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Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, Army chief of staff, told Army spouses at the Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C., last week that he would continue to ask for input from garrison commanders on which family programs work and which don't work.

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Oct. 31, 2012) -- In a town hall meeting with Army spouses, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Ray Odierno reiterated the Army's commitment financially to do everything possible to find the right programs to help families deal with the complexities of Soldier life.

"We're still going to invest a lot of money in our family programs -- it's a high priority -- that's not going to change, but we need to do better and be more efficient in the dollars that we have," he said to the predominantly female audience at the annual meeting of the Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, last week.

"We have to eliminate programs that aren't efficient enough and aren't gaining enough for our families and invest in the programs that are truly making a difference," Odierno said, adding he needed input from spouses on the programs that work and don't work.

He also said the Army needed to look at many programs that were funded with wartime funding, such as the child care subsidy program. That program was put in place because leadership knew there would be many parents deployed.

"As we move to the future, is this (funding) still necessary when parents are no longer deployed? We'll have to make those decisions as we go forward," Odierno said. "I don't want to paint a picture that we're funding everything. We've gotten additional monies from our operational funds because we were

fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but that will begin to go away after 2014."

Odierno made it clear that no family program would arbitrarily be discontinued. He stressed that garrison commanders will have to determine their particular family program needs and possible solutions to problems since every post has different quality of life issues.

"I don't want to respond to problems, although we'll still be able to do that," he said. "I want us to build programs that make us better as individuals, make us better as families and make us better as an Army community."

Odierno spoke briefly about two programs the Army would soon be launching. The first is the "Ready and Resilient Campaign," which is tied to the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program.

"People can define resiliency in a lot of different ways, but there are a couple of things that we know for sure," he said. "We know that as you're able to enhance performance and capabilities, you build resiliency in individuals. It's about developing physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually."

The second new program is the "Soldier for Life Campaign." Odierno said this program was about Soldiers and families making transitions, whether the Army becomes a career or not.

"This is about bringing Soldiers into the Army, having them continue to improve themselves during their time in the Army, then when they leave the Army we're going to assist them so they're ready and prepared to move on to the next stage in their lives," he said.

Thomas R. Lamont, the assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, said the transition program leverages what he calls the "whole of government approach" and included both the Department of Veteran Affairs and the Department of Labor.

"We're in the process of improving integration and synchronization of all our Soldier and family quality of life programs," he said. He noted that the Army had spent \$600 million in support of family programs in 2008 and that had grown to roughly \$1.3 billion for fiscal year 2013. Lamont didn't say what funding for fiscal year 2014 is anticipated to be.

"We are beginning a drawdown of our forces as directed by the DOD in support of the new national defense strategy, and we recognize that this drawdown may stress our Army," Lamont said. "But we are committed to ensuring that sustaining the all-volunteer Army remains our top priority and supporting our families is the key element of that focus."

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 01 November 2012