

# OPENING OUR DOORS *to*



# CHILDREN and YOUTH

A Toolkit and Guide for Installation Child Development and Youth Center Opening Ceremonies

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## Disclaimer

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## Service Specific Guidance

This guide contains generic guidelines and titles for installation agencies. If there are any specific Service questions, follow Service guidance for all appropriate areas such as Engineering, Construction, Public Affairs, Protocol, etc.



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## Foreword

Welcome to the Toolkit and Guide for Installation Child Development and Youth Center Opening Ceremonies! This Toolkit is designed to make your life easier when it comes to planning a Groundbreaking Ceremony and Opening Ceremony for your program.

The Military Services, including the National Guard and Reserve Forces, have been adding child care spaces to installations through a combination of Military construction, temporary facilities, renovations, and expansion projects. These spaces provide services to children from infancy through the teenage years depending on the facility and community needs.

Much of the funding to support these projects has come directly from Congress through Military Construction or Emergency Intervention Funding to support storm ravaged locations and those installations that are contributing significantly to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). In addition, many military installations are growing in population due to deployment and Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

Staff members who are responsible for opening child development and youth facilities have a variety of tasks, ranging from overseeing the construction/renovation process to ordering equipment and setting up environments. In addition, they must hire and train new staff and ensure the day-to-day management of the existing programs is not interrupted.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth is providing this guide to assist program and installation staff in the planning of Groundbreaking and Opening Ceremonies. To that end, we have collected information from the Military Services and professional staff to prepare this guide.

This Toolkit includes samples and templates that your colleagues in various Child Development and Youth Programs have used. It is based on “lessons learned” and provides information and resources to help you plan and conduct a successful ceremony.



## 1. Getting Started: It All Begins at the Beginning

“Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it’s not all mixed up.” ~Christopher Robin in A.A. Milne’s Winnie the Pooh

Planning a ceremony of any kind involves many details and lists. Meetings, telephone calls, and the sheer number of hours spent preparing for the event can be overwhelming. Pre-planning will make your life easier. Start by getting organized, determining the scope of your ceremony, and identifying the 5 Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and the H (How).

### Getting Organized

One of the most important keys to your success will be to get organized and stay organized. It is a good idea to keep a binder or file folder so that you can organize event-related information. You should take it with you to meetings and briefings concerning the ceremony and keep it nearby during phone calls. To make the most productive use of your file, divide it into sections, place a calendar inside, and include some sticky notes. Possible topics/tabs include:

- ◆ Meeting Notes
- ◆ Timeline
- ◆ Forms
- ◆ Checklists
- ◆ Publicity
- ◆ Briefings and factsheets
- ◆ Invitation/Guest List and RSVP Worksheet

These topics will help you get started. Add your own topics and update your files frequently to ensure you have an accurate log at all times.

### Determining the Scope of the Ceremony

Each Child Development and Youth Center Opening Ceremony is unique; they vary in scope and size. To determine the scope and size of the ceremony, conduct initial meetings with engineering and construction staff, the Public Affairs Office (PAO), Protocol Office, and the Installation Commander. During this stage, two factors must be considered:

**Construction Project and Dates.** Meet with engineering and construction staff to determine three or four possible dates for Groundbreaking and Opening Ceremonies.

- ◆ You can hold a Groundbreaking Ceremony when the site has been determined or when the site has been prepared for the construction team.
- ◆ The Opening Ceremony is often scheduled when the facility has been in operation for a short while. This provides an opportunity for support staff to address any last-minute facility concerns and for program staff to set up the environment to give visitors a genuine feel for what the program has to offer children and youth.



- ◆ Although most programs reported holding their ceremonies after the facility has been open for a short while, some held their Opening Ceremonies before the “moving in” date. These programs knew the community had waited for the new facility and felt that the Opening Ceremony would be an important step in showing the community the progress that had been made and built the sense of anticipation for the community. This is a decision that should be made with the Installation Commander and is based on what works best for your installation, keeping in mind the needs of the families who are to be served.

**Commander’s Vision.** Meet with your Installation Commander approximately three to four months before the proposed opening date.

- ◆ You should prepare a background paper to outline important facts. Inform the Commander of when the center is scheduled to open and explain the importance of the program in support of the mission and families.
- ◆ The Commander must first decide how big the ceremony should be. The Commander will determine who should be included in this celebration:
  - The staff and families on the installation?
  - Local officials?
  - Members of Congress, Department of Defense officials other Leaders, or VIPs?
- ◆ The list of prospective attendees (beginning with the senior ranking guest) will be used to identify a date that works with the senior ranking guest’s calendar along with the Commander’s schedule.

## The Background Paper

When preparing for a Groundbreaking or Opening Ceremony, it is vital that you have a clear picture of the project to present to your Commander. Write a background paper, a factsheet, or a staff summary sheet that describes the 5 Ws and How. This formula can be used as you continue to plan and prepare additional information papers for your Commander, the PAO, the installation community, as well as the local civilian community.

### Answering the 5 Ws and How

- ◆ **Who is involved?** The child development, school age, youth, teen, or family child care program that is being opened and any guests who will be invited.
- ◆ **What will take place?** The Groundbreaking Ceremony or the Opening Ceremony.
- ◆ **When will it take place?** Remember to include a proposed window or several options for date and time based on the best estimate from the individuals responsible for construction.
- ◆ **Where is it taking place?** Typically, programs hold the ceremony onsite, but you should consider the exact location. Is the parking lot the only space large enough to hold the group you would like to invite? Does the playground work? Always consult with your engineering and construction experts who may have input as well.



# **SAMPLE—Template Factsheet for Press Release**

## **Event**

To: Public Affairs Office

Date: dd/mm/yy

### Summary of Details

- ◆ What:
- ◆ When/Where:
- ◆ Who:
- ◆ Why:
- ◆ How:

### Additional Information:

- ◆ Mission:
- ◆ Number of Additional Families/Children Served:
- ◆ Unique Characteristics of Facility:

### Person(s) to Contact for Quotes and Statements

Attachments (Brochures, Programs, Photographs, etc.)

Point of Contact Information (Name, Office, Phone Number, e-mail)



- ◆ **Why is this ceremony important?** Commanders need to know how this additional space will positively impact the mission of the installation. Was the funding provided for the project advocated by a certain person or entity? Is this project of particular interest to a certain person or entity (for example, did your Congressman/Congresswoman advocate for the funding?) Was this a congressionally funded initiative as a part of Emergency Intervention Funding (EIF)?
- ◆ **How will the ceremony take place?** Provide the Commander with a brief overview of your ideas for the ceremony. Remember, this is an information brief to fill the Commander in on upcoming events and to get the Commander's support. Details can be provided during a later meeting. The two most important outcomes of this meeting are that you ask for Commander's concerns with the proposal and ask the Commander to designate a team of personnel on the installation who can help plan this event.



## TIPS

### for Preparing the Background Paper

◆ **Keep it simple.**

Don't overwhelm the Commander with questions about the color of napkins to be used. Let this phrase guide you during your brief: "Here's what you need to know. . ."

◆ **Make it relevant.**

Highlight how the military continues to serve their families and enhance military quality of life by:

- providing additional child care spaces in state-of-the-art facilities,
- supporting the mission by supporting the family through accredited programs,
- ensuring the safety and well-being of the military child, and
- providing care that ensures the healthy growth and development of children.
- A sample background paper and a template can be found in the Index.



## **SAMPLE**

# **Background Paper for Initial Meeting with the Installation Commander**

**Purpose:** To provide information about the upcoming Child Development Center Opening Ceremony, and to determine the Commander's vision, guidance, and scope of the ceremony.

**Background:** Construction of the new Child Development Center is scheduled to be completed with a pre-occupation inspection by 11 May 2009. Staff needs Commander's guidance and intent on type and scope of Opening Ceremony.

**Discussion:** Based on most current information from engineering and construction, estimated date of completion is 11 May 09.

- ◆ **[What:]** Opening Ceremony
- ◆ **[When:]** Anytime after 1 June 09.
- ◆ **[Where:]** Staff suggests this ceremony take place on playground of new child development center, which is large enough to accommodate 125 adults and children.
- ◆ **[Who:]** Invited guests, program staff, families, and children.
- ◆ **[Why:]** This \$9,500,000 MILCON-funded facility will provide 200 additional spaces for children at this installation.
- ◆ **[How:]** A ribbon-cutting ceremony including guests and children from the center will take place. Following the ceremony, a tour of the facility will be conducted for Distinguished Visitors (DVs). Family tours and activities will be provided in the afternoon.

**Recommendations:** Installation Commander determines the scope of ceremony and the highest ranking member who should be invited. Installation Commander designates a point of contact (POC) or a team of personnel on the installation to help with the planning of this event.

**POC:** Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, (Official Title) XXX-XXXX

\*A listing of personnel who could be on the team is found in this toolkit.



## 2. Timing Is Everything

“To get something done, a committee should consist of no more than three men, two of whom are absent.”~Robert Copeland

Planning the ceremony for your program can be very time-consuming, but the more you plan, the easier the day of the event will be. Begin early, and all will be well. For Grand Opening Ceremonies, programs typically hold their initial planning meeting six months before the planned date. For smaller Opening Ceremonies, hold your initial planning meeting 3–4 months before the date. Later in this chapter, you will find sample timelines to guide you through this process.

### Checklists/Plans

Begin the planning process by developing a checklist of things that need to be done based on the scope you and your Installation Commander defined in the initial meeting. This checklist should include the installation office or individual who will be in charge of providing the necessary support for the ceremony. Although, each military service and installation has its own prescribed methods and tools to plan ceremonies, there are many things in common. When planning your ceremony and creating your checklist, consider the following:

#### Date

Has it been coordinated with and placed *on the calendar* of all high-level invitees, especially participants? Have you included the time?

#### Invitations

Invitations should be coordinated with the Installation Protocol Office.

#### Content

- ◆ Who will design a map and directions to the ceremony as an insert for out-of-town and off-installation guests?
- ◆ What is the ‘military dress’ requirement?
- ◆ Who is responsible for the seating chart?

#### Publication and Distribution

- ◆ Who is attending?
- ◆ Who oversees the invitation list?
- ◆ Who will design/print the invitations?
- ◆ Who will mail the invitations?
- ◆ Who is in charge of inviting Distinguished Visitors such as members of Congress, who require additional invitation information?
- ◆ How many invitations are needed?
- ◆ Will electronic invitations be sent to the installation community via an installation e-mail service?



