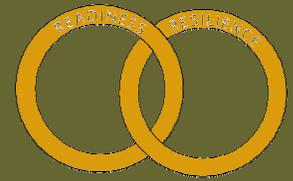


# RINGS NEWSLETTER



*Readiness and Resilience in National Guard Soldiers (RINGS) Project  
Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Health Care System, Minneapolis, MN 55417*

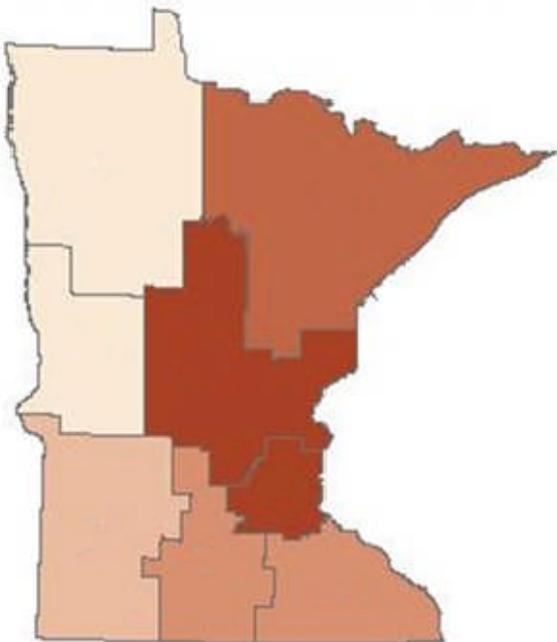
## The RINGS Story

Welcome to the Readiness and Resilience in National Guard Soldiers (RINGS) project newsletter! Thank you for your interest in and support of the RINGS Project.

In 2006, the RINGS Project was launched by a team of researchers from the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in collaboration with the Minnesota Army National Guard (MNARNG) leadership.

Thanks to the commitment of National Guard soldiers and military families like yours, the RINGS project has made great strides in learning how soldiers who experience the stresses of military deployments maintain their strength, resilience, and well being – and yet there is still so much to learn.

With your help, the RINGS team recently expanded its efforts. Our team is now working to understand how National Guard soldiers and their families face the challenges of deployment. Funded by the VA Office of Research & Development, the RINGS-2 study will provide key information to military commanders, VA health care providers, national policy makers, and our local communities about how to strengthen and support military service members and their families.



*RINGS-2 participants represent communities throughout the state of Minnesota. The map above illustrates the number of participants in the RINGS-2 study by region, with darker shades reflecting more participants.*

## RINGS-2 Study Update

This past winter we completed the first pre-deployment surveys of the RINGS-2 study at the Family Preparation Academies in Rochester, Saint Paul, and Brainerd. We had an outstanding response. **Nearly 80% of soldiers provided us with their input by returning surveys. We also heard from over 1,000 spouses or significant others of National Guard soldiers and over 600 additional family members.** This high response rate truly reflects your commitment to helping fellow soldiers and military families. A special thank you to all the RINGS-2 participants!

In May, Dr. Melissa Polusny, lead researcher of the RINGS Project, met with 1st Brigade command leadership at Camp Ripley. Dr. Polusny briefed commanders on initial findings from the pre-deployment surveys about soldier and family concerns. Because of your participation, efforts are being made to address the needs of soldiers and their families. Stay tuned for more updates on the study's progress in future newsletters!

## RINGS Investigators, MNARNG Meet with Top DOD Leader

**MINNEAPOLIS VA MEDICAL CENTER, June 1, 2011**— RINGS-2 researchers, along with Deputy State Surgeon LTC Amanda Digre and Chief of Deployment Cycle Support MAJ Aaron Krenz, met with Deputy Secretary of Defense Tom Campbell to provide a briefing on the RINGS Project and findings so far. Mr. Campbell was given information on the resilience that National Guard troops show before, during, and after combat deployments, the importance of family and family support for deploying soldiers, and the efforts VA and MN Army National Guard are making to help soldiers through helping families. Mr. Campbell said that he was impressed by these efforts and supported them! This was an exciting opportunity to highlight both the efforts of the RINGS team and MN National Guard and the need for more support for families locally and throughout the nation.

### In Your Own Words

We recently asked soldiers and families “What is most important for you as you prepare for a deployment?” Here is some of what you said.

From a soldier:

*“That my family is behind me all the way.”*

From a spouse:

*“Children’s activities in our area to keep busy while the other parent is deployed. The less time they have to worry, the better for the stay home parent.”*

From a parent:

*“I want to be there for him now and support him. I feel proud, apprehensive about his future during deployment, confident in his training, hopeful in his return!”*

### What is Next for RINGS?

The next wave of surveys for RINGS is scheduled to begin in September. At that time, you will receive another survey as part of the ongoing RINGS Project. We are trying to understand the adjustment military families experience over time during the course of their soldier’s deployment. Your continued input is important to our learning about this process.

Everyone’s input is important! If you have any questions about the project, please give us a call. If you have moved, or if your address or telephone contact information has changed, **please send us your updated contact information.** Simply fill out the enclosed sheet and send it back in the pre-addressed and stamped return envelope so we can continue to stay in touch.

### Military Family Resources

Do you need assistance during your loved one’s deployment? The Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program provides connections to community support, services, and resources for military families and service members. The Beyond the Yellow Ribbon website provides contacts for Family Assistance Centers, Family Readiness Groups, Events, and other supports.

For information, go to  
[www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org](http://www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org)



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