



ACS UNIT SERVICES STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT: FINAL ASSESSMENT

March 1998

Prepared for:

Army Community and Family Support Center
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“Outcome Evaluation of ACS Strategic Plan: Final Assessment”

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ASSOCIATES
and
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Background on Unit Services Strategy

Overview of Initiative

- Unit Services Strategy was established as an approach to meeting revised ACS goals and mission statement set out in the ACS Strategic Plan of 1993
- Mission of the ACS Unit Services Strategy
 - The ACS Unit Services Strategy is designed to increase unit leader awareness of and contact with ACS staff in order to provide soldiers and family members greater access to programs designed to prevent crises, enhance readiness, increase self-reliance and assist soldiers and family members in successfully coping with the mobile military lifestyle.
- Objectives of ACS Unit Services Strategy
 - Connect each military unit/activity with ACS services
 - Provide a visible ACS staff member for unit chain of command on ACS programs and services
 - Identify and address soldier and family needs effectively and quickly
 - Enhance unit skills on how to support soldiers and families



Background on Unit Services Strategy



Implementation of Initiative

- Implementation pilot tested at nine posts trained in January 1994
- Army-wide implementation expected after May 1994 training
- Eight outcome sites identified in May 1994 for evaluation of initiative
 - Aberdeen Proving Ground
 - Fort Benning
 - Fort Campbell
 - Fort Detrick
 - Fort Drum
 - Fort Leonard Wood
 - Mannheim
 - Fort Sill



Status of Unit Services Strategy Implementation

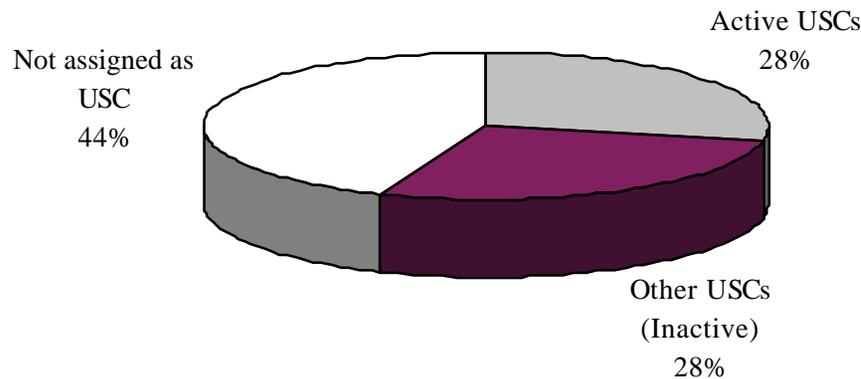


ACS Staff Participation

Key Points:

- More than half of ACS staff (56%) are assigned as USC; of these, half are comparatively “inactive” in that role (i.e., have no contact or less than once a month contact with their units).
- About one in four (28%) ACS staff are “actively” involved as Unit Services Coordinators (i.e., have contact with their units at least once per month).

Percent of Staff Assigned as USCs
(n=107)



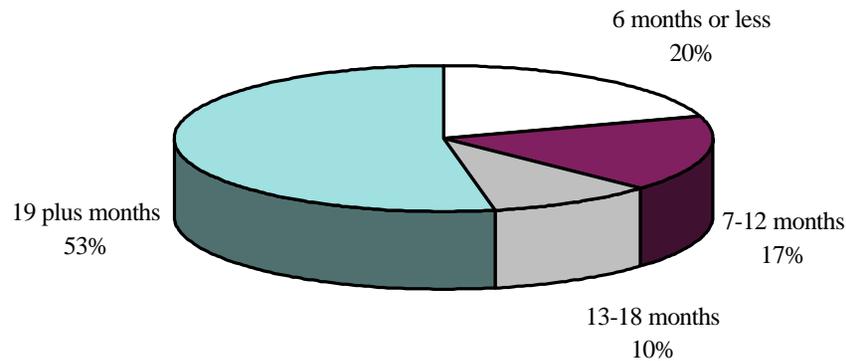


Status of Unit Services Strategy Implementation



ACS Staff Participation

Months Serving as Active USC
(n=30)



Key Points:

- More than half of active USCs (53%) have been in this role for more than a year and a half.
- No differences in results are found between inactive USCs and ACS staff not assigned as USCs, therefore:
- *In this report, most ACS results are presented based on comparisons between “active USCs” and all other ACS staff members, labeled as “other ACS staff.”*

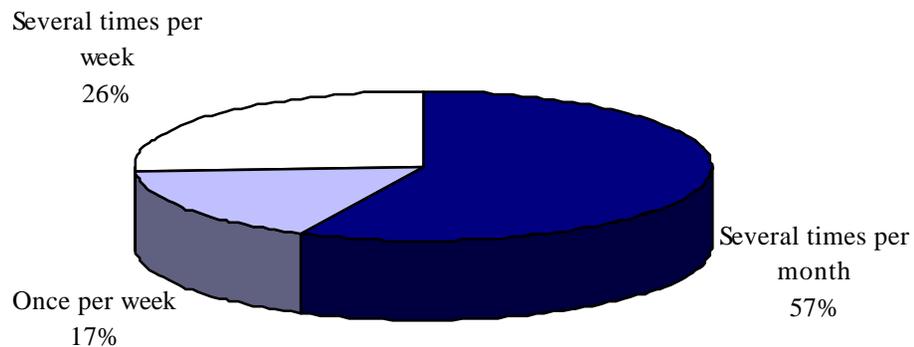


Status of Unit Services Strategy Implementation



ACS Staff Contact with Units

USC Contact with Chain of Command: Active USCs



Key Points:

- More than two out of five (43%) active USCs have weekly contact with their units.
- USC contact with the various levels of chain of command is substantial.

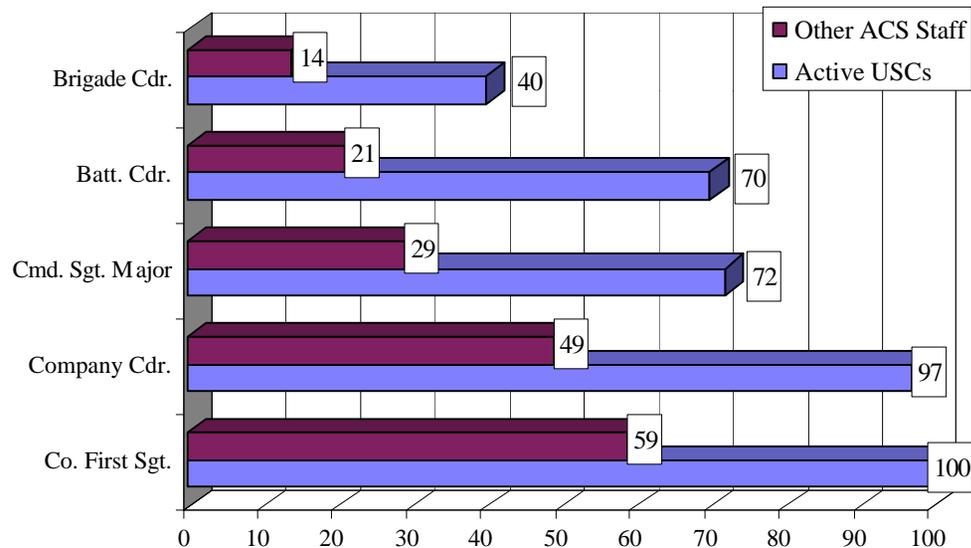


Status of Unit Services Strategy Implementation



ACS Staff Contact with Units

Contact During Last Six Months:
ACS Staff with Units



% of ACS staff with some contact

Key Points:

- At all levels of the chain of command, active USC staff maintain greater contact than other ACS staff.
- Nearly all active USC staff maintain contact with company commanders and first sergeants in their assigned units.
- Active USC staff are also more likely to have contact with unit leaders at the brigade and battalion levels than other ACS staff.

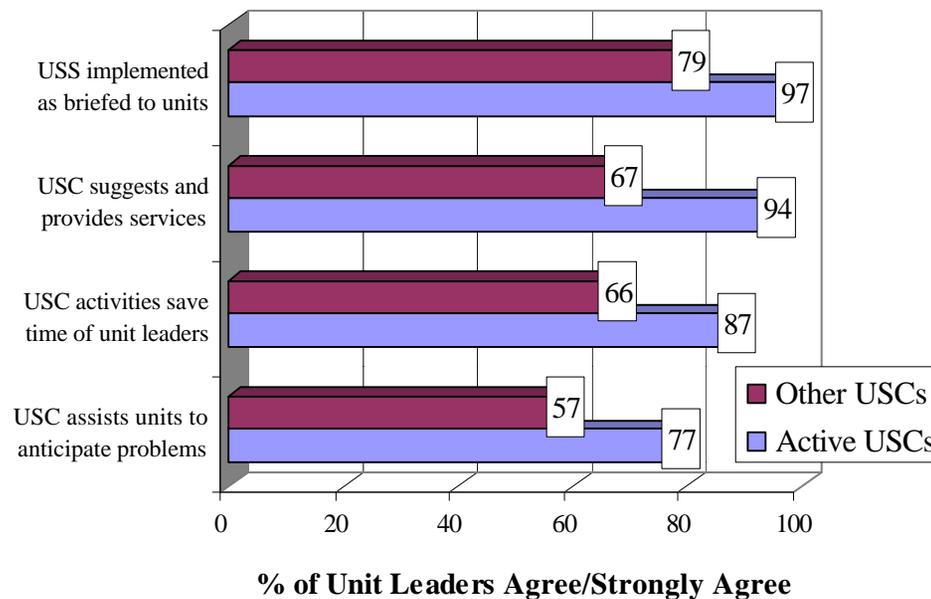


Status of Unit Services Strategy Implementation



Chain of Command Rating of Implementation

Unit Leader Rating of Unit Services Implementation



Key Points:

- Nearly all unit leaders (97%) with active USCs report that the Unit Services Strategy has been implemented in their units as briefed.
- On every unit services indicator, those unit leaders with active USCs indicate that there is greater ACS involvement in their unit.

