

# KEY SPOUSE PROGRAM TIPS AND SUCCESS STORIES

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**Many thanks to all the Senior AF Leadership Spouses, installation Key Spouses and Key Spouse Mentors, First Sergeants and Airman & Family Readiness Centers throughout the Air Force for sharing the below collection of tips and success stories.**

## **TIPS:**

1. Incorporate KSs into the unit's sponsorship program and processes, ensuring all "inbound spouses" have the information they need before arriving on the installation. Military One Source offers a "Sponsorship Awareness Training for Families" and is available through an eSAT course which can be accessed through My Training Hub. Login to the site requires an email address and creation of a password. The course takes approximately 90 minutes to complete and can be accessed through the following link:  
[https://myhub.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=SIS:9:812951163311203::::P9\\_ID:12](https://myhub.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=SIS:9:812951163311203::::P9_ID:12).
2. When referencing the KSP with families and military members, market the program as an information and resources support group - NOT a social club.
3. Provide unit families information on Social Media etiquette, along with a link to the AF Social Media Guide, <http://www.af.mil/AF-Sites/Social-Media-Sites/>.
4. Assess how many KSs may truly be needed in a unit by developing a ratio of KSs to unit spouses. This varies depending upon the mission of the Wing. "Our Wing set an objective of 1:50 minimum (one KS to 50 unit spouses), and a goal of 1:25 so the KSs could have strong enough relationships and frequent enough contact to pick up on the 'soft signals' (also helped get through PCS season change outs). The Mission Support Group provided us with the numbers of exactly how many spouses were assigned to each squadron and each unit commander (CC) recruited KSs to meet the 1:25 goal. Our KS numbers doubled throughout that timeframe as the unit CCs recruited towards 1:25 or better.
5. To reinforce the importance of the KSP, and make it a priority, we mitigated this through a wing tracking slide which tracked metrics with a stop light chart that was reviewed monthly at Wing Standup. Items in the chart included areas such as 1.) Ratio of KS to spouses per squadron <1:100=red, <1:50=yellow; <1:25=green 2.) KS assignment/notification during sponsor process 3.) Assigned KSs to each spouse (as opposed to just a posted list they can call if they have time).
6. Cross-wing exchanges are great opportunities for discussion, networking and exchanges of success stories between similar squadrons (i.e. KSs talking to other similar squadrons from other installations and wings).

7. As a wing, we opened up almost all our leadership training opportunities (i.e., PACE) as an option for our KSs and KSMs to attend.
8. The mayor of the local community held a “Sneak Peak Event” for KSs/KSMs informing them of upcoming community projects and events.
9. Communicate benefits of the KSP (Connect, Inform, and Refer) and military members/families will be more trusting and comfortable sharing.
10. Recommend that senior officer spouses not be KSs.
11. KSMs are advisors/supporters, they should not be on the “front line”; primary role is mentoring and troubleshooting issues so the KS can focus on the families.
12. Visibility is KEY: Invite KS to speak at CC Calls, introduce at squadron events, promote as a member of the team and share the purpose and priority of the KSP at every opportunity.
13. As a CC, let your members know the KSP is a priority for you and emphasize the “official readiness” role vs. a “social” role. Social engagement is critical to build relationships, but it’s not the goal of the KSP. KSs need to portray this as well.
14. Divide duties among your KSs and make sure they understand the recommended program minimums.
15. Maintain a “continuity binder”.
16. Familiarize new leadership with the KSP, continuity binder and set your successor up for success.
17. Suggest CCs and CCFs attend a training session to learn about the KSP. Also, if CCs could attend round table discussions, they would be able to hear what some of the obstacles or problems their KSs are encountering; KSs/KSMs are one of the best assets a CC can have.
18. KSs should be represented at / attend Newcomers Orientation Information Fair
19. Ensure there is KS representation at each Right Start as part of WG/CC Welcome Brief.
20. Establish a one-year minimum commitment from the KS/KSM and if they want to continue after a year, that’s great; but for some, it’s can be too much to commit beyond a year.
21. An AF Reserve Tanker Unit provided KSs with familiarization flights as a way to say “thank you” to the KSs on base.
22. KSMs conducted a KS appreciation/social event – very successful.
23. Public Affairs made videos of the required continued education classes, which provided training access to working spouses, or those with prior commitments and/or children.
24. KS/CCF socials were conducted at least semi-annually to discuss best practices and issues from around the base.
25. Provide a monthly newsletter for squadron.

