, the Regiment has liaisons from both the VA and the Department of Labor currently assigned to the Regiment in order to answer questions regarding VA benefits and provide transition assistance. The Marine Corps also has two Marine Corps officers at the VA's Office of Patient Care Services. These officers facilitate efforts between the Marine Corps and the VA to achieve seamless health and medical benefits delivery to discharged Marines. VA staff supports Marines during their recovery through benefits counseling, assistance with applications, and coordination with VA health care referrals.

Q 11. What has been the feedback on the pilot Disability Evaluation System (DES)?

A 11. As a result of the pilot's success within the National Capitol Region, it has expanded to additional military installations across the country. Initial feedback indicates that the DES pilot has been well received by individual service members. The program has given Marines an increased awareness of their specific Department of Defense and VA disability compensation and benefits. They will be entitled to these benefits at the time of their release from active duty and their immediate enrollment into the VA healthcare network. This awareness enhances facilitation of their seamless transition from active military service to veteran status.

Q 12. How is the WWR planning for an increase in combat wounded after the decision to send more troops to Afghanistan?

A 12. The WWR is updating its contingency plan to meet an increased need for non-medical care resulting from the decision to send more troops to Afghanistan. We will handle the increased patient load through prepared liaisons and non-medical care providers at our medical treatment facilities, enhanced family support services, and an established means of information distribution.

Q 13. How does the WWR support Reservists and their families?

A 13. The WWR provides a full compliment of services to the Total Force. In addition to finding support through the WWR Call Center, the Return Integration Location Process under the WWR's Reserve

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Medical Entitlements Determination Division facilitates medical evaluations of mass groups of reservists returning from deployment. At post-deployment health assessment sites, VA representatives provide readjustment services and information on VA programs. Reservists can also benefit from the Reserve Psychological Health Outreach program with six psychological health teams located at Marine reserve sites across the Nation. These teams provide psychological health support and training in combat operational stress control. Families of Reservists can find support through the Families OverComing Under Stress program, which assists families experiencing the pressures of deployments. In addition, families have access to the Military Family Life Consultant Program, which helps families understand the impact of the stressors associated with a military life.

Q 14. How does the Marine Corps support the families of its Wounded Warriors?

A 14. The WWR Family Support Staff provides continuity of care to families throughout the multiple phases of recovery and in geographically dispersed locations. A WWR Family Support Team consists of non-medical advocates including Family Readiness Officers, Family Support Coordinators, Wounded Warrior Battalion Detachments, VA Polytrauma liaisons and Recovery Care Coordinators. These individuals work together to ensure the smooth delivery of family services. The Regiment published the WWR Family Readiness Support Handbook in April 2009 to help the Family Support Staff execute and coordinate these duties.

Q 15. How does the Regiment's Family Support Staff communicate with families?

A 15. Communication is key to meeting the needs of families. The Regiment strives to find convenient and innovative ways for families to provide feedback. The staff sends emails, quarterly newsletters, instant messages and command updates to families in order to share information on recovery to transition. The Regiment also conducts regularly-scheduled town hall meetings at regional locations to serve as a more personal mechanism for two-way discussion and feedback.

Q 16. What types of mental health support does the WWR provide?

A 16. The WWR Clinical Services Staff supports a comprehensive psychological health and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) program to help every Marine receive the best prevention, identification and treatment. Coordinating care at different medical facilities and charitable organizations, the Clinical Services Staff includes a Psychological Health Coordinator, a TBI Coordinator and licensed Clinical Care Consultants. The Clinical Services Staff provides outreach education about TBI, substance abuse, combat operational stress and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It helps individual commands with evaluations of the needs of their WII Marines in order to answer any questions about medical symptoms and diagnoses. The Staff also discusses coping and resiliency resources with Marines and their families.

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Q 17. How does the WWR receive one-on-one feedback from wounded Marines and their families?

A 17. The Regiment conducts proactive outreach to get feedback from its active duty, reserve and separated WII Marines and their families through a wide range of resources. The Regiment gets its feedback from its Sergeant Merlin German Call Center, two Wounded Warrior battalions and their subordinate elements, the Battalion Detachments located at military treatment facilities, VA Poly-Trauma Center liaison teams, Recovery Care Coordinators, District Injured Support Cells, Family Readiness Officers, chaplains, and Hometown Links dispersed throughout the country. Through this organizational structure, the Marine Corps is able to collect information, analyze trends and initiate appropriate responses in a timely manner.

Q 18. What types of spiritual services does the WWR provide?