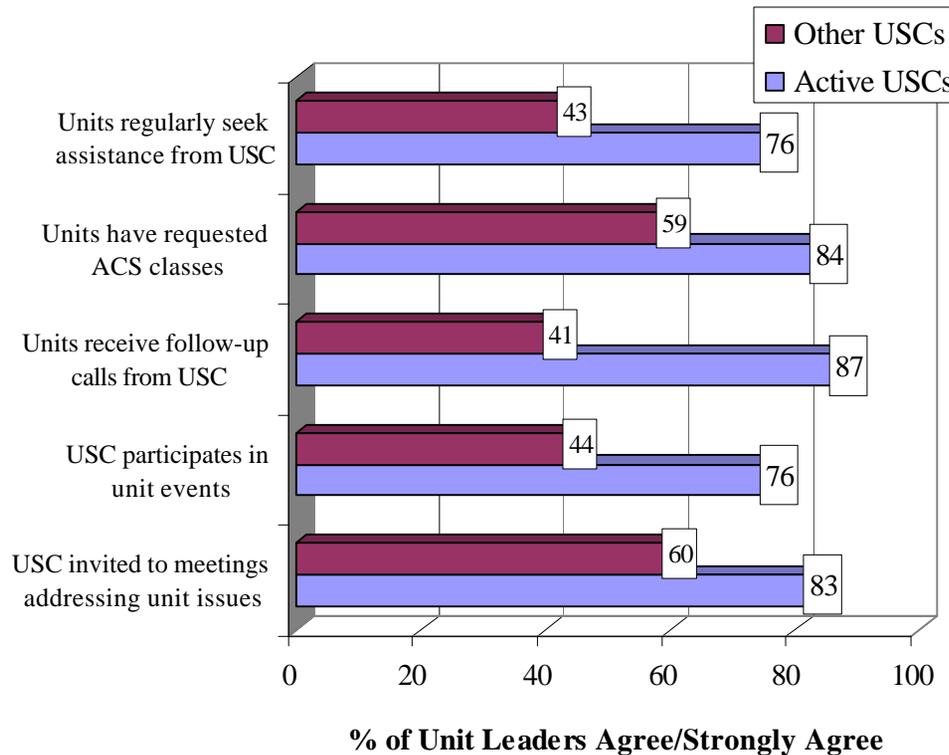


Status of Unit Services Strategy Implementation



Chain of Command Rating of Implementation

Unit Leader Rating of Unit Services Implementation



Key Points:

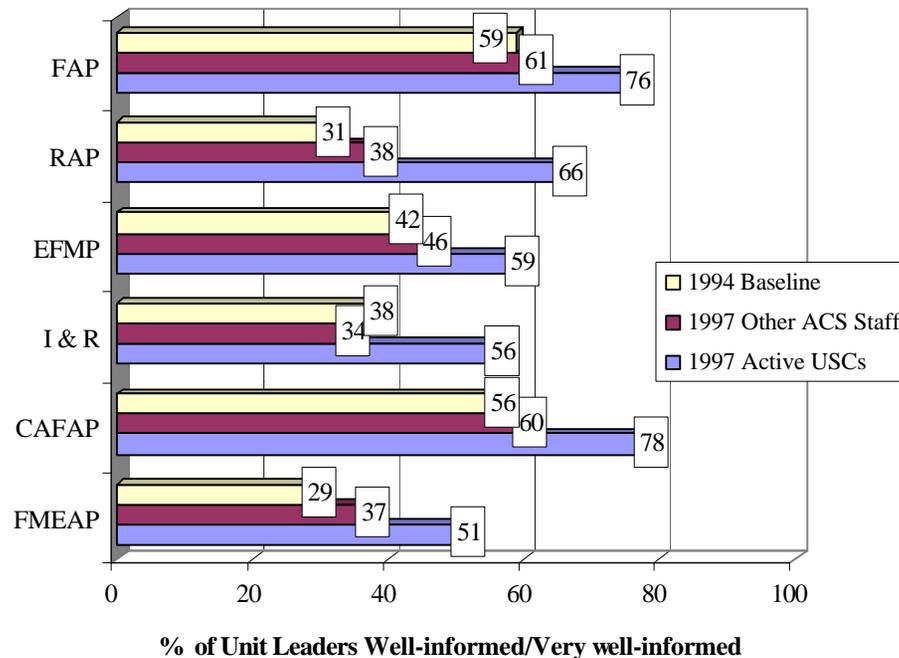
- Unit leaders with active USC's are twice as likely to seek ACS staff out for assistance (76% vs. 43%) and invite them to participate in unit events (76% vs. 44%).
- The more the USC is involved in the unit, the more likely unit leaders agree that USC activities save them time in solving personal and family problems.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Chain of Command

Unit Leader Awareness of ACS Programs

Knowledge of ACS Programs: Chain of Command



Key Points:

- Knowledge of ACS programs and services is significantly greater among unit leaders with an active USC.
- There was only slight improvement between 1994 and 1997 in unit leader's knowledge of ACS programs when there was no active USC to provide assistance.

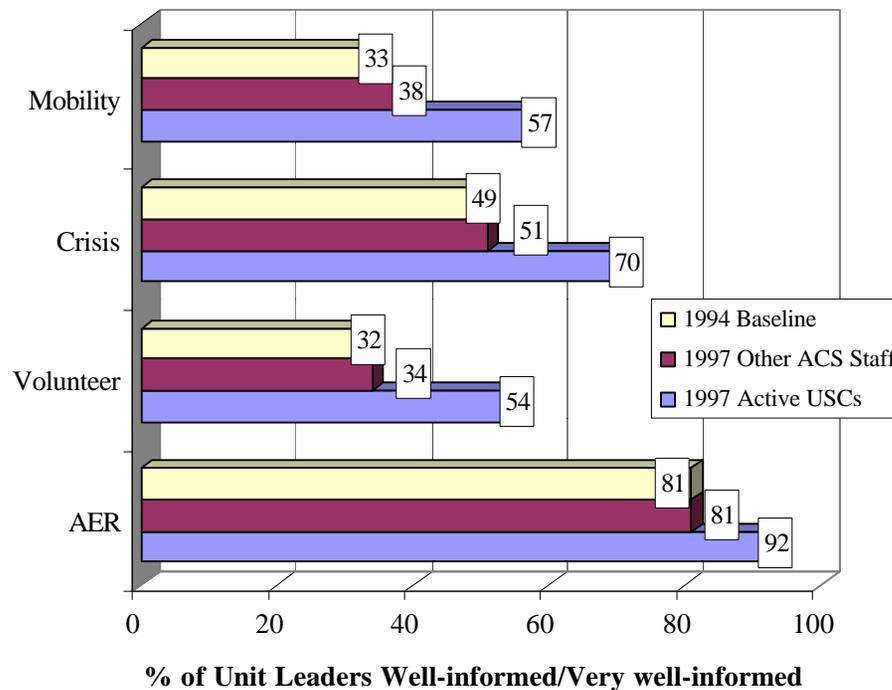


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Chain of Command



Unit Leader Awareness of ACS Programs

Knowledge of ACS Programs: Chain of Command



Key Points:

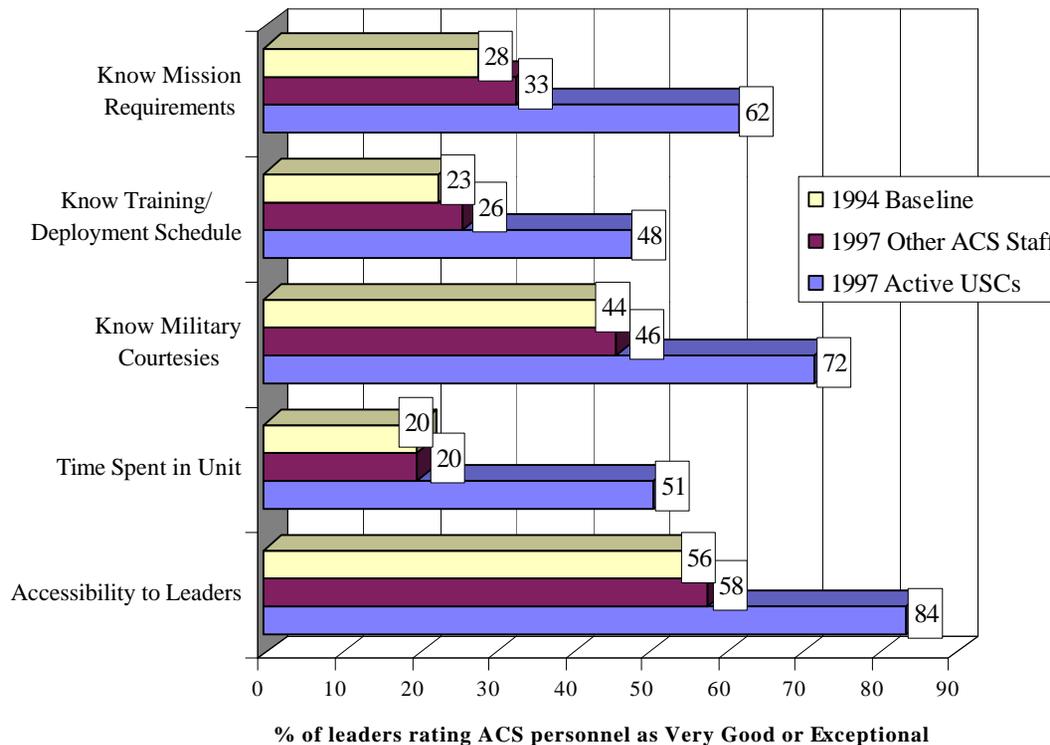
- For most ACS programs, fewer than half of unit leaders without an active USC report they are well informed about the programs.
- Unit leaders are most informed about AER, FAP and CAFAP, however their knowledge of these programs increases when they are served by an active USC.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Chain of Command

Ratings for ACS Support for Units

ACS Rating on Unit Support: Chain of Command



Key Points:

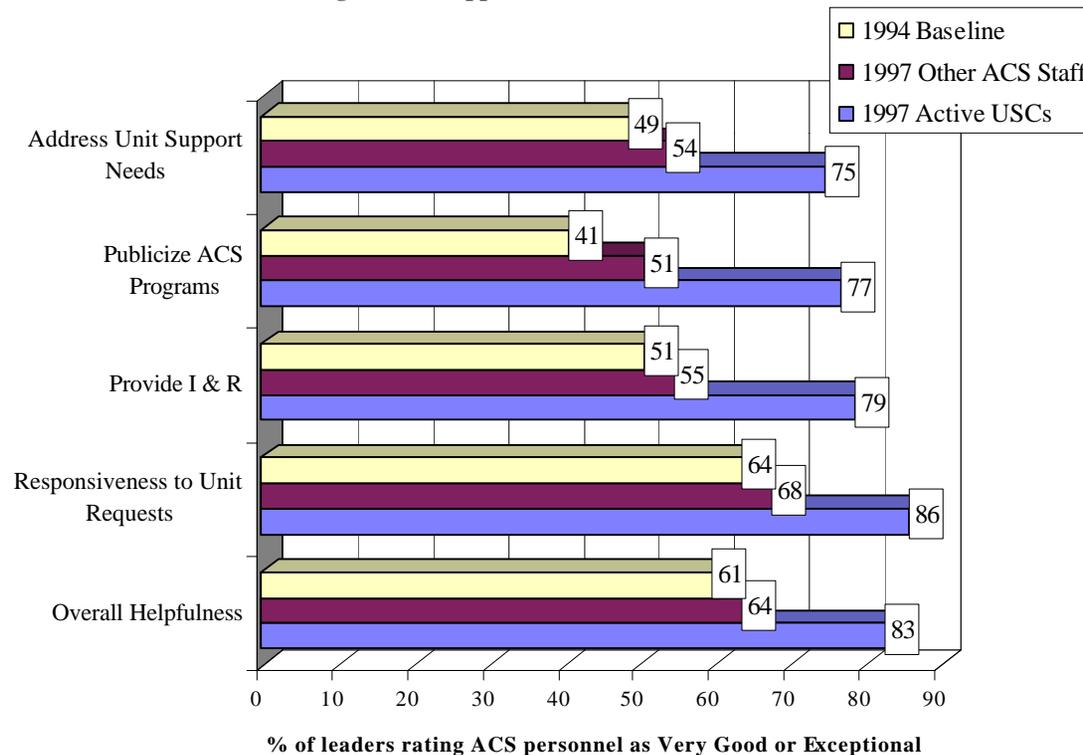
- Unit leaders with active USCs are much more likely to rate ACS high on every indicator of unit support reviewed.
- There was very little change in unit leaders' perceptions of ACS support for unit needs between 1994 and 1997 when there was no active USC operating in the unit.
- Unit leaders with active USCs rated ACS higher on all indicators, especially in their knowledge of the unit's mission and the time they spend with personnel in the unit.
- By having an active USC, unit leaders saw ACS staff as more accessible to unit leaders (84%) compared to those without an active USC (58%).



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Chain of Command

Ratings of ACS Support for Units (continued)

ACS Rating on Unit Support: Chain of Command (continued)



Key Points:

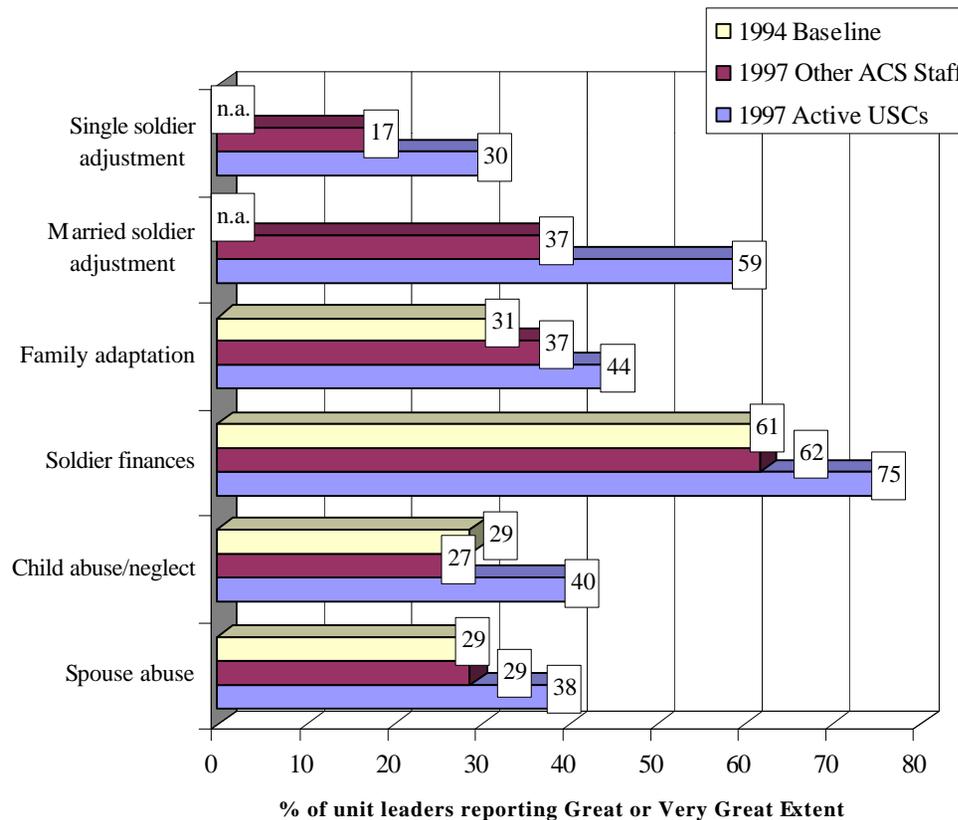
- Unit leaders with active USCs are consistently more likely to rate ACS staff high on these additional indicators of unit support.
- High ratings on the overall helpfulness of ACS (83%) reflect very positively on the success of an active Unit Services Strategy implementation.
- The higher ratings of unit support by chain of command with active USCs are also reflected in the ACS staff's own ratings in this area.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Chain of Command

Unit Leader Ratings of ACS Performance

Perceptions of ACS Having Positive Impact: Unit Leaders



Key Points:

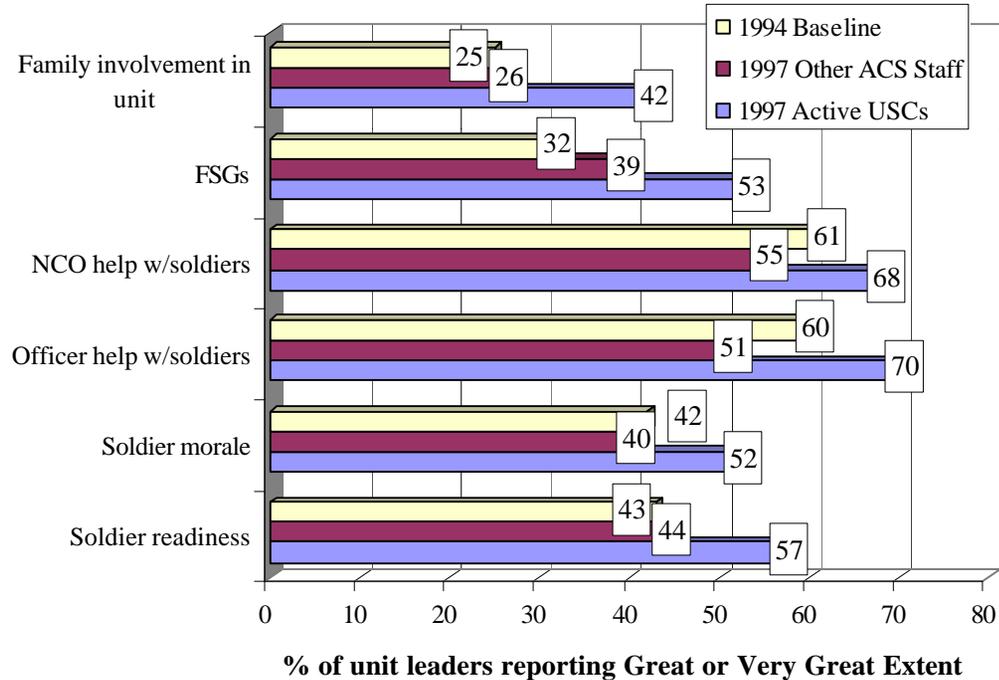
- Unit leaders with actively functioning USCs are more likely to report that ACS is having a significant positive impact on the personal and family adjustment of soldiers and families.
- Leaders with active USCs are especially likely to believe that ACS is having the most positive impact on the adjustments of single and married soldiers, soldier financial responsibility and child and spouse abuse rates.
- Unit leaders, regardless of whether they had an active USC or not, believe ACS is having a higher impact on family adaptation in 1997 than in 1994.
- The pattern of unit leader ratings of ACS impacts are similar to the pattern of ratings by ACS staff.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Chain of Command

