

Introduction

For military families, change is certain. All families want to make the changes that accompany relocating, deploying, or separating from the military as easy as they can for their children. However, families whose children have special needs must work even harder to help their children weather the changes with as little stress as possible.

Relocating

Moving is an integral part of life as a military family. There are belongings to pack, a move to plan, expenses to be tracked, and a new home to find. When a family has a child with special needs, these experiences are even more complicated and emotion filled. As part of the military community, there is a lot of help available, such as financial help for the move and, if desired, a sponsor waiting to help at the new duty station. It will benefit the entire family to take advantage of these resources.

The Exceptional Family Member Program

It is very important that a child with special needs be enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). To enroll in EFMP, contact the Family Support Center aboard the nearest military installation. This will ensure that your child's medical and educational needs will be considered as a duty station is selected. Service members will be assigned to an area where their EFM's educational and medical needs can be met, provided there

is a valid personnel requirement for the service member's grade and specialty.

Service members have the option of accepting assignments where services for EFMs do not exist. Choosing this option usually means that the service member must live apart from the family so that the child can continue to have his or her needs met. Contact the EFMP office at the new duty station to let them know that you are coming and what your family's needs might be. If respite care or specialized daycare is needed, the EFMP coordinator can help provide available resources.



You can find a listing of Family Support Centers as well as EFMP Coordinators at www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil



Once you are moved in, you may want to make an appointment with your new healthcare provider so your child will have a chance to become familiar with him or her before an illness occurs.

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Family Support Centers

Once you know you are moving, contact the nearest Family Support Center and ask to speak with a relocation specialist. The Relocation Assistance Program offers a wealth of information for the relocating service members and their families. Be sure to discuss your moving allowances and understand how they are computed. This is also a good place to look for resources to help meet the needs of an exceptional child. The Family Support Center can also connect you to the Exceptional Family Member Programs and to available respite care programs. To find a family center near you go to www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil

PlanMyMove

PlanMyMove (<http://planmymove.mhf.dod.mil>) is a comprehensive moving tool that includes tools for military families with special needs, that lets you create customized moving tools, such as calendars, to do lists, and arrival checklists, all intended to help you get organized and to make your next move as smooth as possible!

Schools

Ask your child's current teacher to write a letter introducing your child to the new teacher. An overview of what the teacher sees as strengths and weaknesses, as well as a description of what works well with your child will help the new teacher. Contact the new state's Parent

Training and Information Center (www.taalliance.org) for information on schools in the new area.

Medical Concerns

Before moving, check to see what medical care is available at the new duty station. The Provider Directory on the TRICARE website (www.tricare.mil) can help locate specialty services. Phone numbers are provided so that providers can be contacted in advance to be sure that they are still network providers and are currently accepting new patients.

If a child has special physical needs, take extra care to ensure that the child's records are kept safe. Before moving, make copies of the child's important documents and leave copies of important papers with grandparents or close friends if possible.



Moving with Special Needs Checklist

- Copies of important records, such as IFSP, IEP, letters from doctors or EFMP confirming Category Four status for priority housing (Navy and Marine Corp), birth certificates, and passports.
- Refilled prescription.
- Contact information for medical connections in the new location.
- Contact information for the doctor you already have a relationship with, in case you need advice from someone who already knows your child.

Tell the Kids

For some families, the news that the family is moving is best presented in a family meeting. If you think the reaction is likely to be a positive one, this is probably a good idea. If, however, you think your kids are going to be upset, it may be a good idea to tell them one on one before the family meets to discuss this. This will allow time to react to each child individually, and may avoid a scene where one upset child sets the tone and then negatively influences the other children.

Before telling the kids about the move, arm yourself with some of the positive aspects of your new home.

- Is it closer to friends or family?
- Are there beaches? Is it near an amusement park?

- If your kids are old enough, show them your new home on a map and begin the discussion of your journey to your new home.
- Should your child have a special interest, find out if there is a museum on the way to your new home that your child would not be able to experience otherwise.

Decide the best way to present the move and give thought to how you will handle various emotional responses.