- ◆ Who is in charge of receiving/recording the RSVPs?
- ◆ Who is in charge of providing a list of visitors to the installation so visitors are registered with front gate security?

### Factsheets and Briefings

Prepare factsheets and briefings for the Commander, Distinguished Visitors, the installation community, and the off-installation community. Create a factsheet with information that can be adjusted or personalized for each audience. This is particularly helpful when planning large ceremonies. Consider who is responsible for preparing a factsheet for:

- ◆ Installation Commander
- ◆ Installation community
- ◆ Parents of children in the child development program
- ◆ Off-Installation community leaders
- ◆ Military press
- ◆ Civilian press

**Speeches**—Talking points and speeches should be prepared and provided to speakers.

- ◆ What is the protocol for the designated order of speakers at the event?
- ◆ Who is responsible for writing the speech for each speaker at the event?
- ◆ Who is responsible for setting time parameters for speakers?

**Ceremony**—There are many details involved in planning the ceremony, including:

- ◆ Acknowledging special guests and speakers. Who should be invited to speak?
- ◆ Who will narrate/be master of ceremonies for the ceremony? Who will prepare a script for the narrator?
- ◆ Depending on the program, what involvement should the children enrolled in the program have? The families?
- ◆ Is there a plan to include entertainment (for example, music, band, or vocalist)?
- ◆ Who is responsible for designing and reproducing the program for the ceremony?
- ◆ Who is responsible for coordinating an Invocation with the installation chaplain?
- ◆ Who is responsible for the flag ceremony?

**Press**—Determine the level of press involvement ahead of time. Your Public Affairs Office (PAO) will be instrumental in helping answer the following questions.

- ◆ Who will market this event? While some installations have a marketing office, others do not. Consider this in your planning.
- ◆ Who will coordinate with the media (press, radio, Internet, and T.V.)?



- ✦ Will there be a need for a dedicated press area?
- ✦ Who will write press releases and have quotes prepared from children, staff, and families?
- ✦ Who will provide a list of photo opportunities for press members/photographers?
- ✦ Who is responsible for ensuring there is written parent permission for photos of children
- ✦ Who will evaluate the need to involve key civilian community officials including education and community outreach; resource and referral agencies; and business, economic, and professional organizations

**Support Services**—Support Services are needed to set up the area for the ceremony. In addition to setting up, consider the following:

### **Equipment/Site Setup**

- ✦ Who will supply, set up, and remove chairs?
- ✦ Who will supply, set up, and remove a podium, stage/dais?
- ✦ Who will supply, set up and remove a tent, if necessary?
- ✦ Who will make arrangements for audiovisual (microphones, video, and photography) support?
- ✦ Who will make arrangements for sweeping, cleaning, mowing the area?
- ✦ Who will be responsible for clean up after the ceremony?
- ✦ Who will set up the site for speakers with a podium, the ceremonial scissors (keeping them out of reach of young children), and ribbon?
- ✦ Who will arrange a coat rack or coat-check area?

### **Food and Refreshments**

- ✦ Who will arrange refreshments, food, beverages, and supplies for the postceremony celebration?
- ✦ Who will set up the refreshment area with tables and, if necessary, chairs?
- ✦ Who provides the funding for paid labor, refreshments, and supplies for the ceremony?

### **Parking and Security**

- ✦ Who will arrange parking for the event? For Distinguished Visitors?
- ✦ Does traffic need to be re-routed around the facility?
- ✦ Who will take charge of coordinating an inclement weather plan?
- ✦ Who is responsible for conducting a safety inspection of the area?
- ✦ Who will conduct a risk assessment and determine security requirements for the event?



**Rehearsal**

- ◆ Who will conduct a rehearsal of the ceremony?
- ◆ When will the rehearsal take place?
- ◆ Who needs to be present for this rehearsal and who needs to be pre-briefed on the schedule of events?

**Tours and Escorts**

- ◆ Who will escort Distinguished Visitors?
- ◆ Who will plan for the facility tour after the ceremony?
- ◆ Who will create a written plan of the areas/classrooms to be shown and the information to discuss with visitors?
- ◆ Who will conduct the tours of the facility?

**Lastly, and most important: WHO WILL LEAD THIS EFFORT?** *(It's probably you, because you are holding this guide.)*

Write additional things to consider that pertain to your own situation that should be discussed at this meeting in the spaces below:

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**Planning Team**

As you begin to visualize your ceremony, think of the various installation offices that need to be involved in the planning stages. You may invite a specific office to one initial meeting, or you may find that a particular office is so instrumental to the planning process that you need this office represented at each of the planning meetings. Below is a list of installation offices *(or their service-specific alternatives)* that may need to be involved in planning your ceremony:

- ◆ Installation Commander Office representative
- ◆ Installation Engineering and Construction Office responsible for the project
- ◆ Contractor or construction company in charge of constructing the facility
- ◆ Protocol Office
- ◆ Public Affairs Office or community Relations Office





## Initial Planning Team Meeting

Meeting with the Installation Commander and creating a planning checklist will have helped you confirm the scope of the ceremony and develop ideas for “the big day.” Your initial planning team meeting will likely have the largest number of participants. The atmosphere you create in this first meeting is very important. Below are some tips on conducting your initial planning team meeting, followed by a sample agenda. A checklist template for tracking action items is located in the Appendix.



## TIPS

### for the Initial Planning Meeting

- ◆ Secure a space large enough to accommodate the group.
- ◆ Provide light refreshments.
- ◆ Have paper and pen available for attendees.
- ◆ Be Welcoming—These individuals are going to work closely with you to make this event a success. If you give the message that this is a chore for you, they will feel overwhelmed, making them less likely to do their part. One idea is to give each member a tea bag with a little note saying, “Thanks for being part of our TEA-M!”
- ◆ Make sure you have a start time and an end time—and follow it!
- ◆ Begin the meeting by having each member introduce themselves.
- ◆ Prepare an agenda and follow it as closely as possible, giving planning team members a chance to give their input.

# **SAMPLE Meeting Agenda**

## **Grand Opening—Child Development Center**

### **Planning Team Meeting (updated 10 Jan 07)**

**0900–1000**

<b>Update on Status of Project</b>	Lynne/Dee
<b>Update on Ceremony</b>	
Date, Time, Location	Lynne
Inclement Weather Plan	John
This is the Installation Commander's (IC) Ceremony	John
Installation Commander Update	Troy
Project Manager Update	Heather
Engineering and Construction & Contractor Update	Public Works Office
Commander Involvement	Greg
OSD, Service Secretary Involvement	Greg
Elected Leaders, Community Leaders	Troy
Invitations/Printing	Terry
Mailing of Invitations	LT B.
Chaplain and Color Guard	Lynne
Master of Ceremonies/Speaker List	Lynne
Dedication	Lynne
Accommodations for DVs	Greg/Lynne
Meals	Greg/Lynne
Transport, Air	Greg
Transport, Ground	Lynne
IC Pre-Brief	Troy
Program	Lynne
Order of Events and Program Draft	Lynne/Troy
Press/Media	Troy
Press Release, Press Escort	Troy
Photographers	Troy
Ribbon Cutting—Scissors	Jeremy
Ribbon, Location, Photo Op	Tammy
Dedication	Greg
Entertainment (Children's Involvement, Navy Fleet Band)	Dee
Food & Beverage—Onsite and Reception	Joanne
Tours of Facility	Dee
Parking	Security
VIP—List to Security/Shuttles	Lynne
Event Logistics	Jeremy
Tent, Seating, Podium, Dais/Stage, Table	Jeremy
Audio System	Lynne
Dates for Setup	Jeremy
Budget	Lynne

**NEXT MEETING WILL BE 17 Jan 07 in Conference Room; 0900–1000**



## Planning Timeline

Most installations begin planning the Opening Ceremony 3–4 months in advance; planning for a Grand Opening Ceremony begins 6 months in advance.

### Planning Timeline for Grand Opening Ceremony

If the installation is planning a Grand Opening Ceremony with numerous guests, the planning meeting timeline may look like this:



### Planning Timeline for Opening Ceremony

If the installation is planning a Groundbreaking Ceremony or Opening Ceremony and the list of invited guests is limited to those on the installation, 3 months is a reasonable lead time to begin assembling your team and meeting regularly. Your timeline may look like this:





## Meeting Timeline and Planning Documents

In many cases, the planning team meets every other week; however, you should determine the frequency of meetings by gauging the support services on your installation and evaluating the amount of work to be done. Approximately 1 month before the ceremony, you should begin meeting weekly. Some support agencies may not need to attend each meeting; however, it is best to include most team members during each phase for consistency and accuracy.

Careful planning at the beginning will save you time and effort as you prepare for your ceremony. Checklists help you to stay on task by defining specific action to be taken during a specified time period. Planning documents provide details concerning the tasks at hand. An informal planning document may provide:

- ◆ Points of contact, and
- ◆ Status updates.

A more formal planning document may include:

- ◆ An overview of the situation,
- ◆ The overall mission of the ceremony, and
- ◆ The activities involved in executing the mission, including the concept of operations, assigned tasks, and coordinated instructions.

In the Appendix you will find a sample checklist and two sample planning documents used by different services for their Opening ceremonies. Take a moment to read through the information. This will help you develop your own planning materials. Samples and templates for Groundbreaking ceremonies are also located in the Appendix.



### 3. Publicity, Press Releases, Protocol

“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.” ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

As you contemplate the publicity surrounding your ceremony, one of the most important considerations is to go back to the **WHY?** Ask yourself, “*Why is the installation and the surrounding community interested in holding a ceremony to break ground or celebrate the completion of the child development or youth program?*” Some important reasons are to:

- ◆ **Promote**—The United States Government through its agencies and services has dedicated substantial funds to improve the quality of life for military families. One avenue is through Child Development and Youth Programs. This is an important message to relay to your community.
- ◆ **Motivate/Celebrate**—Increasing space to serve children and youth and modernizing run-down facilities decreases the number of dissatisfied parents and community members; it makes your job easier as well. Literally hundreds of hours have been spent (many of your own!) preparing for this day. Remember, the opening of a new program is a kind of birthday party; it is a celebration of many people coming from all areas of expertise, giving endless hours of hard work to serve their community. That is a reason to celebrate.
- ◆ **Inform/Communicate**—Focus on the importance of the program and the vital service it provides to the military, the military service member, and the military family.
- ◆ **Report**—Public affairs officers (PAOs) will be asked to report on your ceremony. They need as much background information and as many details as possible to help them support you in this effort.