A 18. The mission of the WWR Chaplain is to provide spiritual and emotional care WII Marines and their families and staff regardless of their faith tradition. The WWR has four chaplains at the Regiment, battalions and Landstuhl, Germany who are prepared to assist in the course of a Wounded Warrior's spiritual journey through prayer, spiritual counseling, religious sacraments or simply by listening.

Q 19. How does the WWR coordinate efforts with charitable organizations?

A 19. The Charitable Giving Office coordinates with a broad range of groups and private individuals who provide a range of financial and in-kind support and services. The office investigates donors to ensure that gifts are allowed and coordinates with different organizations for special events and programs.

Q 20. What is the status of the planned Wounded Warrior complexes and additional military construction at Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton?

A 20. Funding was approved to complete two Marine Resource and Recovery Centers and two battalion headquarters buildings. The Resource Centers are designed to be multi-purpose in nature and include rehabilitation programs, counseling support and adaptive sports opportunities, all of which offer comprehensive support to wounded, ill and injured Marines and their families. The facilities will be in a condensed "campus-like" environment, adjacent to Naval Hospitals, Fisher Houses, and other medical and rehab facilities to ease logistical issues with regard to appointments and other recovery-related requirements. Ground has been broken on the new Wounded Warrior barracks at both Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejeune.

Q 21. How does the WWR help transitioning WII Marines find jobs?

A 21. The WWR is committed to providing transitioning Marines with effective tools to find employment upon leaving the Marine Corps. The WWR provides employment counseling, job referrals and information on internships and apprenticeships, and training in resume writing and interviewing skills. The WWR has a Department of Labor representative, who provides employment assistance through job announcements and employment training services.

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Q 22. What is the status of the Marine For Life program?

A 22. The Marine For Life (M4L) program has a network of 117 reserve Marines across the country who have been successfully assisting many Marines as they transition back into the community upon leaving active service. M4L recently increased its national reach after adding employment, education and public affairs specialists to its staff. The M4L staff is currently developing plans for program improvements for FY10. Those plans include reorganization of the M4L presence across the country to ensure the best coverage possible; improved IT resources to enable better information sharing; and enhanced marketing campaign; and increased partnerships with the transition programs of the other services, with veterans service organizations, and with schools and businesses nation-wide.

Q 23. How does the Marine Corps assess the effectiveness of the Wounded Warrior Regiment?

A 23. The Regiment uses multiple resources to assess its programs. Command visits, town hall meetings, weekly battalion situation reports, and data analysis give the Regiment an opportunity to assess how it is serving its Wounded Warriors and their families. The Regiment's Assessment Cell ensures consistency of non-medical care through surveys and rapid action polls to obtain quick, targeted opinions and provide the Regiment with scientifically sound, reliable and actionable results for program improvement and individual case resolution. External input in the form of leadership visits, Congressional inquiries, and the work of Executive and Legislative Branch commissions, investigations, and review groups also allows the Regiment to assess the effectiveness of efforts and target areas of deficiency.

Q 24. Does the WWR have any resources to assist with planning future programs or services?

A 24. The Regiment's Future Planning and Transition Team (FITT) launched its Future Planning Initiative during summer 2009. Wounded Warrior care is a dynamic field with constant changes and medical and non-medical care improvements. Members of the FITT interview subject matter experts in Wounded Warrior care in order to leverage their expertise on future trends and needs. The FITT has interviewed subject matter experts from private industry, government and non-profit organizations. The Regiment takes the guidance learned during these interviews to make necessary adjustments to current services and plan new programs that aim to enhance Wounded Warrior care in the future.

Q 25. What are some new initiatives the WWR is launching?

A 25. The WWR is constantly planning new programs and services to give its Marines and their families the best possible non-medical care. These services and programs promote healing and renewal. The Marines, in turn, gain confidence and turn to achieving success in their lives.

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- Focus on Ability Campaign - The WWR is developing an awareness campaign that stresses Wounded Warriors' abilities rather than their disabilities. The campaign will feature stories of Wounded Warriors who have overcome their injuries to succeed in the military and in civilian life. The campaign will include print stories, posters and video profiles.
- Employment Advisory Board - The Board, which will meet regularly, will consult external and internal employment experts in order to make recommendations to the commanding officer on effective strategies in job searching.
- The Connection WWR Newsletter - Connecting WII Marines and families to the support and services they need to succeed, this newsletter will be another vehicle for distribution of Wounded Warrior care information.
- Inaugural Warrior Games - The WWR will field a team of 50 athletes for this first-of-its-kind Department of Defense event in May 2010. Competing against Wounded Warriors from the other services, Wounded Warriors will prove to themselves that they have abilities that they can carry over into everyday life.