26. Provide an informational KS page in the base paper or on wing Website.
27. Recommend providing KSs with a mission brief on their organization/unit so they are even more familiar with unit and leadership within.
28. The AF KS Guide is written clearly and if followed makes for a very successful Unit KSP. Encourage each wing to follow it thoroughly and urge squadron CC's to interview a KS at the beginning of their command will reduce the confusion and generate a level of respect and cohesion in all squadrons.
29. Collaborated with the medical group, which offered a tour of the facility, a TRICARE update and explained how to handle patient concerns with healthcare service. This training was well received by all attendees and has reduced complaints over social media.
30. For CCs, waiting to create a robust KSP will not help when a crisis falls on the squadron. Striking a balance between the primary mission and establishing a KSP shouldn't wait, as it may be too late when a crisis hits.
31. Suggest having a KSM attend new squadron CC courses, allowing KSM to advocate/validate the program during the A&FRC Briefing, providing additional "real-world" insight to new CCs and their spouses.
32. Highlight unit KS via an introduction flyer with names, pictures and contact information.
33. Squadrons assigned a KS based on location, (i.e., if they live outside the base they were paired up with someone who lives in their local area).
34. Offer KSs/KSMs training in the evening and off-site (in volunteers' homes, if necessary) to allow greater flexibility with work and childcare concerns.
35. Include foreign services units and their members/families in your KSP.
36. For CCs, please recognize the hard work and dedication of your volunteer KSs. Highlight KSs in CC Calls and quarterly awards, luncheons, etc. Make them visible and important. Please help with funding business cards (perforated business card stock paper).
37. Consider "back-up" KSs, like deputies. That way if a family is in the midst of a crisis, the primary KS can focus on that one family and the deputy can handle less time consuming issues.
38. Don't use a KS when it's more important to have a CCF of CC involvement.
39. Squadron conducts quarterly training meetings with KSs, in addition to the A&FRC trainings.
40. KS/KSMs met quarterly with the Squadron CC to discuss/review squadron KSP and ways to strengthen/improve it.
41. Offer a base-wide volunteer rewards program based on the number of hours volunteered per month. Volunteers can then earn a certain level of rewards which can be very appealing (parking pass for up front parking at the commissary)

or BX, free bowling, free coffee at the coffee shop, etc.). This could also help to encourage better participation in Continuing Education opportunities.

42. Installation created a "Helping Agency Matrix" which was provided to all Ks and KSMs to help refer families in the right direction. It was also posted on the wing Webpage for all to access.

## **EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS STORIES:**

1. Created a KS Team Crisis Scenario Training geared towards helping CCs, CCFs, and KSs/KSMs (KS Leadership Team) get comfortable working together as a team. The concept is a mass training to get all unit KS teams in the same room, broken up at tables by squadron. It started with each table's KS being taken to another room and given one of the crisis scenarios, as if they had just received a phone call from a spouse. The KS then returned to KS team to develop a solution. At the end of the exercise, each table/KS team out-briefed the group on their particular issue/solution/pitfalls. Training forced the conversations for CCs to give their individual expectations to their own KS's; and brought the Unit KSP teams together across the wing. (Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina)
2. Created, with local Public Affairs Office, KSP commercial/video. Please use link to view the KSP Commercial (Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=mX7dT5TRvYE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=mX7dT5TRvYE)
3. KSs were unsure of their roles during a Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) event, so a specific training was developed for the KSs/KSMs; NEO 201 will be presented as needed or prior to semi-annual base exercises. (Osan AB, South Korea)
4. Navy Ombudsman and Army Family Readiness Groups have been included in our KS social networking group. (Misawa AB, Japan)
5. Implemented Unit Spouse Sponsorship Program: Contacted inbound active duty member 3 months prior to report no later than date (RNLTD) to request spouse's name and e-mail. Contact made with inbound spouse to pair with KS and provide information regarding overseas PCS, the base and surrounding area, squadron Facebook page, etc. to give inbound spouse resources for a smooth transition and easier integration into spouse programs upon arrival. (Aviano AB, Italy)
6. Unit implemented new program aimed at discovering what each unit spouse has to offer individually (artist, photography, travel, design, event organizers, playgroups, chefs, etc.) to get them involved and excited about sharing their talents in the squadron. (Aviano AB, Italy)
7. Annual United Kingdom (UK) KS Symposium: Organized and hosted by a KS team made up of KS's, KSM's and senior leadership spouses from all the UK bases. The A&FRC reps from each base participate in the process/program as observers and subject matter experts on A&FRC-related areas. (RAF Lakenheath, UK)
8. Unit Welcome Program: Send invitations via email, Facebook, or posting a written invitation in new spouses PO Box to attend monthly Unit Welcome Meeting. During the meeting the KS team provides new spouses with information packets and allows spouses an opportunity to put a face to the KS team members. New spouses can ask questions and network with other squadron

spouses. This program also works in tandem with Unit Spouse Pre-deployment Briefings where there is an opportunity to provide resource information and ensure accurate contact information is on file in preparation for deployments. (RAF Lakenheath, UK)