#### Establishing a Relationship with the Public Affairs Office (PAO)

The ceremony must be news-related to receive attention from a military PAO. Your Installation PAO can help you plan for your ceremony in the following ways:

- ◆ Write/edit/issue press release.
- ◆ Decide on press releases before the center Opening Ceremony that will inform the community during the construction process. For example, as the building is inspected by the various installation safety, fire, and health offices, you can decide to issue a press release letting the community know the building is being certified by these various installation offices and agencies. This is a great advance news story to keep the community informed.
- ◆ Provide press escort.
- ◆ Coordinate with installation photographer.
- ◆ Review the guest list.
- ◆ Coordinate DV involvement.



- ◆ Review verbiage for the official invitation.
- ◆ Review program, scripts, and speeches.

## Understanding the Role of the PAO

The PAO will review speeches, scripts, programs, articles, and brochures and evaluate them for security, accuracy, and propriety.

Another role of the Public Affairs Office is to improve community relations by developing effective two-way communication between the military and the community. The PAO will also be helpful in evaluating the need to involve key civilian community officials including education and community outreach; resource and referral agencies; and business, economic, and professional organizations.

## Establishing Common Ground

When you initiate contact with your installation Public Affairs Office, remember the four criteria discussed above. As one Public Affairs Officer said, “The mission of any Public Affairs Office is not to provide you with publicity about your event; it is to Promote, Motivate, Inform and Report.” These are the common ground you share with any news agency in their effort to get the word out to the community.

Besides the mission of the PAO, another area of common ground that you share with the Public Affairs Office is that you both have similar audiences. Your goal will be to get the word out to:

- ◆ Service members
- ◆ Family members
- ◆ Local communities
- ◆ General public

You will also seek to use similar communication vehicles:

- ◆ Newspaper, Radio, Cable (both on and off the installation)
- ◆ Marquees
- ◆ Bulletin Boards
- ◆ Flyers
- ◆ Web sites
- ◆ E-mail
- ◆ Installation Guides
- ◆ Chain of Command



## Reaching Out to the Community

Child Development and Youth programs on many installations throughout DoD are linked to off-installation organizations as well, and you should consider inviting guests from your local community. To reach the installation community, set up a meeting with your PAO.

### Press Kit

Prepare a factsheet with all the important facts for your PAO. You need to consider whether it is best to write the entire press release for your PAO, or whether your Public Affairs Officer would prefer to have some latitude in writing this. However you proceed, it is important for you to provide the PAO with the basics of a press kit. By preparing these press kit contents for your PAO, you are giving the office all the tools they need in order to support you in getting the word out. A press kit consists of the following items:

#### Factsheets

You will find information about factsheets and samples in the Appendix. The more information you provide, the easier the PAO's job will be. Ensure the information you provide is concise; then, many PAOs will use their expertise to write a great news story.

#### Quote Sheets

Quotes from those involved are helpful when preparing press releases. At a minimum, there should be a quote from the Installation Commander and from program participants. For programs serving young children, parents are a wonderful source. It is helpful if you can identify a few people for the PAO to contact for quotes and let them know ahead of time that someone from PAO will ask them for comments.

#### Brochures

Provide your PAO with additional information that will help in writing "the story" or preparing the press release.

#### Photos

You can supply the PAO with a list of photo opportunities by providing the program of events and pointing out important activities.

#### Respond to Query documents (RTQs)

The Public Affairs Office will likely receive inquiries from the media and the public before the formal event. The PAO uses the information to respond to these inquiries. An RTQ typically includes key information, background facts, and questions and answers. It is prepared by the PAO with information provided by the subject matter experts. A good RTQ serves as a source document and ensures that all are speaking with one voice.



## Factsheets and Informative Briefings

There are several audiences for whom you will need to prepare factsheets and briefings. These include:

- ✦ Installation Commander,
- ✦ Installation personnel involved in the ceremony who need information,
- ✦ PAO,
- ✦ Other press agencies (civilian),
- ✦ Protocol Office (or service-specific agency,)
- ✦ Distinguished visitors or guests who may be asked to speak at the ceremony. Typically, speakers would like background information to prepare their speeches.

When writing information for a press release, factsheet or briefing, focus on the ABCs of journalism:

- ✦ **A**ccuracy—Make sure you have all the facts right: names (spellings), ranks, times, places, numbers, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.
- ✦ **B**revity—Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. The language used in point papers or bullet background papers as well as power point briefings for any military audience is **SHORT** and **TO THE POINT**.
- ✦ **C**larity—As the saying goes, *Keep it Simple*. Use short words. Remember, the goal is to inform not educate. For example, say “*start*” or “*begin*” instead of “*implement*.” Be clear and keep related ideas together. As you *keep it simple*, you will get your message across without confusing your audience.

The following will help you prepare factsheets and information briefings for the various audiences you need to address.

- ✦ **Briefings for the Installation Commander and installation personnel who are involved in the ceremony.** There may be several opportunities when you need to brief the Commander to provide updates as the planning progresses. These may be presented as PowerPoint briefings or as factsheet. Find out from the Installation Commander’s administrative assistant which format is preferred. Samples and factsheets are provided in the Appendix.
- ✦ The desire for information will vary from command to command. Check with your command leadership to identify specific command communication points and include these in your planning checklist. Plan to brief the Commander approximately 1 month before the ceremony, followed by a final pre-brief one week before the ceremony. **Make sure to add this briefing to your planning checklist and confirm this meeting date on the Commander’s calendar in a timely manner.**



The following topics should be addressed when briefing the Installation Commander and other installation personnel:

- ✦ Overview/background
- ✦ Invitation
- ✦ List of invitees:
- ✦ Approximate number of guests
- ✦ Distinguished visitors/invited speakers
- ✦ Program/sequence of events
- ✦ Seating plan
- ✦ Site plan
- ✦ Parking plan
- ✦ Logistics support

**Briefings for the PAO and other press agencies (civilian).** When providing information to the PAO, be sure to give them background information so they understand the project and its significance to the installation. It is the responsibility of the installation PAO to coordinate any and all forms of communication with other press agencies. You can provide additional information that may be helpful to the PAO in that regard. The press kit, which was discussed earlier in this section, is a valuable resource that will be helpful to your PAO. You may also choose to provide your PAO with the briefing information from the Installation Commander briefing.

For specific information that may be helpful to other press agencies, in particular the civilian agencies, see the section on *Information that Applies to Child Development and Youth Programs; Unique Features of a DoD Child Development or Youth Program* in this guide.

**Briefings for Distinguished Visitors or guests who may be asked to speak at the ceremony.** Typically, speakers request background information to prepare their speeches. You can provide them with the same information that the PAO used in coordinating with civilian press representatives. If the guest speaker is a member of Congress or local government official, the speaker's office may contact your PAO or your Protocol Office with additional questions. For example, one program was contacted with the following questions from the Congressman's office:

- ✦ Why was another day care needed?
- ✦ How many children will this day care service?
- ✦ What makes Army day care better?

In response to these questions, the staff members were able to provide a great deal of information, including terms used in military child development programs, for the Congressman to personalize his speech for the military child development center Opening Ceremony!



Remember, when communicating with others concerning the ceremony:

- ◆ **Be specific.** When informing—and inviting—individuals or representatives from offices outside the installation, you will need to provide specific details about the project and the program.
- ◆ **Keep it simple.** Do not use military acronyms and other terms that may not be familiar to civilian communities.

## Information that Applies to Child Development and Youth Programs

The PAO is responsible for releasing all information to the media and may look to you as the subject-matter expert to assist with writing a draft press release. When preparing a press release or information brief that is unique to Child Development and Youth Programs, there are some key items for you to consider:

- ◆ **Mission of child development program or youth program.** This information is already clearly addressed in the many handbooks that apply to your particular service and organization. The opening of a center is a great opportunity to reiterate this mission to your audience.
- ◆ **The number of additional families served.** Be sure to note the previous capacity and how much the capacity is growing due to this construction project. Tell whether this is an expansion or a replacement facility.
- ◆ **Unique characteristics of the facility.** Inform your audience of any state-of-the-art features that are part of the design. Many of the features in the design of Child Development and Youth Centers are unique and geared toward meeting specific needs of the children. For example, one newly opened center has heated floors in the infant/toddler sections.
- ◆ **Unique features of a DoD child development or youth program.** You know the strengths of your program best. Be sure to highlight the unique strengths of DoD programs. This is especially important when your audience is civilian. They may not be aware of the factors that make DoD Child Development and Youth programs unique. For example:
  - **Focus.** DoD programs focus on ensuring the safety, intellectual, and emotional well-being and growth of the children in their care.
  - **Certification.** Programs are held to stringent inspection criteria, which is applied in unannounced inspections several times each year. Annual certification is required.
  - **Training.** An ongoing professional training system continues to educate staff members on their role in teaching young children.
  - **Safety.** Child development and youth programs ensure the safety of the children in their care. The centers are inspected regularly for fire, safety, and health concerns. Video surveillance systems are important assists, and staff members are trained to safeguard children from neglect or abuse.
  - **Accreditation.** An impressive 97 percent of eligible DoD Child Development Centers are accredited by nationally recognized agencies that promote excellence in their fields.



- ◆ **Partnerships with off-base organizations enhance the level of programming and care.** Your PAO will be helpful in evaluating the need to involve key civilian community officials including education and community outreach; resource and referral agencies; and business, economic, and professional organizations. For example, most DoD Youth programs partner with Boys & Girls Clubs of America, local 4-H clubs, and other organizations. They should be invited to attend and, possibly, participate in the ceremony.

## Establishing a Relationship with the Protocol Office

Your installation Protocol Office (or service-specific agency) knows all the “Rules of Etiquette,” including the right thing to say, when to say it, when to write it, and how to say and write it. Therefore, it is advisable to develop a close working relationship with this office. While the staff in this office is well-versed in military protocol matters, they may not have much interaction with the installation child development or youth program. It is important that you provide them with the background information on your specific activity and the importance of Child Development and Youth Programs for the installation, the service member, and the military family as a whole.