- Discuss ways your children can keep in touch with friends, or have a visit planned before you move away so the good-bye won't be so final.
- Be positive. If you are upbeat about your move, your kids will be reassured that all will be well.



You can use the MilitaryHOMEFRONT Forums to connect with other families at other military installations. Visit www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/forum



Consider your child's developmental level. Will a visual aid help your child keep track of the plan for your move? A count down on the calendar might help, along with a picture of boxes on the day the packers come, or a truck on the day the movers come.



Moving day can be hectic, and children are not immune to the excitement and nervousness that may come with it. Consider asking a friend to keep your kids for the day.

- If your child has concerns, or is grieving for his or her old home already, it is very important that you show your child that you understand this sorrow, and that it is natural and normal. You might share some of your own sorrow coupled with some aspect of the new home that you are looking forward to.
- Remind your child that the present home was once new, and yet they made friends. This will happen again.
- A calendar or time line with pictures of things that will be happening leading up to, during, and after the move may help calm the fears of younger or special needs children who rely on daily reminders to help them prepare for what each day will bring.

<i>Moving Stories for Kids</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Moving Day</i> by Robert Kalan
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>We're Moving</i> by Heather Maisner
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Boxes, Boxes Every Where</i> by Crystal Bowman
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Berenstain Bears Moving Day</i> by Stan and Jan Berenstain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Alexander, Who's Not (Do you hear me? I mean it!) Going to Move</i> by Judith Voist



MTOM (www.defenselink.mil/mtom) is a website designed for Military Teens On the Move. This website was specifically designed for children 6 to 18 years old. It uses humor, empathy, testimonials, and upbeat visuals to provide a wealth of relocation information and to address the challenges facing military children and youth as they cope with the strains of moving.

- Have a family meeting to discuss the children's feelings: whether they are excited, angry, or worried. Reassure your children that all these feelings are normal.
- Find time in normal rituals of meal preparation or bed time to have one-on-one conversations with your children, so they can share their thoughts and feelings about the move.
- Plan a farewell party. Take lots of photos and collect addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers.
- If your child is old enough, provide a scrapbook for the child to assemble.



Medically required equipment can be shipped in the same manner as the sponsor's professional papers and books and does not count against your household weight allowance. Visit your Transportation Office (TO) or Traffic Management Office (TMO) for more information. You will need a letter from your physician stating that the equipment is medically necessary.

- Moving away from the familiar and into the unknown can be scary. Give your children opportunities to express their feelings. Happy and excited feelings are much easier to accept and deal with, but negative feelings, like sorrow or anger are just as valid. If your children feel that only happy thoughts should be expressed, the negative emotions will just go underground and may well surface as negative behaviors. This does not mean your child is entitled to set a negative tone for the whole family or that poor behavior is acceptable, but honest talk may diffuse some of the difficulty.

Packing

Before the movers arrive, set aside the following items in a room with a big sign on the door asking movers to stay out:

- Important documents such as school records, dental records, any medical records, birth certificates, insurance policies, copies of PCS orders, and a copy of the household inventory form.
- Medicine and medical equipment that will travel with you.
- Comfort needs, like a pillow or some favorite music or DVDs.

Overseas Suitability Screening

Before being stationed overseas or to a remote assignment, all families of service members are screened for overseas suitability. The screening is mandatory and is used to determine if the member or family member(s) have any special needs that may require special medical or educational attention. The presence of a special need does not mean a family is not eligible to travel overseas; however, it does mean extra care is necessary to be sure the family is living in an area that is suitable to all family members.

Traveling with Kids

Whether traveling by plane, train, or automobile, traveling with children takes some planning.



Command sponsorship is required for families to participate in TRICARE Overseas Program Prime



“As parents we are our family’s best advocates.”