Unit Leader Ratings of ACS Performance (continued)

Perceptions of ACS Having Positive Impact: Unit Leaders
(continued)



Key Points:

- Unit leaders with an active USC are much more likely than those without one to believe that ACS is having an impact on the help that officers and NCOs provide to their soldiers.
- Similar to the perceptions of ACS staff, unit leaders without an active USC are less likely to see ACS supporting them in 1997 than in 1994.
- The belief that ACS is helping with family support groups improved between 1994 and 1997, especially when there is an active USC in the unit.
- The presence of an active USC is much more likely to result in the belief by chain of command that ACS is having an positive impact on soldier morale and soldier readiness.

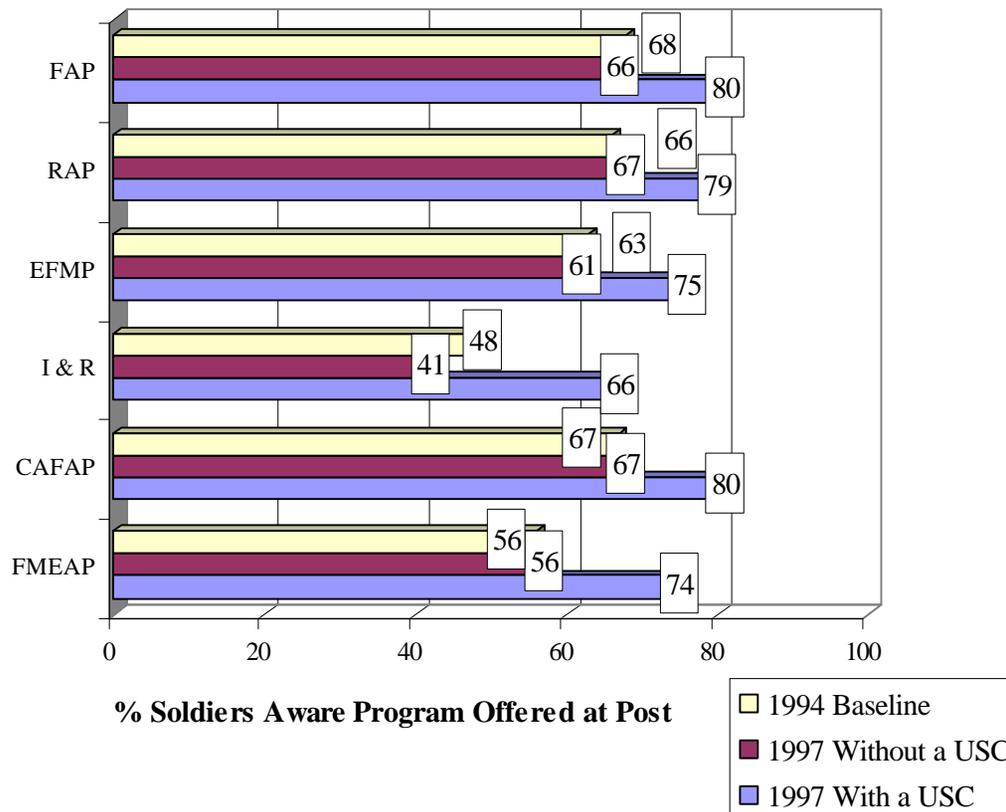


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Soldier Awareness of ACS Programs

Soldiers' Awareness of ACS Programs



Key Point:

- Across all ACS program areas, soldiers with USC exposure are more knowledgeable about the various ACS programs at their post than other soldiers.

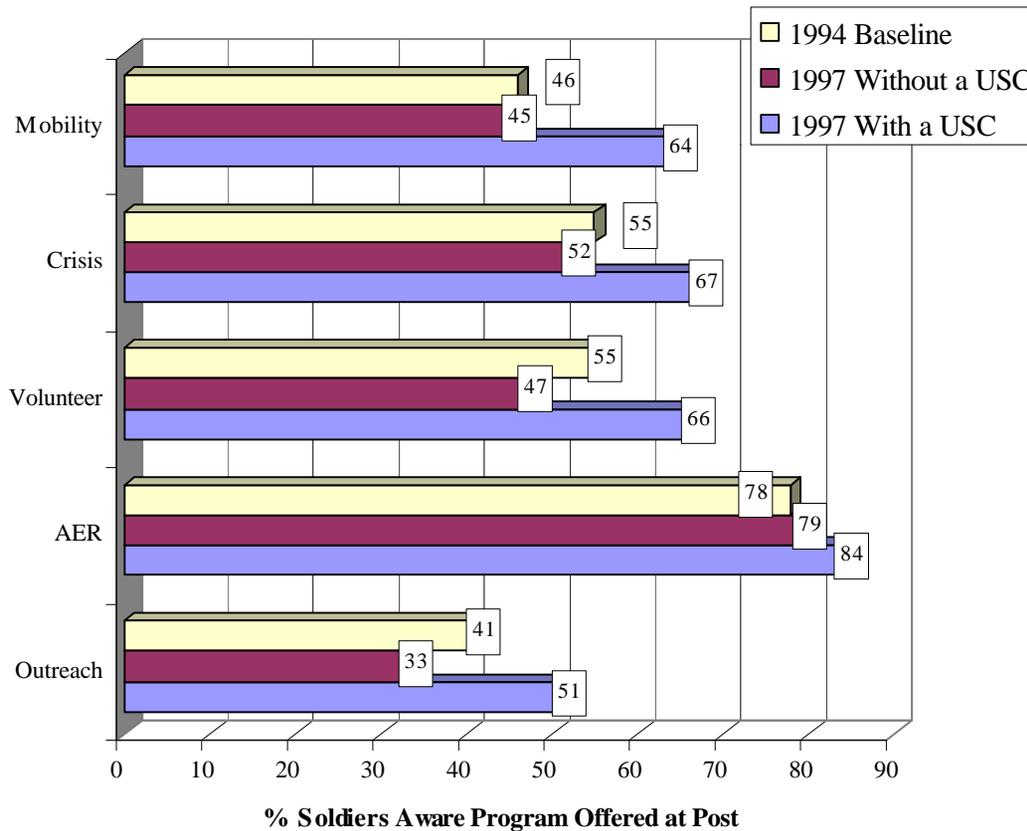


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Soldier Awareness of ACS Programs

Soldiers' Awareness of ACS Programs



Key Points:

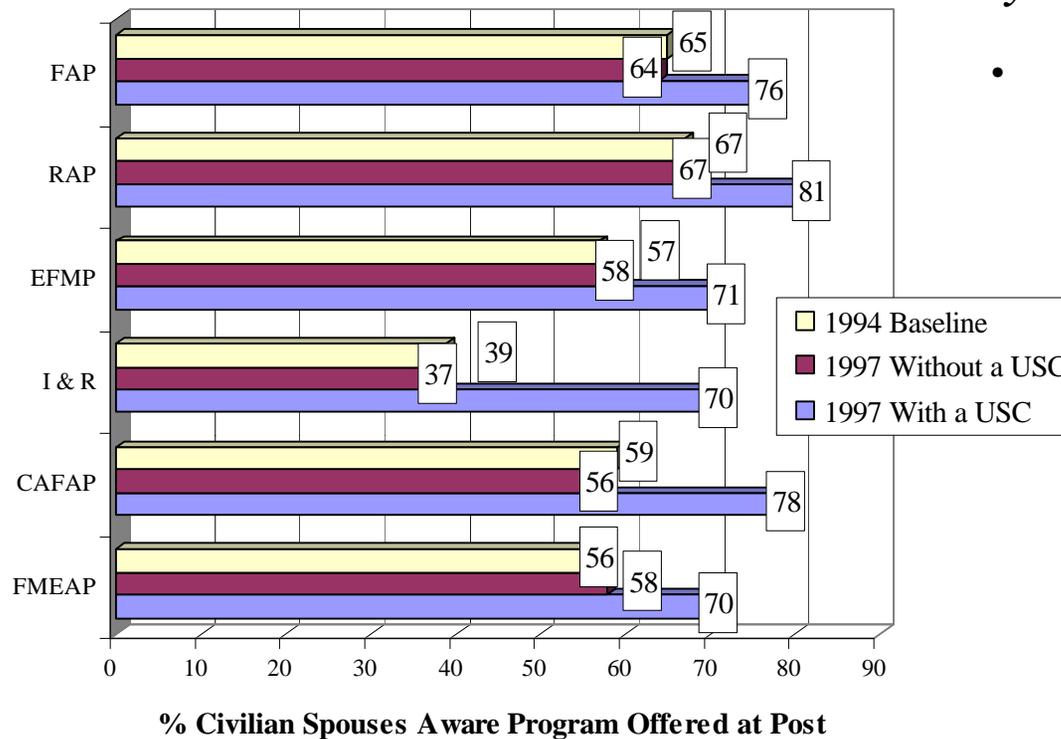
- Soldiers are most familiar with Family Advocacy (FAP), Relocation Assistance (RAP), Army Emergency Relief (AER), and Consumer Affairs & Financial Assistance (CAFAP); however, more soldiers have become aware of these ACS programs as a result of being served by a USC.
- Improvements in soldiers' awareness of ACS programs between 1994 and 1997 markedly increased for those soldiers served by a USC.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses

Spouse Awareness of ACS Programs

Spouses' Awareness of ACS Programs



Key Point:

- Across all ACS program areas, civilian spouses who know that a USC operates in the unit are more knowledgeable about the various ACS programs at their post than other spouses.

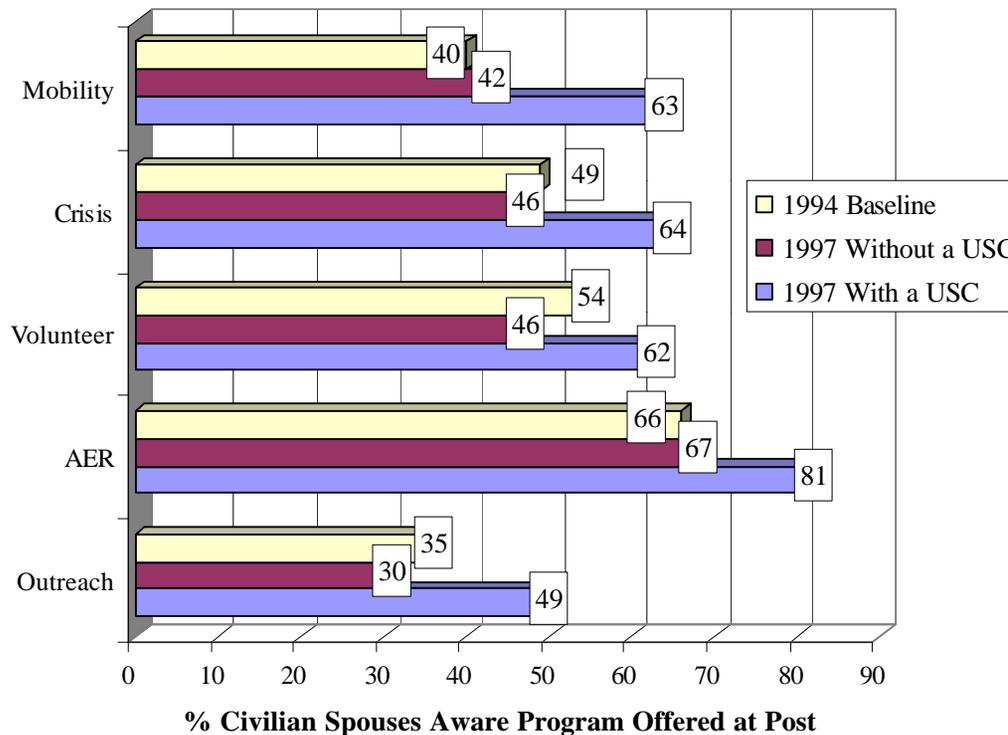


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Spouse Awareness of ACS Programs

Spouses' Awareness of ACS Programs



Key Points:

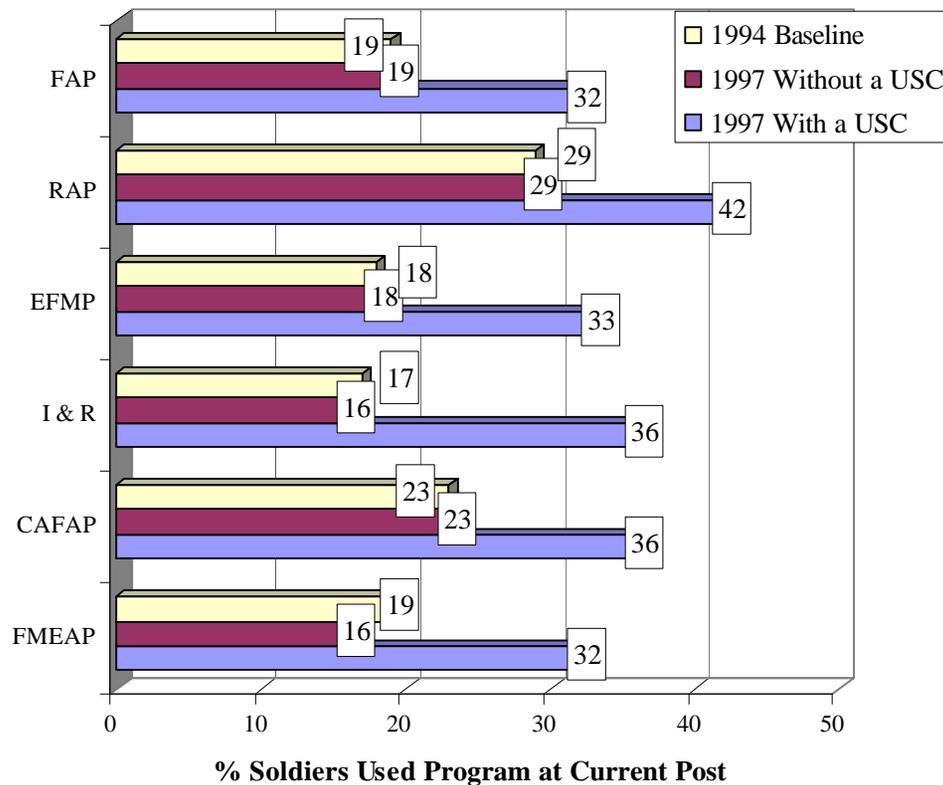
- Civilian spouses are most familiar with Relocation Assistance (RAP), Family Advocacy (FAP), and Army Emergency Relief (AER); however, spouses who know about their USC are most aware of these ACS programs.
- Similar to the finding for soldiers, improvement in spouses' familiarity with ACS programs between 1994 and 1997 increased markedly when they knew that a USC had been designated to the unit.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses

Soldier Use of ACS Programs

Soldiers' Use of ACS Programs



Key Point:

- Soldiers who are aware of a USC in their unit report higher usage of all ACS programs at their post than other soldiers.

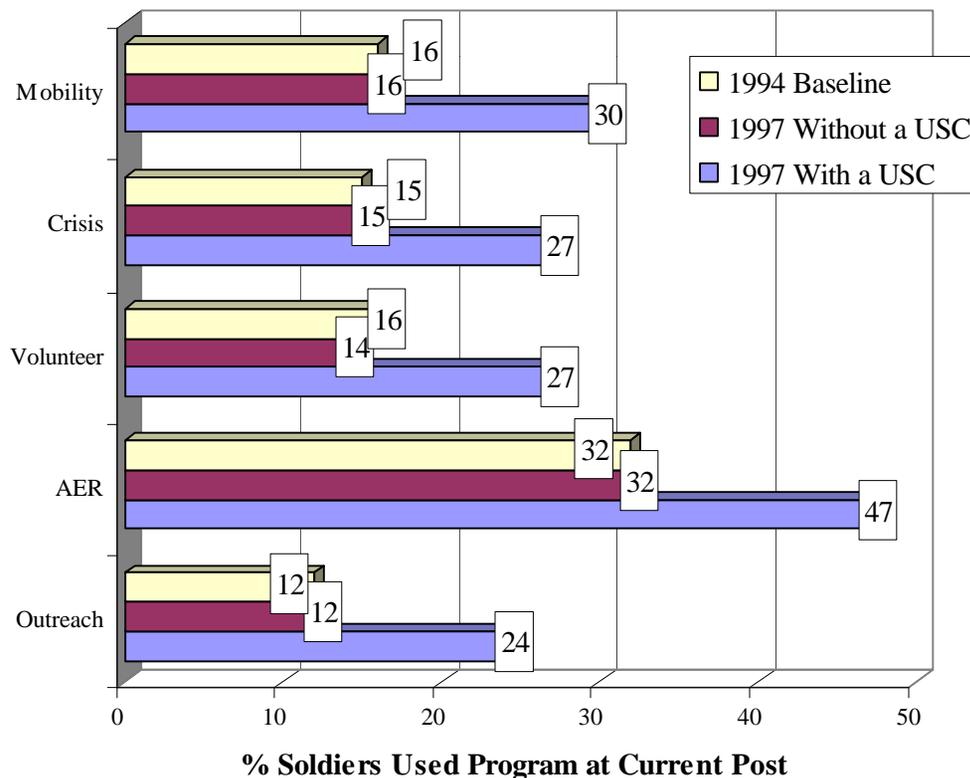


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Soldier Use of ACS Programs

Soldiers' Use of ACS Programs



Key Points:

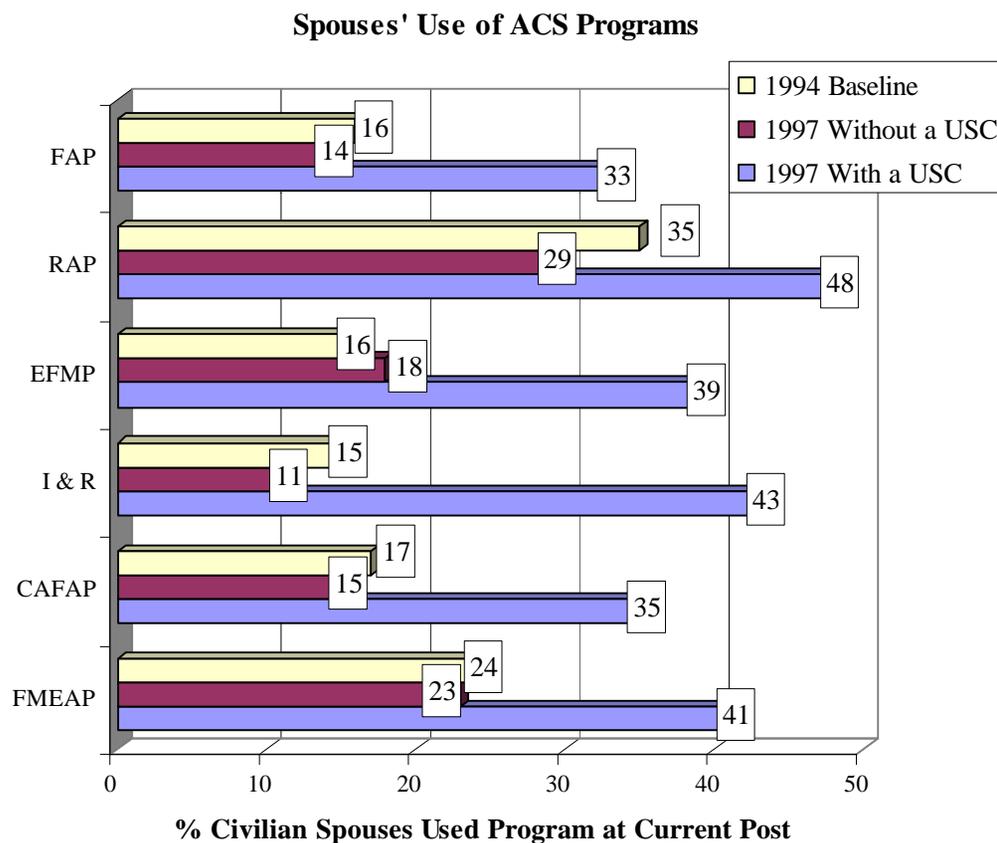
- No change in the use of ACS programs is seen between soldiers in the baseline (1994) and those who were not aware of a USC in their unit in 1997.
- For every ACS program, soldiers' use of ACS programs increased between 1994 and 1997 when they are aware of a USC in their unit.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Spouse Use of ACS Programs



Key Point:

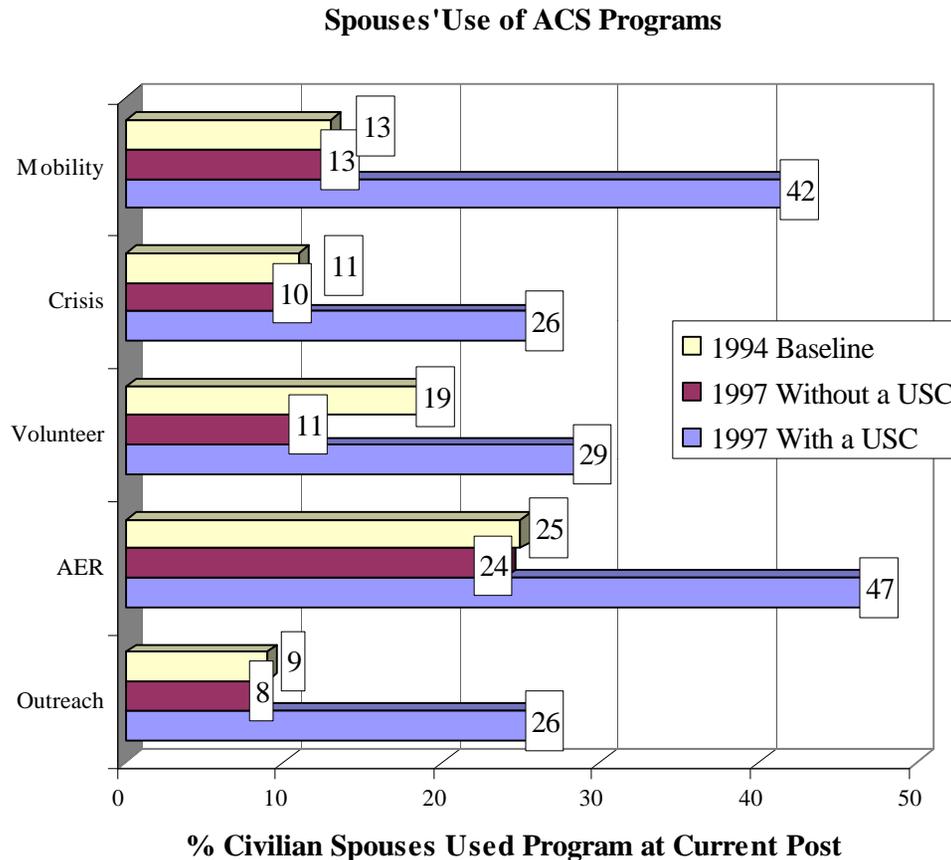
- Spouses who are aware of the USC in their partner's unit report higher usage of all ACS programs at their post than other spouses.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Spouse Use of ACS Programs



Key Points:

- For every ACS program, spouses' use of ACS programs increased between 1994 and 1997 when they are aware of a USC.
- Little change in the use of ACS programs is seen between 1994 and 1997 among spouses who had no USC experience.

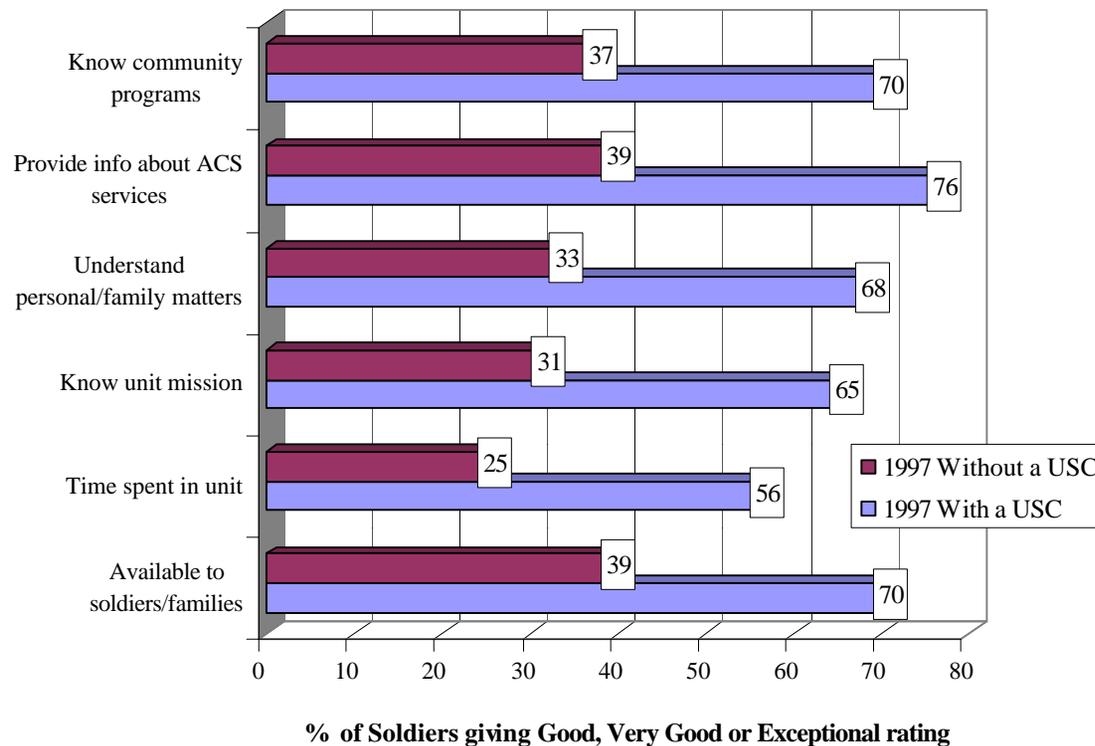


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Soldier Rating of ACS Performance*

Soldier Rating of ACS Staff Performance



Key Points:

- On every indicator of ACS staff performance, soldiers with USCs rated ACS staff more highly than other soldiers.
- Soldiers with USCs rated ACS staff most highly on their knowledge of community programs and services (70%), ability to provide good information on ACS programs (76%), availability to soldiers and families (70%), and willingness to assist when soldiers and families seek help (70%).