Once your Protocol Office representatives understand your mission and the importance of this ceremony, they will be better able to assist and advise you in the areas of protocol.

### Order of Precedence and Other Protocol

When organizing an installation-wide function such as a Groundbreaking or Opening Ceremony for a child development center or youth center, one mistake that can be near-fatal is not getting the order of precedence right. This order is very important as you plan your program of events, draft speeches, provide background briefings, determine seating charts, and develop a host of other plans in preparing for the ceremony.

In preparing for the ceremony, your Protocol Office can help:

- ◆ Review planning documents.
- ◆ Coordinate the guest list. Review the need to involve key civilian community officials including education and community outreach; resource and referral agencies; and business, economic, and professional organizations.
- ◆ Prepare or review verbiage for the official invitation.
- ◆ Print invitations.
- ◆ Mail official invitations. Kindly request that the Protocol Office mail the invitations. Many installation programs have reported that military and civilian offices will prioritize invitations sent from an installation Protocol Office ahead of invitations received from Ms. Sunny Sun, Sunshine Child Development Center, Sunnyside, Sunny State, USA.
- ◆ Review program, script, and speeches.
- ◆ Coordinate OSD, service DV, or elected official involvement. Whenever there are Distinguished Visitors involved, at whatever level, consult with your Protocol Office for guidance.
- ◆ Coordinate seating chart.



- ◆ Coordinate with installation color guard/honor guard.
- ◆ Establish flag order of precedence.
- ◆ Arrange accommodations for Distinguished Visitors.
- ◆ Coordinate with tenant organization, service, and Host Nation Protocol Offices.
- ◆ Answer procedural protocol and ceremony question.

## Photos and Other Art Media

Photographs are used to tell a story. When they are displayed, they share this story with others. For example, you can use photos to tell the history of the project by displaying photographs of construction as the project progresses. This is a useful way to make connections between center staff, families who are in the program, children, and any families who are interested in the program. You can also use this display to build anticipation and bring focus to the idea that the construction or renovation of a new facility is an exciting event for the entire installation.

Photos can be used in a variety of ways to tell the story of the project. Some examples are:

- ◆ **Photo collages.** Photo collages showing the progress of the construction project; these can be hard copy photos that are displayed in the current facility for children and families to see.
- ◆ **Web site postings.** Some programs have also posted photos on their Web sites so the community can see the construction process. If you have an e-mail database for your families, you can periodically send a link to the center Web site with messages encouraging families to view the progress. For example:
  - “Take a look at the beginning stages of our construction project.”
  - “The countdown continues . . . watch how the new facility is taking shape!”
  - “Only 45 more days until our Groundbreaking Ceremony.”
  - “Take a look at how the construction site is being prepared!”
- ◆ **Facility Layout.** If the construction company is willing to provide you with a picture of the architect’s rendering of the facility, you can display it in your front lobby or on your website.

### IMPORTANT!

*Before addressing the creative uses of photography for center openings, it is very important to note that ALL children who are featured in photographs displayed or taken must have an updated, signed parent consent form on file. Ensure that you personally review photos that are taken for publication purposes before they are made part of any official press release or publication.*

## Photo Guidelines on the Day of the Ceremony

Part of your request for support from the Public Affairs Office should include asking for photographic support the day of the ceremony. Some installation PAOs send a reporter to cover the “story” and take pictures. Others refer you to the installation photo lab or visual support depending on the size and scope of the ceremony. If you have an assigned photographer, be sure to include him or her in planning meetings. In addition, it is helpful to ask a colleague to take pictures as the day unfolds. Here are a few guidelines to remember:



- ✦ Review the program of events for the celebration. Make a list of important moments you will want to capture in a photo.
- ✦ If your ceremony includes several high-level guests and other press representatives are invited, consider designating an area to be cordoned off for photographers and/or the press. Be sure to coordinate planning with the PAO.
- ✦ Make sure visitor and facility badges are not visible or are removed before the ceremony.
- ✦ Ask your PAO for guidelines on what type of camera works best. If you do not have any guidelines, a general rule of thumb is to use a camera with 4 megapixels; this should print a good quality 4 x 6 photo.
- ✦ Double-check the list of children who do not have permission to be photographed; unless the list is very long, it will help if you avoid taking pictures of these children.
- ✦ Remember this ceremony is about how the community is supporting CHILDREN, so they should be the focus. Consider photos of:
  - Individual children.
  - Children interacting with other children.
  - Children interacting with other adults (their families, staff and distinguished guests).
  - Multicultural groups of children DoD programs serve.
- ✦ Try to capture images of happy, engaged children, and when photographing the children, try to get faces, not the backs of their heads.

Other general considerations provided by one Public Affairs Officer include:

- ✦ **Personalize.** Photos should be action shots, not “grip and grins.”
- ✦ **Diversify.** Take a variety of photos, vertical and horizontal to support different layouts for publishing. Cover all aspects of the event and vary the shots (horizontal and vertical, close up and wide shot).
- ✦ **Strategize.** You can take a lot of photos, but may find that some aren’t usable. Be selective. Be aware of closed eyes, people yawning, and people with something in their mouths, hands in pockets while in uniform, or compromising or unflattering positions. These will not be used for publication.

### Considerations When Submitting Photographs for Press Releases

- ✦ Include all caption information, preferably at the end of the text of the article. Captions are always written in the present tense and usually in the third person. Label the caption the same way you do the picture; that is, the same one- or two-word title for both caption and the photo file.
- ✦ Try at all costs to avoid group pictures. Identify people in the picture from the left to right and from the back to front.
- ✦ Always include the name of the photographer.



- ◆ Do not write on the back of a photograph. Ballpoint pens can damage a photo. You can type the identifying information on a piece of paper and tape it to the back of the photo in case it gets separated from the article.

**Including Children’s Art in the Process**

Including children’s art makes this project unique from any other construction project on the installation. Children’s art can be posted to show visitors the use of a variety of media in creative art experiences for children. Examples include:

- ◆ Pre-schoolers took a field trip to see the large machinery preparing the ground for construction. They were asked to draw a picture of what they saw and dictate information about their picture to a teacher. These works were posted in the reception area as part of the Groundbreaking Ceremony. This not only became a learning experience for the children, but also was a tangible way to show visitors the developmental process of the curriculum in the preschool program.
- ◆ Children’s art was laminated and used as a tablecloth for a Grand Opening Ceremony reception.
- ◆ A slide show of children’s art was displayed as the children sang a song. This was the focal point of the program for another Opening Ceremony.
- ◆ Children’s art was used in creating a label for water bottles celebrating the center opening to be used by guests during an Opening Ceremony on a hot summer day.
- ◆ Youth created place cards for the chairs of the invited guests in their teen center ceremony.

As you continue planning, remember that the focus of this special day should be the children. Brainstorm more ideas on including photographs and children’s art in your Opening Ceremony, and write them below:

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## 4. Planning the Ceremony

“Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work.”~Peter Drucker

### It’s About the Children

No matter how large or small the ceremony, whether planning a Groundbreaking Ceremony or an Opening Ceremony, whether this is for a renovation, an addition of two classrooms, a modular building or a permanent structure, the focus remains the same: the children.

### Consider the Age and Stage of the Children

It is very important that you keep in mind the age and stage of the children involved. Consider the appropriate involvement for children under the age of 5. Something we know about young children is that their knowledge of the world is limited to their own experiences. Children under age 5 experience the anticipation of a special celebration; their ability to *wait and sit still* cannot and should not be tested.

Through experiences in the classroom, preschool-age children and older children in youth and teen centers can certainly be made a part of this project throughout the construction stages right up to the celebration ceremony. Some suggestions for including children in the process are:

- ◆ Many centers opened their doors at least 30 days before the Opening Ceremony. This gave the program staff an opportunity to set up the room environments and personalize their classrooms. The children had an opportunity to become accustomed to the center and their new surroundings. This also gave the center staff some weeks to work out any last-minute issues one may encounter with a new facility.
- ◆ Some programs literally opened their doors the day of the ceremony. For these programs it was very important to schedule enough opportunities for children and their families to tour the facilities, meet the staff, and familiarize themselves with the building.
- ◆ One program held a “book shower” in anticipation of the opening. Families were asked to bring a children’s book and were treated to “sneak peek” tours of the classrooms, which included hands-on activities for families to engage in with their children while they learned about the new facility. Other programs have held a “birthday party” for the new building, an innovative way of including the children, their families, and the staff in this celebration.
- ◆ Youth and teen programs can involve their students in many aspects of planning the Groundbreaking and Opening Ceremony. Talk with your youth and ask them what ideas they have. Some teen and youth programs planned their ceremony around a certain theme; a luau or a “Character Counts!” celebration made it a fun event for the students and the guests. Students can take photographs of the ongoing construction process and report about it in a program newspaper. Teens can hold a mini-Opening Ceremony in a certain area or room. They can be active in selecting songs for the ceremony. There are many ways youth and teens can be involved—just ask them.



## Groundbreaking Ceremony

Much of the planning that goes into a Groundbreaking Ceremony goes into an Opening Ceremony. Some Groundbreaking ceremonies consist of a gathering of the Installation Commander, the Engineering and Construction Office, the contractor, and a representative from the child development center. Some installations have included the same ceremony and fanfare that is afforded to Grand Opening Ceremonies. The process is the same:

- ◆ It begins with your installation Engineering and Construction Office to decide on a date when the area will be prepared for groundbreaking.
- ◆ Following that, you will schedule a meeting with the Installation Commander, to inform the commander of the possible dates and to determine the scope of the ceremony. Prepare a background paper, including important information the commander needs to make the decision on how to proceed, the scope of the Groundbreaking Ceremony and whom to invite. This meeting may include the PAO and the Protocol Office.
- ◆ Once you have an understanding of the scope of the ceremony, you will gather your planning team and begin creating a personalized planning document.

Templates are provided for both the timeline and the planning team checklist. Review the samples and then personalize the templates according to your commander's vision and the scope of the Groundbreaking Ceremony.

### Safety First

A foundation of a Groundbreaking Ceremony for a child development and youth program is safety. Since the terrain can be uneven at best, try to plan for this. Ask your installation Safety Office (or service-specific office) to conduct a review or risk management assessment to help you in planning the groundbreaking. Work with safety representatives and the installation office in charge of the site to determine the best location.