~Katrina, mom to a daughter with downs syndrome, Quantico, VA

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parent to parent

The following tips will help make the trip go smoothly:

- Be sure to inform TMO if a child has special needs.
- Be proactive in contacting the airlines or other services to assure there are arrangements for wheelchair storage and to find out the locations of accessible bathrooms. If a wheelchair is needed at the gate, make the calls yourself to be sure this happens.
- Keep security items within reach.
- Have healthy snacks at hand.
- Bring plastic bags for trash.
- Bring books, cards, and games to help pass the time. A few new items may hold a child’s attention longer than an old favorite.
- A child might enjoy being in charge of his/her own travel bag; however, regulate how much is put into this bag so that it doesn’t get too heavy!
- Bring an inexpensive umbrella stroller; these can be especially helpful in airports and train stations.
- Tape emergency contact information in children’s clothing or have them wear a medical alert bracelet.

- Take a portable DVD player if possible, along with the child’s favorite DVDs as well as comforting music for bedtime.
- Keep hand wipes ready for frequent hand cleaning after stops and before eating.

Air Travel

The Air Carrier Access Act prohibits airlines from prohibiting passengers on the basis of disability and actually requires U.S. air carriers to accommodate the needs of passengers with disabilities. For more information contact www.disabilityinfo.gov.



Each service has a system to screen families so that any special needs will be identified and can be taken into consideration as the service member is assigned to a new duty station.

Army–Family Member Deployment Screening

Navy–Suitability Screening

Marine Corps–Suitability Screening

Air Force–Family Member Relocation Clearance Process

Keep the following things in mind as you prepare for the trip:

- Contact the airline 48 hours in advance of the flight if special services are needed, such as a respirator hook up or transportation of an electric wheelchair.
- Ask if the bathrooms are accessible if flying on an older or small aircraft.
- Remember that assistive devices do not count toward the limit on the number of pieces of carry on luggage. Wheelchairs (including collapsible battery-powered wheelchairs) and other assistive devices have priority for in-cabin storage space (including in closets), as long as you take advantage of preboarding.
- Ask your physician about the safety of flying if a family member suffers from seizures. Get the physician's



If you choose to check your car seat, you can ask that it be put into a large plastic bag that is available at the airport. This will prevent it from becoming soiled.

recommendation in writing and carry it with you as part of your family's medical records.

- Consider bringing a stroller to gate check, as there can be a lot of ground to cover between gates.
- Use a backpack instead of a diaper bag as it will leave your hands free to hold on to kids.
- Bring snacks for the kids, as few self-respecting toddlers will eat airplane food, and on many flights only a small bag of pretzels is offered anyway.
- Decide if boarding early would be the best choice for your family. Air-conditioning is generally not turned on until just before take-off, so a squirmy child would have to remain still longer than necessary in an overheated plane. Some families tag team, with one parent



It might help to prepare your kids for going through security. Practice with a toddler walking through a doorway one at a time and handing over that precious backpack to be X-rayed.



If your child requires oxygen and is traveling by air, arrange to have oxygen provided by the airlines as you will not be allowed to use your own.



Amtrak allows trained service animals accompanying passengers with disabilities in all customer areas in the stations, trains, and Amtrak Thruway motor coaches. If the train schedule permits, you may walk your service animal at station stops. However, if you plan to walk your animal during the trip, please notify the conductor when you first board the train.

boarding early with the bags and the other parent boarding later with the kids.

- Be sure the car seat you have is compatible with airline seats. Check the airline's website for car seat information.

Traveling by Train

If you are traveling by train, Amtrak will assist those in wheelchairs in the case of high or low platforms or bi-level trains. Your child may remain in the wheelchair en route or the chair may be stowed. Should your child require oxygen, you must make reservations in advance and give notice of your need to bring oxygen aboard at least 12 hours before you board. Please call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245) for more information about bringing oxygen on an Amtrak train, as well as station accessibility.

Train travel means that more interaction with children is possible than in a car, especially if there is only one driver. Be sure to bring activities your child enjoys, such as favorite stories, card games, and healthy snacks.

Traveling by Car

Traveling in a car affords a family greater flexibility than in a plane or a train. You can stop and explore or stretch your legs when you would like to. To make the most of the journey, plan a route with places of interest to stop along the way. Provide children with a map with the route to the new home clearly

If your child is likely to run or wander off, be sure you have a copy of the child's identifying information with you at all times. If your child is not verbal, you may want to put identifying information on the child. Remember to use a phone number other than the home phone.

