What is an AOS State Assessment?
An **AOS State Assessment** examines the current needs of Soldiers and their Families, identifies gaps in service, and targets priorities for planning. The assessment statement must include data supporting or proving the need. The information must be written in a clear and precise manner so the readers understand the importance and need for a “call to action.” The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that State level alliances consider the current needs when developing a plan to address gaps in and access to programs and services.

What Steps Do I Take to Complete A State Assessment?
A combination of informational interviews, online research and data collection are the principle activities required to complete and AOS State Assessment. Using the AOS Assessment wheel, CSCs schedule in person or phone interviews with Army Community Service Directors, Garrison Commanders, State Family Assistance Coordinator, **Judge Advocate Generals (JAGs)**, The **Adjutant General (TAGs)**, Guard and Recruiter Family Programs, Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Directors, and Chaplains.

Websites for Additional Research and Statistics
- Respective State National Guard Website
  - [http://www.nationalguard.mil/](http://www.nationalguard.mil/)
- NAMI Veterans Resource Center
  - [http://www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- Traumatic Brain Injury Info Page
- National Center for PTSD
  - [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/)
- Win Over PTSD
- Meeting The Legal Needs of Military veterans, service members and their Families
- United States Army Homepage
- Department of Veterans Affairs
  - [http://www.va.gov/health/default.asp](http://www.va.gov/health/default.asp)
- National Guard Family Programs
  - [http://www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/](http://www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/)
Sample Assessment Statements
You will have an assessment statement for each of your State level alliances. Enter the assessment statement on the Alliance screen under assessment (located in the outcomes section).

Behavioral Health
In the past seven years, Idaho has had 17 suicides associated with the Military: 12 Soldiers - two occurred during deployment, four had been previously deployed and six never deployed. From the 17, five were children and two were FY11 deployed Soldiers. Research shows these deaths are accreted to relationship issues, financial issues and alcohol abuse misuse. Idaho National Guard has called a "call to action" in supporting Suicide prevention and resiliency.

Legal
COL Robert Cotell, JAG Commander, Fort Knox, Kate Lindsay, Coordinator of the Pro Bono Consortium, Jacqueline S. Duncan, Director of the Kentucky Volunteer Lawyer Program, and Sonny Hatfield, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist have confirmed that Kentucky has no organized legal assistance effort for Military and their Families. There is a high unmet need for legal services with divorce, child custody, lease/tenant disputes, and foreclosure cases.

Financial
The Bureau of Labor and Statistics reports that 15.2 percent of Veterans who served in the Afghanistan and Iraq war are jobless. Indiana estimates a rate of 23 percent for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and a 32 percent rate for all Veterans. The national unemployment rate is 9 percent. Veteran unemployment is projected to increase due to force reductions.
Sample Questions For Assessment Information Interviews

You will find many of the questions interchangeable. As you plan for your interview, consider which of these questions you’d like to include in your discussion.

**Garrison Commander** - Key objectives in talking to a Garrison Commander are to inform them about AOS work to provide programs and services to the geographically dispersed by developing community alliances. To provide them with information about the financial programs and other AOS programs and to gain an understanding of the primary needs of Soldiers. Similar to a TAG interview, here are a few suggested questions for you to consider in your planning for a Garrison Commander meeting.

In my conversations with Family Program Directors, ACS Directors (name others if appropriate) I’ve learned that the primary needs of your Soldiers are (list 2-3 of the needs you have identified). Are there additional concerns we should include in this list?

- Which do you consider the top two needs for Soldiers and their Families?
- If we were able to engage community partners to assist in meeting these needs, what planning and execution pieces would we need to include?
- I’d like to keep you updated on the progress of developing AOS community alliances. Would you like me to meet with you later this year, prefer updates by phone or email, or would you like me to provide updates to a designated person?

**State Family Assistance Coordinator; FMWR Director; ACS Director**

**Guard and Recruiter Family Programs; and if possible Family Readiness Support Assistant** – These meetings are similar in that they seek to uncover the most pressing needs of Soldiers and Families; build a relationships and explore effective ways of working together. You will be able to compare responses and use them in writing your assessment statement and in targeted the defined need for your partnership alliances.