Consider the Groundbreaking Ceremony to be an anticipation-builder for the community. Many families on the installation are waiting for additional child care spaces to be available. Include them in this celebration. Some suggestions for including children and their families:

- ◆ If possible, obtain the architect's rendering and drawings of the plan to be displayed as part of the Groundbreaking Ceremony. There is not a great deal of visual evidence that the plot of land which has been cleared and is ready for groundbreaking will someday be a child development center.
- ◆ Ensure that you begin the process of taking pictures on a regular basis to document the construction. These photographs can be used to visually display the progress for the families and the community, and such displays are really amazing for guests and families to see when they are taking the first tour of the new facility.



- ◆ There are many ways to involve the children who are a part of the program in this celebration. Some ideas include:
  - Center staff can involve the children who may be taking part in the groundbreaking by including the construction process into the curriculum. The children will be able to actually see the planning that goes into such a construction site preparation, and staff can use their expertise in the areas of children’s learning to create hands-on experiences for the children.

Examples of extending what the children are observing into activities include:

- ◆ Preschool age children can prepare their own “construction site” in the learning center area. They can “design” and “construct” their own buildings, have access to a variety of construction “vehicles,” and learn how they facilitate the construction process.
- ◆ School age and teen students can extend these activities to their level, constructing, designing, and learning about the process of building a structure from the ground up. They can also learn about ground preparation and the important elements through a visit to the site and discussions with site supervisors and planners.
- ◆ It may be too costly to ensure that every parent or family member will receive a printed invitation to the Groundbreaking Ceremony. Work with the students to create an invitation that can be reproduced and sent home to families.
- ◆ Even if your Groundbreaking Ceremony is a small one, allot time and some resources to hold a reception following the ceremony. Ensuring the children, their families, and the program staff are included in this process from the very beginning is key to helping the community of young learners feel part of this momentous occasion!
- ◆ It is said, “A picture is worth a thousand words” . . . see the article below:



**Fort Myer Construction Underway**  
*Ed Gonzales and a three-year-old boy work together to break ground on the new Fort Myer Child Development Center and begin construction near the Fort Myer Commissary. The Center will accommodate 438 children of various ages and is expected to be completed by summer 2008. Gonzales is chief of Family Services and Recreation Program for Fort Myer's Morale, Welfare and Recreation directorate.*  
 Photo by Adam Skoczylas



## Opening Ceremony

Now that you have developed your planning tools and had several meetings with the planning team, you are ready to put your plan into action.

- 1. Inform the Installation Commander.** Remember your first step is to inform. Get the Installation Commander’s position on the type and scope of the ceremony. Provide the Commander with background information for a clear picture of the project and how it impacts the installation, the military member, and the families.
- 2. Identify timeframes.** Work with the Engineering and Construction Office and with the contractor to determine a realistic timeframe so that several dates can be presented to the Installation Commander and other Distinguished Visitors for their availability.
- 3. Develop the planning document.** Use the templates provided to you as samples and personalize a Planning Document for the unique needs of your installation and the ceremony your Installation Commander has determined is appropriate.
- 4. Build relationships.** Developing a sound, cooperative working relationship with the installation offices whose assistance you will need is important. Communicate your enthusiasm and commitment to this project. Invite those offices and agencies who will be advocating for you (with the press, the chain of command, and installation support agencies) to see the impact the child development, youth or teen program is having on the community—and the children.
- 5. Review your checklist often.** Make it a practice to review your checklist *at least* weekly, right from the beginning. Use it as a working document, make notes, make changes and refresh it each week. Try to find one person in your team to be your “checks and balances” person. For some installation project officers, it was the PAO, for some it was a colleague from the child development center—don’t do it alone.

## Grand Opening Ceremony

The Grand Opening Ceremony has the same format as the Opening Ceremony, but there are few things that make the ceremony unique:

Opening Ceremony	Grand Opening Ceremony
Most guests are from the installation	Some guests are from higher headquarters or are elected officials
Number of guests 50–100	Number of Guests 100–250
Some guest speakers from local community or installation	Several guest speakers; one or more are Distinguished Visitors
Entertainment provided is local	May have service band or other live music
	May have a dedication



When planning for a Grand Opening Ceremony, you are increasing the type and scope of the ceremony. In addition, consider the following:

- ◆ You are adding components such as inviting Distinguished Visitors from higher headquarters and perhaps even elected officials. This will require more consultation and assistance from your Protocol Office.
- ◆ You are adding to the required ceremonial protocol. This may change the Program of Events.
- ◆ You are increasing the numbers of attendees.
- ◆ You are adding to the visibility of this function. Therefore, you may be increasing the press coverage of the ceremony. Consult your PAO to ensure you have just the right amount of publicity.

## Additional Variations on Ceremonies

Each ceremony is unique. Variations on ceremonies include inviting elected officials or Distinguished Visitors, installations with Tenant Organizations/ Joint Services and/or Host Nations or Multi-National Forces Represented, and Facility Dedications.

### When Elected Officials or Other Distinguished Visitors Are Invited

When the list of invited guests goes beyond the scope of the installation, it will very likely become a more formal ceremony. Remember to check with your Protocol Office when inviting elected officials. The Protocol Office can contact the invitees’ offices to ascertain if additional information is necessary. They may require a background paper to accompany the official invitation, which you have already prepared; it should be personalized for each distinguished visitor.

In addition, military protocol has an established list of VIP Precedence. The higher the guest is ranked, the greater the emphasis on ceremonial protocol. For example, the President of the United States is ranked in the highest position in the order of precedence, and is therefore coded as VIP 1 Code. The Code continues in order of precedence. Some of those VIPs are listed below as an example (your installation Protocol Office has a complete list).

VIP Code	Order of Precedence	Title
2	4	State Governor
2	20	Secretary of Defense
2	30	Secretary of Education
2	42	U.S. Senators (by seniority, when equal, by alpha)
2	47	U.S. Representatives (by seniority, when equal, by alpha)
2	54	Deputy Secretaries and Under Secretaries of Executive Departments
2	68	U.S. Ambassadors-at-Large
2	86	Generals of the Army, Fleet Admirals, Generals of the Air Force



VIP Code	Order of Precedence	Title
3	113	Mayors of Major Cities (Population 1 million or more)
3	141	Under Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force
3	147	Generals and Admirals (4-Star Rank)
4	171	Lieutenant Generals and Vice Admirals
4	174	State Senators (in their own state)
4	204	SES Members (PC 4)
5	206	Major Generals and Rear Admirals (Upper Half)
6	222	Brigadier Generals and Rear Admirals (Lower Half)
6	225	City Council Members
7	237	Colonels; Captains (USN/USCG); GS-15
8 (Not VIP Ranked)	240	GS-14
8	241	Lieutenant Colonels; Commanders, GS-13
8	242	Majors; Lieutenant Commanders; GS-12
8	249	Command Sergeants Major; Sergeants Major; Master Chief Petty Officers; Chief Master Sergeants; Master Gunnery Sergeants
8	250	Other Non-Commissioned Officers; Civilians by Rank

**Installations with Tenant Organizations/Joint Services and/or Host Nations or Multinational Forces Represented**

Special consideration must be taken when the military installation is host to tenant organizations or joint services. For some overseas locations, Host or Multinational Forces are also represented on the same installation. Some military installations with tenant organizations have two Protocol Offices, one for the installation and one for the tenant. Consult with your Protocol Office and, if possible, with your Host Nation advisor to ensure you are following the best practices in considering all members of the installation.

**Dedications or Naming of Facilities**

When a facility is to be named to honor or memorialize a member of the Armed Forces or a civilian, the process is very specific depending on the military service and must be coordinated through many offices. This process can take as long as one year and, in some cases, has been accomplished in 60 days from the originating installation request letter. Contact your installation Protocol Office and the engineering and construction office for regulatory guidelines and guidance on dedications or naming of facilities. Each Service has specific guidelines for recognizing the naming in formal ceremonies. Some require a plaque be installed; these guidelines are also very precise depending on the Service.



There are several Child Development and Youth Programs throughout DoD that have been named after members of the military and community. If it is your goal to combine the naming and/or dedication ceremony with the Opening Ceremony, **START PLANNING EARLY**—at least 8 to 12 months beforehand. Ideally, as you complete your Groundbreaking Ceremony, you will initiate the paperwork required to name or dedicate the building. Typically, when the ceremonies are combined, they become grand, simply because the scale of the ceremony increases with special guests and ceremony that includes this high form of respect.

A sample of the script that can be used for the dedication portion is included on the following page.



**070312-N-1082Z-001 VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (March 12, 2006)** - The Sharon A. Peterson Child Development Center (CDC) is dedicated at Naval Air Station Oceana (NAS). The center is named after Peterson who served as the Navy's Child and Youth Program manager from Oct. 20, 2001 until her death Nov. 1, 2006. Peterson also served as the Mid-Atlantic Region Child and Youth Program manager and the Quality of Life director for Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Cutting the ribbon for the new CDC was her brother Ken Sullivan and his wife Tarra; Peterson's daughter, Jennifer; Peterson's husband John and his daughter Amanda; Congresswoman Thelma Drake and Peterson's mom, Betty Sullivan. Behind Drake stands Commander, Mid-Atlantic Region Rear Adm. Rick Ruehe. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jason R. Zalasky (RELEASED)



**SAMPLE**  
**Dedication Section of Script**

**Narrator:** “LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, XXXX WILL NOW PRESENT A PLAQUE HONORING XXXX AFTER WHICH THE XXXXXXXX CENTER WILL BE NAMED.”

**FAMILY MEMBERS PROCEED TO THE STAGE**

**“RECEIVING A PLAQUE ON BEHALF OF THE XXXX FAMILY IS XXXX.”**

**GENERAL XXXX PRESENTS PLAQUE**

**REMARKS BY MRS. XXXX**



## The Guest List

Your Protocol Office will help with the Guest List, especially in determining who should be invited based on the scope of ceremony your Commander has determined, and also based on the rank of guests and visitors. Some additional guests who can be invited include:

- ◆ Elected officials such as Representatives and Senators
- ◆ Elected officials from the local government
- ◆ Corps of Engineers representatives, if applicable
- ◆ Installation Engineering and Construction Office representatives
- ◆ Contractors who are involved in the project
- ◆ Installation offices who were a part of the planning committee
- ◆ Local school officials
- ◆ Local community leaders and business leaders
- ◆ Representatives from resource and referral agencies and nearby child development programs
- ◆ Boys & Girl's Club, 4-H, and other community partners
- ◆ Staff who assist the program with background checks
- ◆ Fire, Safety, and Health Office representatives
- ◆ Personnel Office recruiters
- ◆ Regional and higher headquarters/command staff
- ◆ MWR or services team
- ◆ Command representatives
- ◆ Representatives from Residential Community Initiative (RCI) (If housing is privatized)
- ◆ Installation tenant organisations/joint tenant/Host Nation
- ◆ Local newspapers, radio, and television staff
- ◆ Local Child Development colleagues

## Save the Date Cards

When elected officials or other Distinguished Visitors such as political appointees or State and local government officials are invited, especially if they are asked to speak at the ceremony, consider sending Save the Date cards as soon as the date has been determined.