Ideas for your Scavenger Hunt

- flashing red light
- bus
- signs in foreign languages
- food store
- police car
- person using a cell phone
- school
- someone on a bike
- statue
- church
- pickup truck
- dog in a car
- silo
- train tracks
- a car just like ours
- cows
- pond or lake
- dirt road
- tractor
- gas station
- horses
- barn deer

A Toddler's Scavenger Hunt

- tall building
- lake or pond
- bike
- bridge
- red car
- animal
- truck
- stop signs
- store

Some families find the time in transit, while waiting for belongings to catch up with them, to be a bit of a break from the usual household responsibilities. When there is only a suitcase of clothes, the amount of work necessary to keep up the family is diminished. Take this time to find fun in the new area. Help kids to enjoy themselves and get a positive feel for their new home.

Housing

Should your family live on base or off? Five percent of on base housing has the advantage of being wheelchair accessible, a feature that can be hard to find off base. Life on base has the added advantage of other military families close by. Becoming part of a supportive community may be easier on base than it is off, where neighbors may not understand or be interested in the military lifestyle. A big factor in this decision is the wait for housing, which varies from base to base. Some Services offer priority housing to eligible families with EFMs.

Schools

An important factor in your decision about housing is schools. Investigate both on base, if available, and off base schools. Contact these schools well in advance of the move to begin the discussion of how your child's unique needs will be met. Meet with administrators of both systems to share your child's IEP, and see what is available in each system. Your child's IEP should be honored until a new IEP is written, but



The Army calls their special needs childcare resource the Special Needs Accommodation Process (SNAP), The Navy and Marines call theirs the Special Needs Evaluation Review Team (SNERT), and the Air Force does not have this service.

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available services may vary, as might the individual school's approach to special education. Even on a base with a DoD school, the child might be transferred off base if it is determined that the civilian school is better suited. This is more likely if the child has severe or profound challenges. For more information about special education and schools, see module two, *Special Education*, of this Parent Tool Kit.



For state specific education information check www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/efm.

Childcare

For working parents, finding high-quality care is a high priority. As a military parent of a special needs child, finding childcare that can accommodate shift work, extended hours, and weekend duty and can meet the unique needs of a child can be challenging.

Look for childcare that is inclusive. Inclusive childcare allows children to learn together in an educational atmosphere that supports and nurtures the individual strengths of each child, and each child participates in the daily routines and activities of the class regardless of cognitive or physical impairments.

Every child deserves the opportunity to interact with other people regardless of his or her ability level. Most military installations have special resource teams to help parents of special needs kids find appropriate childcare. These teams may be comprised of childcare specialists, an EFMP advocate, a public health nurse, and the parents. The purpose of this team is to explore childcare and youth activities for children with certain special needs who are involved in installation childcare or youth programs. The team will identify the care options available to best meet the child's needs as well as consider any increased technical support, special services, or staffing that may be necessary to care for the child appropriately.

For more information about childcare, check with the installation's Resource and Referral Office. A resource specialist can guide you through the registration process, accreditation and fees, and the exploration of both on and off base options to choose the best care for your child. Installations have different names for the office that manages the childcare programs, so if the name of the office is unknown, the best place to start is at the home installation's Child Development Center (CDC) ask which office provides local childcare resource and referral services. Telephone numbers of all CDCs and school-age programs at can be found at www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/efm.

Questions to Ask About Childcare

What are the priorities for placement on the list at this installation?

I have more than one child. What is your policy on placing siblings?

What process do you use for keeping my data up to date?

Will you get in touch with me, or will I be responsible for periodically updating you?

What is the range of time that I might have to wait for a space to open up in my child's age group?

I will need childcare in the interim. Will you help me find it?

What is your child/provider ratio?

Will the center adapt the physical environment to meet my child's needs with the goal of increasing his or her participation?

Will the providers adapt materials and curriculum to promote independence and capitalize on my child's favorite activities?

Do the providers have experience working with adaptive devices? What types of training have the providers had?

