# KEY SPOUSE PROGRAM TIPS AND SUCCESS STORIES



**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>.

1. When referencing the KSP with families and military members, market the program as an information and resources support group - NOT a social club.
2. 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/>.
3. 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.
4. 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).
5. 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).
6. 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.
7. The mayor of the local community held a “Sneak Peak Event” for KSs/KSMs informing them of upcoming community projects and events.
8. Communicate benefits of the KSP (Connect, Inform, and Refer) and military members/families will be more trusting and comfortable sharing.
9. Recommend that senior officer spouses not be KSs.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. Divide duties among your KSs and make sure they understand the recommended program minimums.
14. Maintain a “continuity binder”.
15. Familiarize new leadership with the KSP, continuity binder and set your successor up for success.
16. 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.
17. KSs should be represented at / attend Newcomers Orientation Information Fair
18. Ensure there is KS representation at each Right Start as part of WG/CC Welcome Brief.
19. 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.
20. An AF Reserve Tanker Unit provided KSs with familiarization flights as a way to say “thank you” to the KSs on base.
21. KSMs conducted a KS appreciation/social event – very successful.
22. 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.
23. KS/CCF socials were conducted at least semi-annually to discuss best practices and issues from around the base.
24. Provide a monthly newsletter for squadron.
25. Provide an informational KS page in the base paper or on wing Website.
26. Recommend providing KSs with a mission brief on their organization/unit so they are even more familiar with unit and leadership within.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. Highlight unit KS via an introduction flyer with names, pictures and contact information.
32. 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).
33. Offer KSs/KSMs training in the evening and off-site (in volunteers’ homes, if necessary) to allow greater flexibility with work and childcare concerns.
34. Include foreign services units and their members/families in your KSP.
35. 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).
36. 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.
37. Don’t use a KS when it’s more important to have a CCF of CC involvement.
38. Squadron conducts quarterly training meetings with KSs, in addition to the A&FRC trainings.
39. KS/KSMs met quarterly with the Squadron CC to discuss/review squadron KSP and ways to strengthen/improve it.
40. 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.
41. Installation created a “Helping Agency Matrix” which was provided to all KSs and KSMs to help refer families in the right direction. It was also posted on the wing Webpage for all to access.