A Save the Date card is also helpful if you have guests traveling from out of town or guests whose calendars fill quickly. This form of notification is very simple but ensures that a block of the invitee's time is reserved for your occasion before other invitations come in. This also helps the out-of-town guests as they make travel arrangements.

These cards can be mailed to the recipient up to 6 months in advance. The format is simple, but it lets the addressee know that more information will follow.



For example:



## Invitations

Your Protocol Office will provide you with guidance on the proper language and contents of the invitation. Typical invitations include the following information:

- ✦ Who is hosting the event,
- ✦ What kind of event it is,
- ✦ When the event will take place,
- ✦ Where the event will be held,
- ✦ RSVP information,
- ✦ Dress, and
- ✦ Optional additional information.

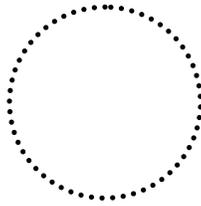
Let's look at a sample invitation, step by step on the following page:



## SAMPLE—Invitation



# SAMPLE (Step-by-Step) - Invitation Template



Command Seal,  
General Office Flag,  
Installation Seal

**WHO:** (Title and full Name of Commander)  
The Installation Commander

of \_\_\_\_\_ Installation

Cordially invites you to attend

**WHAT KIND:** (of Ceremony)

The \_\_\_\_\_ (Groundbreaking Ceremony, Opening Ceremony, Grand Opening Ceremony)

Of the

\_\_\_\_\_ (Child Development Center, Youth Center, Teen Center, Family Child Care Program Office)

**WHEN:** (Day of the week and Date, written out.

For example: *Thursday, the thirty-first of March Two thousand and seven or 2007, both are acceptable.*

The time is also spelled out. For example, *at ten o'clock, in the morning.*)

**WHERE:** (Place)

**RSVP:** This is placed in the lower left-hand corner of the invitation. The use of "RSVP" or "R.s.v.p." is appropriate. For purposes of this document, RSVP will be used. The RSVP date is usually one week in advance, although some installations leave the RSVP date at 4 days prior to the ceremony. It is optional to list the name of the individual who is receiving the RSVPs, but make sure to include the contact telephone number. When listing the number, use both the area code and DSN. For example:

RSVP by 10 April 2007

DSN: 787-XXXX

Commercial: (937) 257-xxxx

[cdopening@military.base.mil](mailto:cdopening@military.base.mil)

**DRESS:** The Dress is listed in the lower right-hand corner of the invitation. Be as specific as possible. For example:

**Dress: Military** – Service Dress

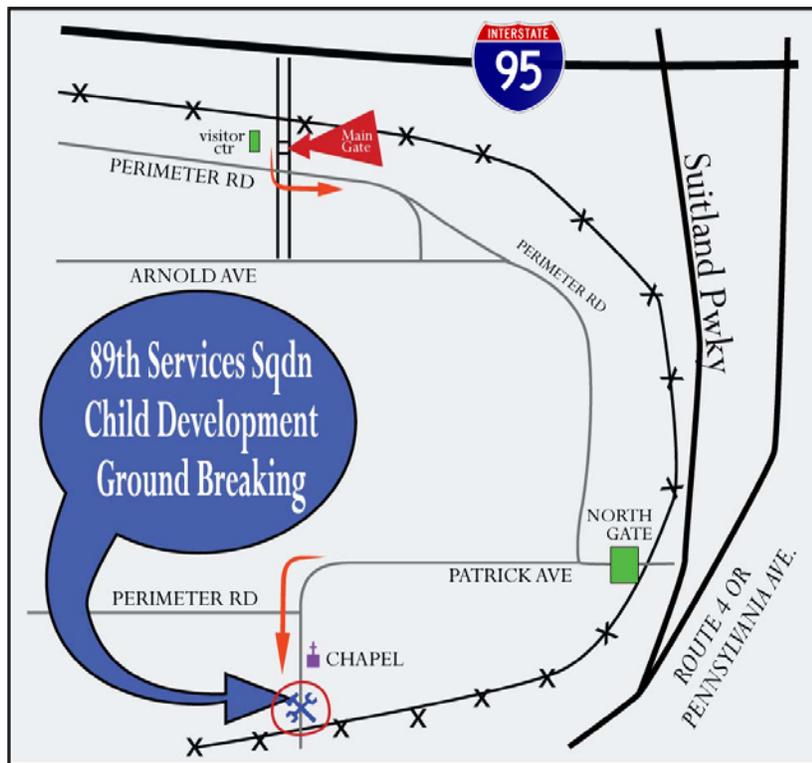
**Civilian** – Business Suit



## Additional Specific Instructions

You may choose to use the bottom center section of the invitation to provide specific instructions. For example:

- ◆ Directions to the Groundbreaking Ceremony are enclosed.
- ◆ Please show your invitation at the gate to facilitate access.
- ◆ Reception immediately following the ceremony.
- ◆ Building 1717 Toddler Road



Direction: From the main gate on Westover Dr., turn left at the 4 way stop sign onto East Perimeter Road and follow the sign. Turn left and proceed around the end of the flight line to the stop light by the North Gate. Turn right onto Patrick Avenue and follow around to Fetchet Drive. Continue down Fetchet (you'll pass Chapel 2 on your left) you'll see the Ground Breaking Ceremony on your right.

## TIPS

### for Creating the Invitation

- ◆ The day and hour are spelled out. Only the day of the week and month are capitalized.
- ◆ Ranks, titles, and names are written in full. Avoid abbreviations wherever possible.
- ◆ If you are inviting guests who will be traveling to the installation, it is helpful to include a map and/or directions to the installation.

## Planning the Program of Events

When planning the Program of Events, work closely with your PAO and Protocol Office. These offices will provide you with guidance and will also review your program draft for accuracy.

As you begin writing your Program of Events, remember you will be shaping the script for the narrator as well. Think carefully about who should be asked to narrate the ceremony. Often, there are individuals on the Commander's staff who are narrators for many ceremonies. Narrators should have good public speaking ability and a sense of military ceremony.

Consider the following as a *basic* guide to the sequence of events:

- ◆ Pre-ceremony
- ◆ Protocol statement
- ◆ Opening remarks
- ◆ National Anthem
- ◆ Invocation
- ◆ Remarks
- ◆ Ribbon cutting
- ◆ Closing remarks
- ◆ Reception





**Pre-Ceremony**—Depending on the level of formality at the ceremony, the Pre-ceremony may include music played for approximately 3–5 minutes before the ceremony. Guests will usually begin to arrive 30 minutes before the ceremony and are asked to be seated 10 minutes before the beginning of the ceremony. If the presiding officer is a General Officer, there is an additional military tradition that will be followed.

**Protocol Statement**—Your installation Protocol Office will help you prepare the protocol statement when you are writing the script. In general, the protocol statement is going to explain the procedural guidelines members of the audience will need to follow.

**Opening Remarks**—In military ceremonies, opening remarks are made to welcome guest, and to announce the host and the occasion that is being celebrated.

**National Anthem**—Depending on the scope and formality of the ceremony, consider asking the installation Color Guard or the local high school ROTC group to provide support for the Posting of the Colors. If this is added to your Program of Events, the order will be:

- Posting of the Colors
- National Anthem
- Invocation

**Remarks**—If you have not already done so, discuss the list of individuals who are asked to make formal remarks with your Protocol Office. Consider who your speakers are—for a child development center, a parent (perhaps a member of your parent advisory board or committee). If you are opening a teen center, ask a teen to address the audience. When there is a dedication, individuals who are familiar with the person being honored should be asked to speak. If there are guests who are Distinguished Visitors you will need to consider whom to ask to make remarks.

**Ribbon Cutting**—When planning for the actual cutting-of-the-ribbon, take the opportunity to consider the individuals who will be asked to take participate in this part of the ceremony. Always try to include community members when you can; children or teens can and should participate in this celebratory moment.

**Closing Remarks**—These remarks are provided by the narrator to thank the participants and members of the audience for being a part of the ceremony, and to provide instruction if they are to stand as the official party departs. The narrator also announces the reception and invites all guests to attend.

**Reception**—Most programs plan a child-oriented reception (cake and juice are most often selected). While some select cookies for their convenience (fewer crumbs to be ground into a new carpet), many programs choose a healthy snack; some have even held a family cookout as part of their Opening Ceremony. A large part of your decision making will be based on the budget. Some programs have received commercial sponsorship from installation or local community businesses and this helps defray the costs of a large reception. Most programs budgeted for the expenses involved in the ceremony during the planning stages.



## The Actual Program

Most programs are folded half-page booklet-style. There are usually four pages of content (simple format); however, some Grand Ceremonies have additional inserts to provide biographical information about honorees or Distinguished Visitors, or other additional information. For purposes of this guide, the format discussed will be the simple format.

### Page One—The Cover

The cover often includes a photograph of the building or addition being opened. Also, the following information is often included:

- ◆ Service seal or the installation seal. There may be room for the service-specific command seal, or another logo.
- ◆ Title of the ceremony.
- ◆ Date.

For example:



### Page Two

The inside cover includes background information, often about the program, and how the new center or addition of space will affect the community. If there are Distinguished Speakers, a short summary of their biographical information could also be found on this page; if there are additional pages, then this information can be included in the additional pages.

### Page Three

This page lists the Program or Sequence of Events. Typically, the event is on the left and the person speaking or the group performing will be listed opposite the event on the right of the list. Full names and rank are written out. A sample Sequence of Events is provided on the next page.