How will the center implement and monitor my child's IFSP or IEP?

What is your provider/child ratio?

Will the center allow me to work with the care providers to show proper positioning, use of equipment, medication administration, etc?

Will therapists have a quiet area to work with my child?

How will the center facilitate diapering? (Sometimes centers will not have changing tables in rooms for 3 and 4 year olds.)

Do you have staff members who know American Sign Language (ASL) or have experience working with augmentative communication devices?

What are your emergency medical procedures? How close are they to a medical facility? Do you have a nurse on staff?

Does the center have a discipline policy? (Ask for a copy.)

Does the center have a method for filing complaints? Whom would I speak with?

Do you provide Emergency Respite Care?



Every military childcare program has a Parent Advisory Board (PAB) in which parents are able to voice concerns and make recommendations for improving service.

Moving In

Move in day is exciting. The new house starts to feel like home, and everyone is relieved to have familiar objects back. Give thought to creating moving day traditions. They can be as simple as having Chinese take out the first night in a new home, or eating the first meal on boxes, even though the table is back. Because of the excitement, pay special attention to children who may wander or find danger in unfamiliar surroundings. If respite care is needed, contact the family support center.

Safety in a New Home

Look over a new home with an eye for hazards such as busy roads or creeks near by. Hold a family

meeting to discuss these hazards with children and establish firm boundaries defining where they are allowed to go.

If a child is likely to run away from the house, talk to the local police or the Military Police (MPs) about this. Provide them with a current photo and a description of the child. Explain how the child is different and might react if confronted. Be sure to include all contact information in the sheet and give copies to the MPs or local police. Remember to update the photo and contact information as necessary.

You may want to make several copies of this to have on hand in case of emergency and to take with you when you travel.



This is our son Michael.

We work very hard to keep him safe, but sometimes he gets out of the house without our knowledge. If you see him, please call us, as he should never be out alone. He is autistic, and may not respond if you talk to him. He may run away from you if he is scared. He has asthma and is allergic to peanuts and peanut oils. If he is having trouble breathing, call 911 and do not offer him snacks that contain peanuts or peanut products.

Name: Michael Smith

Medical conditions: Autism, Asthma, and peanut allergy

Contact information:

Home phone:

Mother: Mary Smith

Work phone:

Cell phone:

Father: Joe Smith

Work phone:

Cell phone:

Thank you very much.

If concerned that despite much vigilance a child may leave the house unobserved, consider installing extra locks or an alarm system. Ask your physician for a letter explaining the medical necessity for these modifications and bring it along with a request to the base housing office or landlord to ask permission to install extra locks.

Talk to neighbors about concerns for your child. Give them your phone number and ask them to call if they spot your child moving away from the house alone. If a child is deaf or blind, contact the base or local authorities and ask for a sign alerting drivers to the presence of a deaf or blind child.

If oxygen tanks are in the home, the local fire department needs to know about them. Also, if a child is likely to hide in the case of an emergency, tell the fire department. A copy of the child ID page that was made for the police would be appropriate for the fire department as well.

If a child is not verbal, consider keeping identification and contact information on the child, perhaps on a bracelet or sewn into clothes.

Spouse Employment

Frequent relocation, extended deployments, and other unique aspects associated with the military lifestyle can create significant career and employment challenges for military spouses. Having a special needs child brings even

further challenge. You may desire employment due to financial necessity or to fulfill personal goals. Fortunately, there are resources available to assist you.

Military Spouse Career Center

To enhance employment and career opportunities for military spouses, the Department of Defense partnered with Monster.com to develop the Military Spouse Career Center. This virtual resource found at www.military.com/spouse can provide assistance to you regardless of your location. The center was created to provide career networking services, employment services, and information to military spouses. The center provides information on spouse-friendly employers, education and scholarships, licensing and certification, job search skills, and much more. The center enables employers to post jobs for military spouses at no cost. Additionally, resumes can be created and posted, and thousands of job openings around the world can be explored.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT (www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil) also has information on spouse employment in the “Troops and Family” section.