- What do you consider to be the most pressing needs for Service members living in (State)?
- What regions or areas in the State have the highest need for services?
- Would you happen to know how many Service members are affected in this region? If no, could you direct me to someone or a report that could help determine this number?
- Is there data on the number of Family members affected in this region?
- What units are currently deployed, about to deploy or recently returned?
- Are there any specific needs we could address to assist these units affected by deployment?
- In what area would you most like assistance from community based agencies?
- What’s the best way to get information about available services to the Soldiers and their Families?
- How you would like me to keep you updated on our progress in developing community partnerships? By email, phone or in person?
TAG - Key objectives in talking to the TAG are to inform them about AOS work to provide programs and services to the geographically disperse by developing community alliances. To gain an understanding of the primary needs of their Soldiers and to engage their active support by having Guard representation on Alliance planning teams (see Focus Area best practice models). Here are a few suggested questions for you to consider to your planning for a TAG meeting.

In my conversations with Family Program Directors, ACS Directors (name others if appropriate) I’ve learned that the primary needs of Guard Soldiers are (list 2-3 of the needs you have identified). Are there additional concerns we should include in this list?

• Which do you consider the top two needs for guard Soldiers and their Families?
• If we were able to engage community partners to assist in meeting these needs what planning and execution pieces would we need to include?
• It’s been our experience that the most successful AOS State level alliance partnerships include active participation from the Guard. Would you consider assigning one of your staff to be an active member of our alliance planning team?
• I’d like to keep you updated on the progress of developing AOS community alliances. Would you like me to meet with you later this year, prefer updates by phone or email, or would you like me to provide updates to a designated person?

JAG - Key objectives in talking to the JAG are to inform them about AOS work to develop legal assistance for military in their state by developing community alliances. To gain an understanding of the primary legal needs of their Soldiers and to engage the active support of the JAG or his/her assigned legal expert to assist in developing the alliances. Here are a few suggested questions for you to consider to your planning for a JAG meeting.

Over the last 16 months, AOS has had success in some state is building alliance of legal assistance volunteers to help Soldiers and their Families.

• If we were able to engage community partners to assist in meeting the legal needs who do you think we should include in our planning and execution?
• It’s been our experience that the most successful AOS State level alliance partnerships include active participation from the Guard. Would you consider assigning one of your staff to be an active member of our alliance planning team?
• I’d like to keep you updated on the progress of developing AOS community alliances. Would you like me to meet with you later this year, prefer updates by phone or email, or would you like to provide updates to a designated person?
• Would you happen to have an estimate of how many Service members are in need of legal assistance?
• In what legal area would you most like assistance from community-based agencies?
Guide Sheet for Assessing State Needs

- What’s the best way to get information about available legal services to the Soldiers and their Families?
- How would you like me to keep you updated on our progress in developing community partnership? By email, phone or in person?

**Chaplains** - In 2012, AOS is building a new approach that will put more emphasis on national faith partners. Let Chaplains know that AOS is developing relationships at the national level with denominations and faith organizations to target outreach to local faith groups through their networks. The former IMCOM Chaplain, Dr. Ron Huggler, is helping build these relationships. Let the Chaplain know that as the national partnerships take shape in the next quarter that they'll get updates and alerts anytime that a communication is targeted to faith based groups in your area.

- What do you think the most important things are that we should ask national partners to communicate to their local organizations?
- What are the most important things we should be asking local faith groups to do?
- How would you prefer that I keep you updated? In person, by phone or email?

Suggest reminding CSC/RFRC to stress the AOS Initiative is implemented across all components. Highlight the support currently in place or Soldiers and Families; plus the successes. For partners, stress the AOS Initiative is implemented across the United States. I have seen potential partners become more engaged when they learn AOS is just not in their state, but building resources in other states. They seem to become interested and show pride in connecting with a “national” initiative.