*1994 baseline data are not available for this comparison

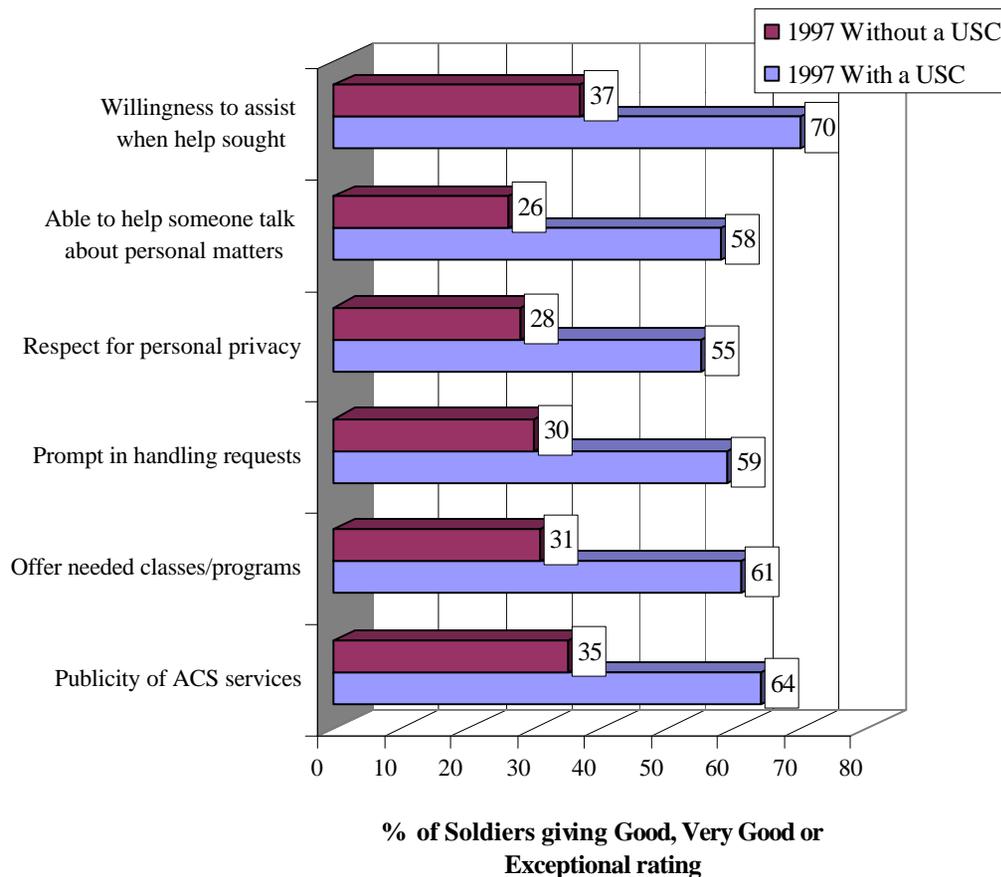


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Soldier Rating of ACS Performance*

Soldier Rating of ACS Staff Performance



Key Points:

- Less than two out of five soldiers not served by a USC give a positive rating to any of the 12 indicators of ACS staff performance.
- Only about one in four soldiers without a USC (25%) give a good, very good, or clearly exceptional rating to the amount of time that ACS staff spend in the unit; in comparison, more than twice the proportion of soldiers with USCs (56%) rate this performance indicator highly.

*1994 baseline data are not available for this comparison

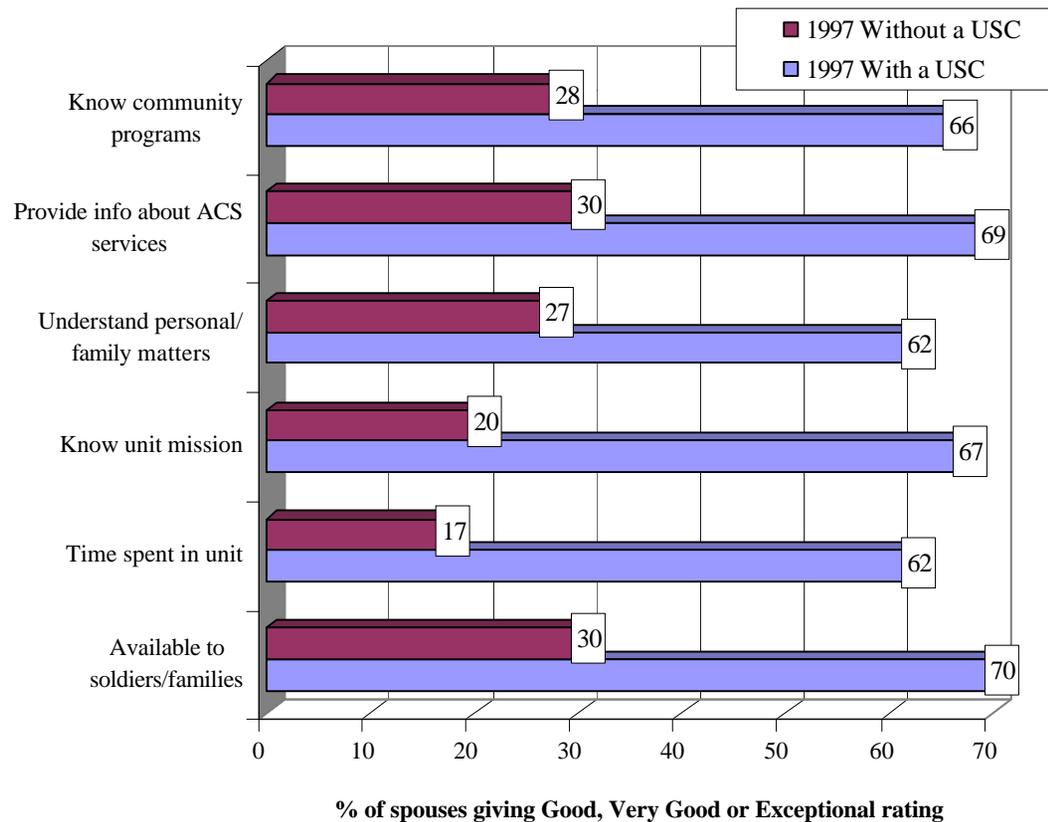


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Spouse Rating of ACS Performance*

Spouse Rating of ACS Staff Performance



Key Points:

- On every indicator of ACS staff performance, spouses of soldiers with USCs rated ACS staff more highly than other spouses.
- Civilian spouses with USCs consistently rated ACS staff highly on every performance indicator, particularly with respect to availability (70%), ability to provide good information on ACS programs (69%) and knowledge of the unit mission (67%).

*1994 baseline data are not available for this comparison

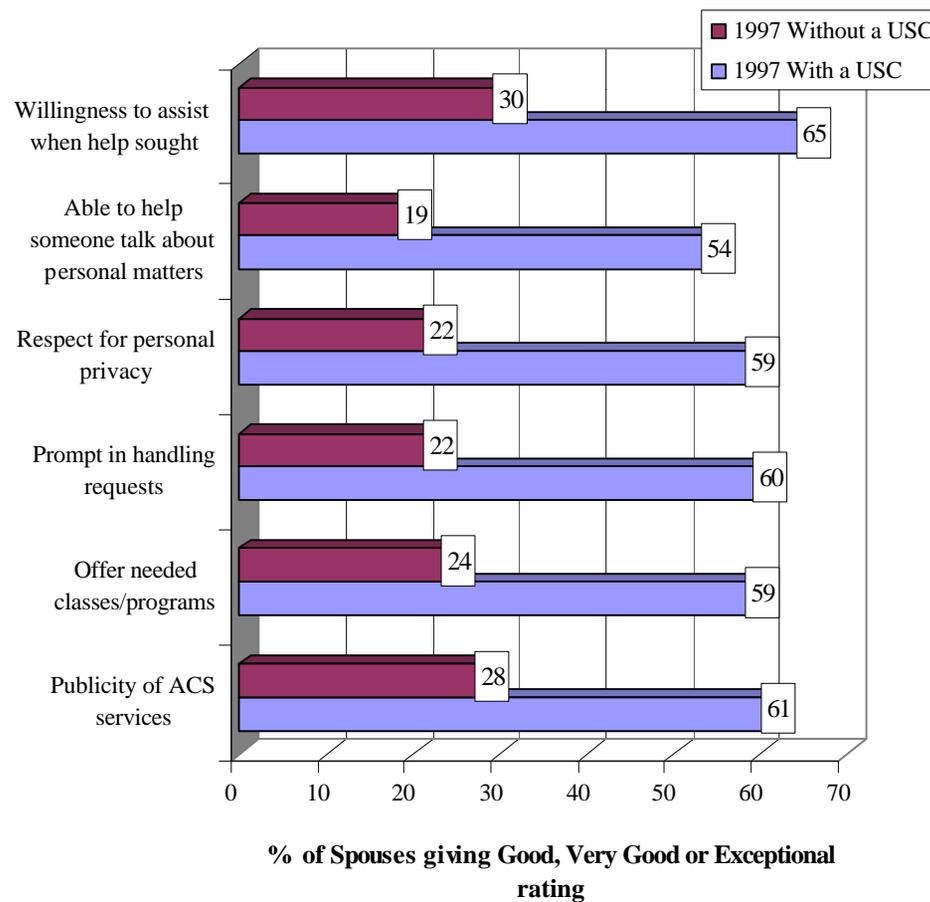


Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Spouse Rating of ACS Performance*

Spouse Rating of ACS Staff Performance



Key Points:

- Less than one-third of civilian spouses with less USC exposure give a positive rating to the 12 indicators of ACS staff performance.
- Only 17% of civilian spouses without a USC give a good, very good, or clearly exceptional rating to the amount of time that ACS staff spend in the unit; two-thirds of spouses with USCs (62%) rate this performance indicator positively.