## Page Four—The Final Page

The final page is often used for *Acknowledgements* or *Recognition*. Keep notes of whom to thank for their involvement in making this ceremony successful. Ask several people you have worked closely with on this project to provide you with names of individuals that you can cross-reference. Some programs thank individuals by name; others thank offices. Often there is a combination of the two.

If your reception or ceremony was sponsored by an installation or commercial entity, they should be thanked on this page as well. If your program is affiliated with an organization, such as The Boys & Girls Club or the 4-H Club, include their logo.

## Tips for Creating the Program of Events

- ◆ **Ask the PAO for samples.** Formats vary greatly. Ask your Protocol Office and PAO to show you samples of ceremony programs to give you ideas. Additional samples can be found in the Appendix of this guide.
- ◆ **Identify participants in the ribbon cutting.** When you are considering the individuals who will take part in the actual ribbon cutting, include any Distinguished Visitors who have taken part in the ceremony. Also remember the installation and construction personnel who have been instrumental in the process. Since the occasion is a child development or youth opening, children and teens are often included.
- ◆ **Ask the PAO and Protocol Office to review the Program of Events.** The Program of Events should be drafted by you and then passed through the PAO and the Protocol Office for a review before being sent to the Installation Commander's Office or to any of the speakers involved.
- ◆ **Practice your timing.** Try to “talk it through” and approximate the time the entire program takes. Is it too long for young children to sit through? Usually speakers keep their speeches brief, but check with your Protocol Office to see if you can let the speakers know they have an allotted time. A good rule of thumb is to provide a range of 5–7 minutes per speaker.

Samples of the Sequence of Events and the Program of Events can be found in the Appendix of this guide.

## Ceremony Scripts

Once you have established the Sequence or Program of Events you can begin writing the script for the ceremony with the help of the Protocol Office. The script details the sequence of events and provides the exact words to be used by the narrator. As you write the script, consider that the narrator will set the stage for the entire ceremony. Provide the narrator with the final, approved script several days before the event.

A helpful way of printing the script is to double-space the document, using all-capital or title case letters. Use a sans serif font at 16-point for readability (Verdana is one that is considered most readable). That way, the reader can easily read through the script without losing his or her place. Some individuals prefer a specific style or font. When considering the various font, type size, and the use of capitalization for the



script you are preparing, it's important to determine the preferences of the person who will be speaking and then follow them. A sample Master of Ceremonies script is located in the Appendix for you to use as a resource.

## Scripts for Speakers

Procedures for drafting the script and individual speeches vary from installation to installation. Each script and/or set of talking points you write for the ceremony will need to be reviewed by the Protocol Office and the PAO. Your first step is to get guidance from your Protocol Office and your Installation Commander. Ask them who is responsible for writing the speech for the Commander. Protocol Offices may have sample speeches for Opening Ceremonies to guide you. Some guest speakers will request a draft of a speech or talking points to help provide them with details about your program. Most often, you will provide talking points and the individual will have staff members write the speech.

If you are responsible for drafting a speech for a speaker at the ceremony, remember the focus of this ceremony is the military children and the families who are served. When developing a script or talking points for the Installation Commander consider including the following information:

- ◆ Welcome guests and Distinguished Visitors.
- ◆ Thank elected officials, OSD, Service Headquarters, Agency, or entity that provided or advocated the funding for the project. Thank them for their efforts in ensuring that the child care needs of military families have been addressed.
- ◆ Thank all who played a role in the construction of the center.
- ◆ Recognize the significant role that CDCs play in support of the military family.
- ◆ Acknowledge the staff of the center and all dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to care for the children of this community.

When developing a script for a guest speaker, use the following as a guide:

- ◆ Review the history of this project. The goal is to provide more child care to military families during times of mass deployment and installation realignment.
- ◆ Express happiness that the project has come to completion.
- ◆ Talk about the nation's youth. For example, "They are a gift to our world. A gift that needs to be nurtured, as they grow and mature to become the future moms and dads, the future Soldier, Marine, Sailor, and Airman. The future teachers, doctors, firefighters and authors. These children have grown up in a world that is founded on service—and they see it and live it each and every day. Thanks to all those who love and care for these children. Our tomorrows are in their hands."

Remember that the guest speakers and Installation Commander will likely have their staffers review/rewrite your words; they are simply suggestions.

## Scripts for Facility Tours

Many programs hold tours of the facility after the ceremony. If the center is not open and caring for children, center staff can be the tour guides. When the opening celebrates a youth or teen center, the students can be tour guides. Since there will likely be more than one tour guide, provide each member



with a script that contains notes and information to follow as they are giving the tour. This will also help in case there are questions about the facility or the program. Some more helpful hints:

- ◆ Remember to print enough visitor badges so that each visitor can sign in and wear a badge. This is an excellent opportunity to explain the safety and security guidelines that are followed in the center.
- ◆ The script should contain an overview of the construction project, including the date the construction began and the cost involved. Also, this is a good opportunity to inform your visitors how many additional children will be served in this new building.
- ◆ If the center has already had a “soft opening” and has been in operation for awhile, consider that the bulk of the talking should take place in the hallways, and you may not wish to enter each room. This is a wonderful opportunity to tell the visitors about the viewing windows and panel in each room of the facility as a means of supervision and access to parents and staff.
- ◆ When the tour passes by the kitchen and training room, use these opportunities to discuss the training program and resources available for staff; in front of the kitchen explain the food program.
- ◆ Each age group served in the center has its own unique environments and materials to enhance the children’s hands-on learning. Point out the special aspects of each classroom.
- ◆ Make sure to avoid using military acronyms and terms when providing tours for visitors who are not as familiar with DoD Child Development and Youth Programs.
- ◆ Allow time at the conclusion of the tour for questions. If you are unsure of the correct answer, take down the visitor’s name and contact information and get the answer to them within 2 days.

Sample script can be found in the Appendix section of this guide.

## Site Plan/Parking Plan and other Security Measures

A very important part of the final planning is to develop a drawing of the actual site for the celebration.

### Seating

Consider the positioning and the number of chairs you will need and determine where to set up the stage and podium. Are you planning to use bleachers? Bleachers were used for one youth center ceremony to give the students, who were active participants in the events, a place to sit and gave them a wonderful vantage point to see the entire celebration.

### Parking and other Security Measures

Regardless of the size of your ceremony, parking arrangements should be considered so that the routine comings and goings of families dropping off and picking up their children is not disturbed. You will need to coordinate with the installation Security Office (or service-specific office) to determine the safest solution to the added number of cars that will need to be accommodated.

Your Installation Security Office (or service-specific office) will also be able to assist you in conducting a Risk Assessment for the ceremony. A Risk Assessment is used to identify potential problems that might impede the success of the ceremony. Each service has its own methods and forms that need to be



completed. At some installations, the child development program staff members conduct the Risk Assessment, while at others, this duty is delegated to the Installation Security or Emergency Planning Office. The assessment is conducted one week before the ceremony, to identify any potential hazards in and around the facility. A sample Risk Management Worksheet is found in the Appendix section of this guide.

Additional considerations for the site plan, parking plan, and other security measures:

- ◆ One installation reported that they were holding an early morning ceremony and realized that this was the same time that a local unit, which was headquartered nearby, went running. The increased traffic and conflict of “jodies” and speakers would have resulted in a difficult situation for both activities (imagine, the reciting chorus of “C-130 rollin' down the strip, Airborne Rangers gonna take a little trip” at the same time the narrator announces “Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand for the official party”). The project officer contacted the unit and the unit representative gladly re-routed their morning run and made things easy on all parties involved.
- ◆ If you have not considered it yet, take a moment to think about bathroom facilities and their proximity to the celebration site, especially if young children are a part of the ceremony. Walking back and forth to the building (often) may add to the requirement of staffing you will have for that day.
- ◆ If the ceremony is taking place outdoors in the grass, make sure you have coordinated with support services to mow the grass and ensure there are no pests such as fire ants that would harm someone.
- ◆ If you are holding your ceremony in hot weather conditions, consider renting a tent for comfort and providing cold water.
- ◆ Contact your local military treatment facility for possible on-site emergency medical support (especially if the weather is extremely hot).
- ◆ Coordinate a date with your Installation Security Office (or service-specific office) 2 weeks before the event to ensure a Risk Assessment Report is completed approximately 1 week before the ceremony.

## The Seating Chart/Seating Order of Precedence

Once you have drawn out where the chairs will be placed in relation to the stage and/or podium and you have received the majority of RSVPs (especially those for Distinguished Visitors and guest speakers), you can meet with your Protocol Office to ask for advice on the seating order of precedence.

- ◆ When you meet with the Protocol Office, confirm who will be preparing name tags for the specials guests and Distinguished Visitors—and also who will be preparing name tags for the seating of Distinguished Visitors. The writing on the name tags should be large enough to be seen, and can be decorated by the children, if your Protocol Office agrees.
- ◆ Print a copy of the seating order and place it in the folder you will have with you on THE DAY just in case there is confusion or a label accidentally flies off a chair.

A sample seating chart is available in the Appendix of this guide.



## 5. The Week Before: Follow-Up, Follow-Up, Follow-Up

“Never, never, never, never give up.” ~Winston Churchill

As you near the final week of preparation, check your planning guide checklist and your timeline. If you have contacted an office for help or a specific task but have not followed up in the past 30 days, use this last week to follow up. Confirm arrangements—confirm in writing and in person—just to make sure there are no unpleasant surprises on the day of the ceremony. Remember, the office that is providing you with support for the ceremony is also taking care of a multitude of other tasks. Make sure your requirements for the ceremony are on their To Do list.

During the week before the ceremony, you should be reviewing your checklist often.