Installation Support

Many installations have a family support center that offers professional family member employment readiness training and support services. Installation-based employment assistance programs provide job search training and



Talk to your children about the deployment before it occurs. Children are quick to sense when something is about to happen and will worry more when information is withheld.

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assistance and serve as a source of information for local job fairs and job search databases. Training and other support services for spouses may include the following:

- Resume writing.
- Skills assessment.
- Career interests assessment.
- Access to computers and the Internet.
- Individual counseling and career planning.
- Job search skills.
- Information about local job listings.
- Career seminars.
- Support and encouragement.

Deployment

Waiting for a loved one to deploy is hard on children as well as spouses. Children may not understand why a parent must leave and may fear the parent is leaving forever. Because children are not very good at expressing their worries verbally, they tend to express them behaviorally. Be sure your children have many chances to express how they are feeling. The following ideas may help your family prepare for and get through a period of separation due to deployment:

- Use your own words to help children find theirs. For example, “I don’t want Daddy to leave, and waiting for him to leave makes me feel sort of sad and worried. Do you ever feel that way?”
- Explain that although many things will be different, many things will be the same.
- If the child plays imaginary games with dolls or animals, try to introduce the idea of one member of the doll family leaving. Let the other dolls say how they feel about this.
- Use a map or a globe to show where his or her parent will be.
- Use a calendar to show children when the deployment will take place, as they may not understand how long three weeks is.
- Be sure that the departing parent has time with each child before deploying. Hug often. Take photos of each child with the departing parent.
- The departing parent might schedule a trip to the child’s school to meet with the teacher. The point of this trip is to be sure the teacher knows about the change in the family dynamics. Let the child show you around his or her school world and perhaps

hear you tell the teacher how proud you are of him or her. You will be able to ask better questions about your child's day if you are familiar with his or her school.

- Have a family meeting about ways to keep in touch during the deployment. Letters, pictures, tapes, and movies are all good ways to stay connected.
- Remember to occasionally send children their own letters. Children enjoy few things more than receiving their own mail! A letter to the family pet will also bring a smile to a child's face.
- Find the best way for the child to mark the end of the deployment. This may be making Xs on the calendar or ripping links off a paper chain.
- Remember that just because a child doesn't express his or her feelings, it doesn't mean they are not troubled. If a child is acting out, it may be the result of unexpressed emotions. Help the child name these feelings.
- It is fine and even healthy for children to see you have sad feelings too, but if you are really about to fall apart, try to do this away from your kids. Strong emotions in a parent can be scary to a child.



- Remind children that they are still safe, and that a deployed parent is still a member of the family.
- Do not minimize the child's grief. To a child it may feel like a parent is lost forever. Grief without understanding is difficult to work through.

Help is Available

If you or your children are having a particularly difficult time adjusting to the deployment, counseling is readily available through several sources. Call the family service center or contact www.militaryonesource.com. Through TRICARE you are entitled to 8 sessions of counseling without a referral from your Primary Care Manager. If more is needed, an authorization can be obtained. Another source of support may be a chaplain. It is important to ask if the chaplain is licensed for marriage or family therapy. The parent at home has a heavy load to carry. As a parent of a disabled child, things can be difficult enough when both parents are available, but now it may seem overwhelming. Taking care of yourself has never been more important. Do not hesitate to contact your EFMP coordinator to ask for respite care. The entire



In case of an evacuation, be sure your extended family knows where to find you and have a plan in place for your family pets.

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family will benefit if the parent at home has the chance to recharge his or her batteries.

Coming Home

When the deployed parent returns, children may feel worried and stressed, as well as happy and excited. Depending on the child's developmental level, he or she may feel uncomfortable around the returning parent, almost as if they were strangers. For some children, even good change is unsettling. Remind your returning spouse of this and help him or her understand that the child's behavior is a reaction to change, and not a rejection of the returning parent.

Make sure children have time to let their excitement out with the returned parent before having quiet time with your spouse. However, once the excitement has subsided, do schedule time to reconnect. Maintaining a strong marriage is one of the best things parents can do for their children.



Many respiratory illnesses can be aggravated by stress; plan to have breathing aids such as inhalers, nebulizers, or oxygen tanks within reach.