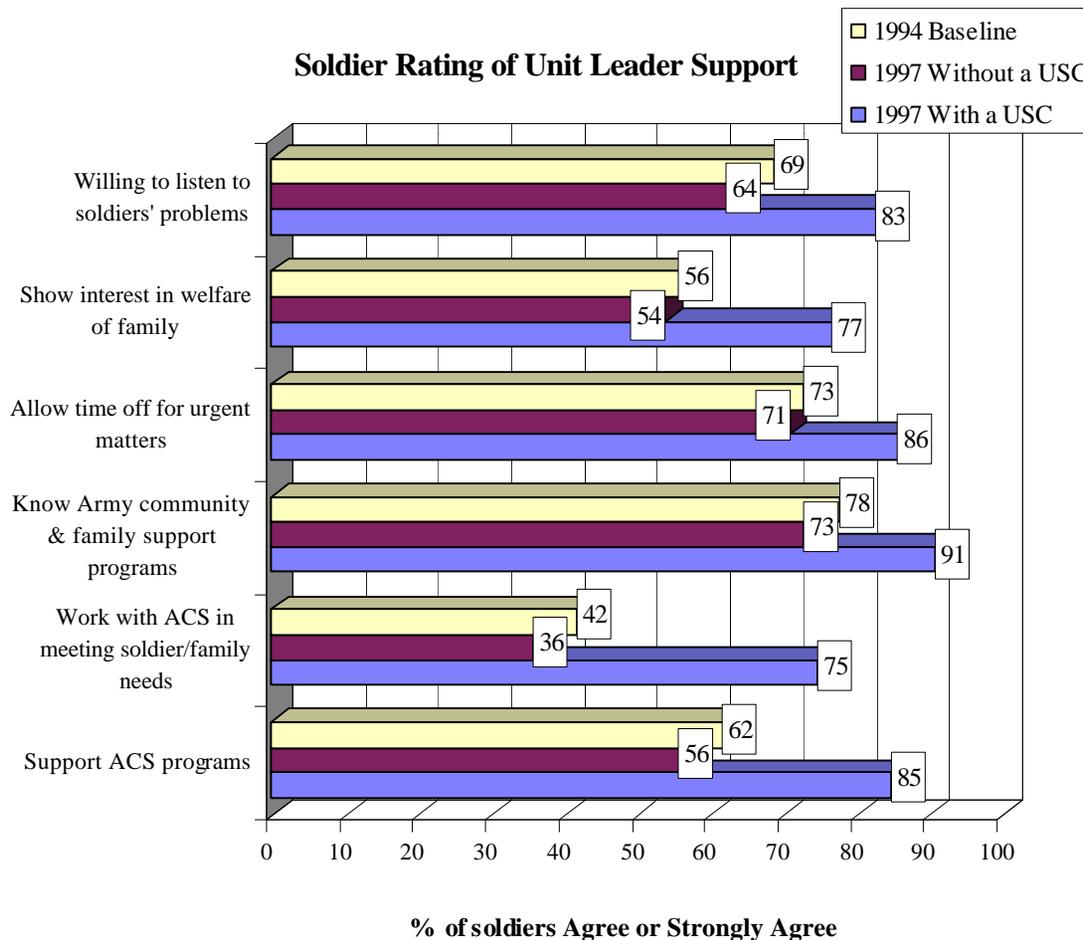
*1994 baseline data are not available for this comparison



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Soldier Rating of Unit Leader Support



Key Points:

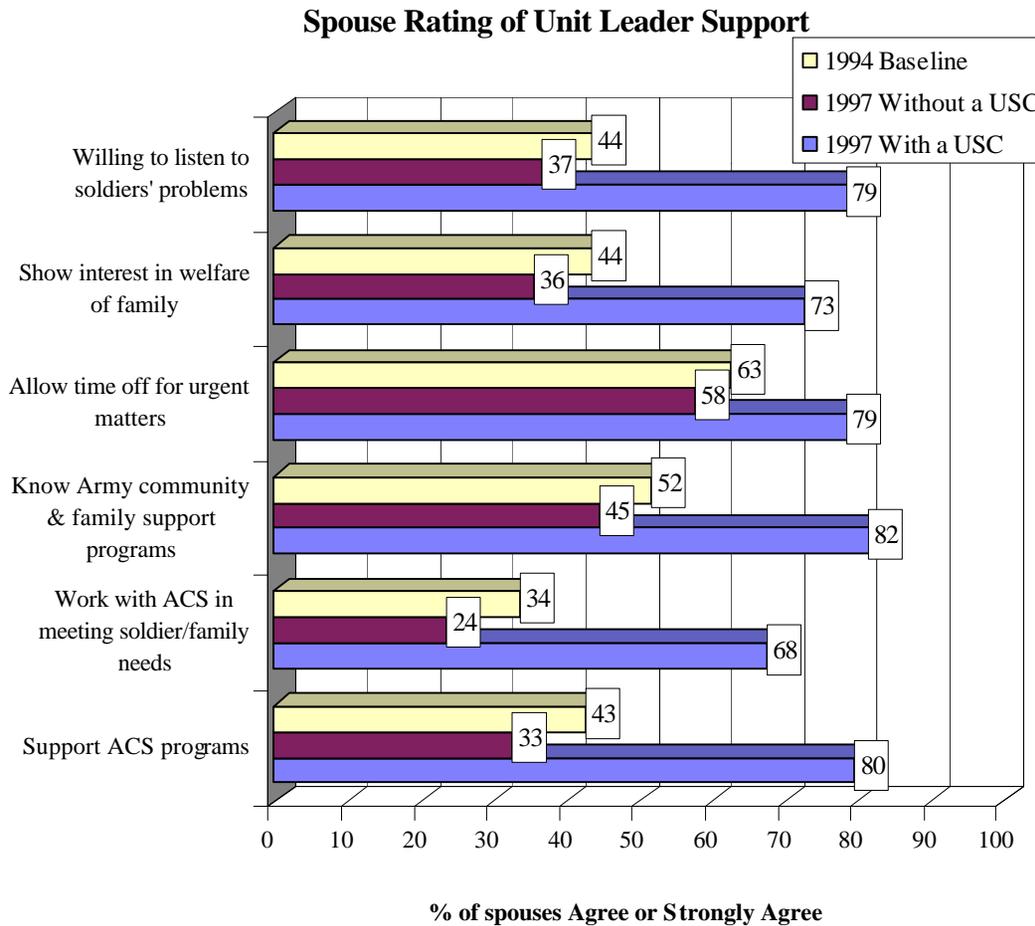
- Soldiers who know that they have a USC in their unit are more likely to agree that their unit leaders are supportive.
- The vast majority of soldiers (75% to 91%) with USC exposure agree that their unit leaders are responsive to their personal and family situations and work effectively with community and family support programs.
- There was very little change in soldiers' perceptions of unit support between 1994 and 1997 for soldiers not served by a USC.
- By having a USC, soldiers see their unit leaders as showing greater interest in family welfare and in working with ACS.
- Soldiers with USCs rated leaders highly in all areas, especially in their knowledge and support of ACS programs, as well as their attention to soldiers' problems by listening and giving time off.



Unit Services Strategy Outcomes Analysis: Outcomes for Soldiers/Spouses



Spouse Rating of Unit Leader Support



Key Points:

- Spouses of soldiers who know they have a USC in their unit are more likely to agree that their unit leaders are supportive.
- A pronounced change in spouses' perceptions of unit leadership support between 1994 and 1997 appears when they know about the USC.
- Civilian spouses with USCs, similar to soldiers with USCs, see unit leaders as more supportive of families and of ACS.



Evaluation Conclusions

- When implemented as designed, the Unit Services Strategy resulted in:
 - Greater awareness and use of ACS programs and services
 - Higher confidence in ACS as a community and unit resource
 - Increased perceived impact of ACS on work, family and community outcomes
 - Higher unit leader support for soldiers and families
 - Enhanced ACS staff performance
 - Greater credibility of ACS as a component of the human service system
 - Improved satisfaction with ACS as an organization.
- These findings were consistent across respondent groups, including ACS staff, chain of command, and soldiers and family members.



Evaluation Conclusions

- The involvement of ACS in units also improved substantially over the years of intervention, including:
 - Greater contact between unit leaders and ACS
 - Greater involvement of ACS in unit activities
 - More appropriate referrals from unit leaders
 - Tailoring of programs and services to unit needs
 - Faster responsiveness to unit requests
 - Time saved for commanders and supervisors in solving soldier and family problems.
- When implemented as designed, the Unit Services Strategy operates as a significant resource for chain of command and for soldiers and spouses.