

# ARMY AND MARINE CORPS CHANGE DAY CARE POLICIES

Until February, 1996, the Army and Marine Corps were content to have a day care policy that effectively denied the rights of religious day care providers who worked out of their homes. Under the old rules, such providers were barred from partaking in any religious exercises in their homes. But three Army couples decided to challenge the regulation and won. The Marine Corps said it will change its regulations as well.

Previously, Army and Marine Corps regulations even denied the practice of family day care providers saying grace with the children before meals. But a three judge panel of the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Army had violated the religious freedom First Amendment rights of the couple involved in the case.

Under the new policy, those who provide day care in their homes will inform parents before they enroll their children if religious activities are part of the program. Neither the Navy nor the Air Force have similar rules. The change in the Army and Marine Corps policies will impact worldwide, but will not affect child care centers that are based outside the home; they are still subject to a ban on religious activities.