9. Welcome Wagon: Unit KSs travel to see new spouse and provide a little welcome basket funded by the Unit Booster Club (assembled by unit spouses). This gives KSs an opportunity to say hello and offer a face to face welcome – it has been well received. (Scott AFB, Illinois)
10. Created the KS Toolkit. This is a comprehensive resource for KSs & KSMs and includes: Official program guidance, local Community Action Team (CAT) agency contact list, quick resource sheet, FAQs section, and comprehensive virtual resources. Initial distribution of the KS Toolkit (binder/paper) was given to CCFs to ensure all current KS/KSMs received one. Subsequently, the KS Toolkit is given to all KSs/KSMs during KSP Initial Training. The Toolkit is posted [www.ramstein.af.mil](http://www.ramstein.af.mil) and will only be provided electronically for more efficient updating and KS/KSMs will still be able to download a copy. (Ramstein AB, Germany)
11. We are able to provide classes in town, closer to where our families live, to get better participation in trainings. We partner with local YMCA and hospital for classroom space, which also enables us to provide evening and weekend classes. (Creech AFB, Nevada)
12. KSM Chat - provides a venue for mentors at all levels (squadron/group/wing/NAF) to freely discuss issues, challenges, share information, ideas and success stories. (Davis-Monthan, Arizona)
13. Mentor the Mentor sessions have been eye opening for new leadership and their spouses. Created M2M to allow for KSM to share with other KSMs trials/tribulations and challenges they face as KSMs. (Whiteman AFB, Missouri)
14. Offers a semi-annual KS "reset button" retreat in order to refresh. (Moody AFB, Georgia)
15. Vice Wing CC attends quarterly KS trainings to obtain feedback on the needs of spouses and the families in their squadrons. (Vance AFB, Oklahoma)
16. Bi-annual round table discussions with WG/CC and KSs/KSMs provides an opportunity for KSs/KSMs to share what issues are affecting families in the community directly without having to navigate through several channels. KSs/KSMs feel empowered to continue advocating for their families knowing they will be heard. (Edwards AFB, CA)
17. Unit conducted a deployment social where the KS team invited all deploying members and their families with the intent of connecting families **before** the 6-month deployment began. The feedback was terrific and one spouse said she had never experienced an opportunity to meet with others prior to a deployment situation in her 15 years as a spouse. (Grand Forks, North Dakota)
18. Group KSMs created social media outlets and monthly/quarterly gatherings for

group KSs/KSMs. This has created more fluid communication and sharing of resources across the entire group. (Altus AFB, Oklahoma)

19. Unit Family Calendar - A 12 month calendar issued to spouses outlining events either hosted by the unit (not the KS) or offered in the community that unit families are asked to attend together. Ex: IAAFA 75 Birthday Celebration 5K, IAAFA Wing Pinning Ceremony, San Antonio Battle of the Flowers Parade (families meet up to participate), JBSA/IAAFA Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration and IAAFA Thanksgiving Luncheon. This is a great example of integrating the social component into a unit KSP and aids in the KS not having to be an "event planner". (Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas)
20. Wing CC hosted two town hall meetings to discuss support and praise for the KSP; additionally, KSs are recognized in squadron, group and wing quarterly and annual award ceremonies. (Luke AFB, Arizona)
21. Quarterly KS Forum: Allows KSs/KSMs (base wide) to discuss trends in units (phone calls, e-mail inquiries, etc.) with issues/concerns being identified and presented to the CAT. (Tinker AFB, Oklahoma)
22. Wing Leadership tracks unit KS activities on a monthly basis to ensure unit members/families are utilizing KSP resources; metrics are shared during CC Calls/briefings. This validates the overall KSP and includes KSs as an integral part of the team. (Buckley AFB, Colorado)
23. A KS created a "Keying' Connected" resource for all KSs/KSMs which is a collection of all of the Facebook pages for all of the participating squadrons within the joint base environment. This resource is useful for referrals during informal contact situations. (Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey)
24. Key Spouse Program Planning Session: A two-hour session with installation A&FRC KSP Program Manager and trained KSs/KSMs to discuss what is working, new ideas, and roadblocks. (Travis AFB, California)