### 1 week prior:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm that PAO has contacted media
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assemble press kits for media
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm marquee display
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide Distinguished Visitor biographies to Installation Commander Office
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide Protocol and PAO with dry run time and place
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm with Protocol that seat name tags for Distinguished Visitors are completed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Site plan/parking plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coordinate Risk Assessment Report with Installation Security Office (or service-specific office)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conduct final Installation Commander pre-brief
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review the planning checklist daily from now until the day of the ceremony
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remind all participants in the planning process of the After-Action meeting that is scheduled for 1 week after the ceremony

### NLT 2 days prior:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Review confirmed list of RSVPs with Protocol
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm catering arrangements for reception

### NLT 1 day prior:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Dry run ceremony with all invited participants
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follow-up with Honor Guard, Chaplain, photographer, Comm. Support, speakers, performers, etc., to ensure attendance

### Review Site Requirements:

- |                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ Inclement weather plan | _____ Lighting                   |
| _____ Platform               | _____ Scissors/ribbon            |
| _____ Podium                 | _____ Ground preparation         |
| _____ Chairs                 | _____ Tent/awning                |
| _____ Power:                 | _____ Parking area               |
| ___ Needed (110v/ 220v)      | _____ Seating area for guests    |
| ___ Available                | _____ Area for photographers     |
| _____ PA system              | _____ Portable toilet facilities |
| _____ Photo/video support    |                                  |



## The Installation Commander Pre-Brief

The Installation Commander pre-briefing should be scheduled for approximately 1 week before the ceremony. You can use various methods of briefing for your Installation Commander. Some installations prepare a PowerPoint briefing; others use an event pre-brief. Your Installation may have a certain format that must be used. At a minimum, a representative from the Protocol Office should also attend this meeting. Provide a written copy of the brief to all meeting attendees. The following topics should be discussed:

- ◆ Invitation (review event date, time, location)
- ◆ Dress
- ◆ List of invitees (Distinguished Visitors)
- ◆ Program—narrator, sequence of events, script
- ◆ Seating plan
- ◆ Site/parking plan
- ◆ Logistical support

You will also want to ensure the Installation Commander has biographies of any Distinguished Visitors who are not on the Installation. If you were delegated with preparing a speech or talking points for the Commander, confirm that this is complete and does not require additional coordination on your part.





# **SAMPLE**

## **Event Pre-Brief**

Child Development Center #3  
Groundbreaking Ceremony  
19 October 2004  
0900

LOCATION: XXXX Avenue

NUMBER OF EXPECTED GUESTS

DRESS

SPEAKERS

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

PROGRAM

1. Sequence Of Events
2. Script
3. Narrator

SEATING PLAN, SITE PLAN AND PARKING PLAN

LOGISTICS SUPPORT

### **Program of Events**

Opening Remarks

National Anthem

Invocation

Remarks

Remarks

Remarks

Ribbon Cutting

Song Presentation

Closing Remarks

Reception



## On the Day Before . . .

- ✦ Even though your checklist says to update and conduct weekly meetings, review the checklist on a daily basis during the week before the event.
- ✦ Based on the timeline, you have scheduled a dry run, a “dress rehearsal” for today. Remember this is done so that any last-minute concerns can be resolved. Ask all people associated with tomorrow’s ceremony to be in place at least 1 hour but no less than 30 minutes before the ceremony. Guests will begin to arrive approximately 30 minutes before the ceremony.
- ✦ Contact all the installation offices or representatives who did not attend the dry run. Confirm their obligation to the ceremony and ask them to come 1 hour before the event to run through or review their responsibilities.
- ✦ If the weather forecast calls for inclement weather, you must determine whether to implement the plan. You will need to consult with your Installation Commander’s Office should plans or locations change in this short time span.

In keeping with the “Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow Up” philosophy, consider carrying your folder containing the most important documents. You may have collected many papers in your file folder since you began planning for the ceremony, but take a few moments to collect only the most important papers and place them into a folder for tomorrow’s ceremony. This will ensure you have all of the pertinent information at your fingertips, including:

- ✦ Most recent planning checklist,
- ✦ Seating chart,
- ✦ Copies of the ceremony script and any speeches,
- ✦ Phone numbers for installation offices who assisted with planning the event, and
- ✦ Emergency numbers.

## Inclement Weather Plans

In your initial planning meetings, you have established and coordinated an inclement weather plan.

If weather becomes a factor (heavy rain, snow, lightning or tropical storm) you may need to change your ceremony in the following ways: move locations, reschedule for a later date, or reschedule for a different time that day. Some things to consider with your plan are:

- ✦ Coordinate the inclement weather plan with the necessary installation offices. At a minimum, these should include:
  - Installation Commander Office representative
  - Installation Engineering and Construction Office responsible for the project
  - Contractor or construction company in charge of constructing the facility
  - Protocol Office
  - Public Affairs Office or Community Relations Office



- Installation Fire, Safety, and Preventive Medicine Office
  - Installation Security Office (or service-specific office)
  - Morale, Welfare and Recreation Office
  - Marketing Office
  - Child Development Program/Youth Program
  - Parent Advisory Board Representative
  - Other installation offices, as necessary
- 
- ◆ Consider the timing of announcing a weather-related change or cancellation. Remember, if you have invited guests from out of town, they may arrive the day before. Coordinate the timing of any decision related to a change or cancellation with your Installation Commander; only the Commander can make this decision.
  - ◆ A change of location is better than a cancellation. Many programs reserved the installation physical fitness facilities or club facilities as an alternative location. When considering an alternative site, make sure it will accommodate the number of expected guests.

## When the Unthinkable Happens . . .

Installations have shared with us that they must be ready for quick changes. With no-notice deployments, large-scale installation emergencies and, sadly, installations suffering casualty losses, each installation must be prepared for sudden news of a cancellation due to unforeseen circumstances. Only your Installation Commander can make the call to cancel or postpone your ceremony. If such a tragic circumstance occurs, there would be no cause to celebrate at that time; it would be better for all concerned to postpone the ceremony.



## 6. The Day Has Arrived

“Success is simple. Do what’s right, the right way, at the right time.”~Arnold H. Glasgow

On the day of the ceremony, you can be perfectly relaxed, knowing that you have worked hard to bring this celebration to the community. Well, that may be slightly unrealistic. It is clear that you will want to check and re-check that all is ready for the big day.

### It’s the Little Things

Do a walkthrough of the sequence of events for the ceremony; walk up to the podium, turn the microphone on, and make sure the ribbon and ceremonial scissors are in place. Also, make sure there is extra ribbon and a pair of scissors nearby. Make sure the scissors can cut.

Walk through the facility, noting the stops that your visitors will take. Also, look in the places not typically viewed by visitors. One director recommended checking the laundry room on the morning of the ceremony. Staff members were so busy taking care of the children and preparing for the big day that someone forgot—or no one remembered—to keep up with the laundry. It is important to put your best foot forward.

Most important, be calm today. Your demeanor will reflect on others. This is a joyous occasion for the entire program, and so many people have worked so hard to make it come to fruition, everyone involved deserves to enjoy it—even while they are working hard at their jobs. Thank the staff and the countless individuals as they come to take their place to do their part in this ceremony.

**Be prepared for anything, be prepared for something!**





## 7. After the Big Day

“Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” Theodore Roosevelt

Following each large-scale project, there will be some temptation to relax. As the project officer who has worked very hard to make this ceremony happen, there are just a few things that you will need to accomplish to complete your job.

### Thank-Yous and Wrap-Ups

While your memory is fresh and you still have all the checklists and guest lists at your fingertips, this is the best time to write a short thank you note. It is highly recommended that you personalize each thank you note. This applies to both Distinguished Visitors and installation staff members who have supported your effort. For the installation support staff and organizations who made the ceremony a success, consider having the children write thank you notes, or create artwork with “Thank you” on them. If you enlist the help of the children in the program, it will make what seems like an insurmountable task quite manageable. In addition, it’s the right thing to do.

Check with your Protocol Office (one last time) to see if there are guidelines about who can write a thank you note to the Distinguished Visitors and what type of thank you is appropriate.

### The After-Action Meeting

The most effective way to build upon our experiences and learn from them is to write down what we learned. Before too much time passes, conduct an After-Action meeting. According to the planning documents, this meeting should be scheduled one week after the ceremony and should have been announced at the last planning team meeting.

Take time the day before the meeting to call the team members, thank them for their hard work (if you have not already done so) and let them know you are looking forward to a quick meeting to compile an After-Action Report.

Consider presenting the planning team members with the following topics and questions and facilitate a discussion while one person takes detailed notes:

- ◆ Describe the success you encountered with the Opening Ceremony.
  - What initiatives worked best?
  - List the things you would do exactly the same again.
- ◆ Describe the difficulties you encountered in planning and accomplishing the Opening Ceremony.
  - Was there an important component that was forgotten?
  - Was there something you would do differently next time or not at all?

Adding this information to your well-organized file folder will be your legacy for the next person who is asked to do this type of ceremony.



## Conclusion

Planning an Opening or Groundbreaking Ceremony for any facility on a military installation requires a great deal of organization. Many child development and youth programs in the field have added this task to the multitude of other duties involved in opening a new center. The guide was developed to be helpful in planning your ceremony. Many military installations contributed their “lessons learned” to help avoid pitfalls and make sure you do not overlook any detail. Use the samples that are featured in this toolkit, create your own, and personalize them for your unique installation and program.

To be successful, be prepared to interact with a variety of offices on your installation and use their expert advice as you plan. A central theme from all military programs, regardless of service or size of center, was the importance of consulting with the Installation Commander to determine his or her vision of the scope of the ceremony and the Engineering and Construction Office to determine realistic dates for the ceremony. If a situation is encountered that exceeds the scope of this guide, contact your installation Protocol Office and your Public Affairs Office. These two offices have a great deal of experience in planning ceremonies on a military installation.

Finally and most important, remember the unique mission of the Child Development and Youth Programs. The focus is, as it should be, on the children and families who are served on a daily basis in this most important way. The ceremony is a way to celebrate the hard work and dedication of many individuals who work hard every day to ensure that military children and youth receive the best care in the safest facility to grow and prosper as their families serve their nation’s military.



**070312-N-1082Z-001 VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (March 12, 2006)** - The Sharon A. Peterson Child Development Center (CDC) is dedicated at Naval Air Station Oceana (NAS). The center is named after Peterson who served as the Navy's Child and Youth Program manager from Oct. 20, 2001 until her death Nov. 1, 2006. Peterson also served as the Mid-Atlantic Region Child and Youth Program manager and the Quality of Life director for Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Cutting the ribbon for the new CDC was her brother Ken Sullivan and his wife Tarra; Peterson's daughter, Jennifer; Peterson's husband John and his daughter Amanda; Congresswoman Thelma Drake and Peterson's mom, Betty Sullivan. Behind Drake stands Commander, Mid-Atlantic Region Rear Adm. Rick Ruehe. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jason R. Zalasky (RELEASED)



**“I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but, I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant!”**

**(Taken from AFH 33-337)**