Disaster Preparedness

Families with special needs must be prepared for evacuation or other emergencies. Careful preparation will reduce stress and hardship. Remember that more time may be needed to evacuate.

You may want to include the following when packing for an evacuation:

- 30 days medication supply.
- Important documents (medical records, insurance papers, birth certificates).
- Enough diapers and clothing for 7 days.
- Bed rail.
- Special eating utensils.
- Special food.
- Entertainment for children (e.g., games, cards, books).
- Comfort items.
- Battery operated flash light and radio.
- A current photo and physical, behavioral, and medical description of your child including a list of necessary medication.
- Contact information for your child's physician.



If you are experiencing financial difficulty because of a natural disaster or other crisis, your military aid society may be able to help:

Air Force Aid Society:
1-800-769-8951

Army Emergency Relief Society:
1-866-878-6378

Navy/ Marine Corps
Relief Society:
1-703-696-4904

Or call the American Red Cross:
1-202-303-4498

Service Animals

Federal law allows guide dogs into emergency shelters. In your packet of important papers be sure to include the dog's rabies tag and license. Remember that in a disaster the guide dog may become confused, and may need more attention than usual.

Power Loss

In times of disaster, extended power outages may last for weeks. If you live in military housing and require electricity for vital medical equipment, contact the EFMP coordinator or housing manager. If generators are not available, contact the Primary Care Manager

to discuss if your child should be moved to a hospital or other facility where power is available.

Transition to Adulthood

Between the ages of 14 and 16, a child's IEP will begin to address the transition process. During transition planning, students and their families find out about community agencies and programs that provide services to persons with disabilities after high school. Some of these adult services include job training and placement, assistance in getting housing, and programs on healthcare and independent living. These transition services should start no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, and should be updated annually thereafter. Also, no later than 1 year before reaching the age of majority under state law, a child must be informed of his or her rights under IDEA, if any, that will transfer to him or her upon reaching the age of majority. Remember to include an older child in the IEP process.

Independent Living

As a parent, you began teaching self-help skills very early in your child's life. Self advocacy skills are also important. Whenever possible, let the child speak for him or her self. This might be encouraging a child to order his or her own food in a restaurant or to explain to a new teacher his or her need to tape record lessons.



Bring the following when evacuating with a service animal:

- ♦ *Food.*
- ♦ *Bowls.*
- ♦ *Records of licensure and rabies shots.*
- ♦ *Disposable bags.*



Service members who are retiring must be aware that while children of retirees are still entitled to healthcare under TRICARE, they are not entitled to ECHO/EHHC benefits. These benefits are reserved for active duty members only.

The time to begin thinking about assisted living facilities is when a child is young, as the waiting lists can be years long. Contact the state you will retire to and inquire about what services are available.

One of the most important adult services, vocational rehabilitation, is available in most states. Vocational rehabilitation services include planning, assistance, support, and training that helps a person get ready for and find a job. Contact the state's Parent Training Center, www.taalliance.org, and ask about programs that help with transition.

It is important to remember that unlike the special education system, a person with disabilities does not automatically get free vocational rehabilitation services. A person must meet certain qualifications, and some agencies also charge fees for their services. Because there is no central system of adult services like there is for special education,

it may be necessary to deal with an assortment of adult services and government programs.

Caring for Your Adult Child

Parents of healthy children can usually plan on their children living independently and becoming financially independent. However, if your child has a life long disability you will need to plan not only for childhood care, but adult life as well. Will the child be able to make decisions about health care or finances? For an adult child to qualify to receive Supplemental Security Income or Medicaid, he or she cannot have more than \$2,000 in assets. So how can you insure a child's well being and financial security?

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid

The Supplemental Security Income program is a minimum monthly cash payment for categorically aged, blind, and disabled individuals. Eligibility is based on the limitation of assets and should not be confused with other Social Security benefits. Medicaid is frequently tied to SSI approval and is a program to pay for health care for certain low-income or disabled individuals or families. Medicaid does not pay money to you; instead, it sends payments directly to health care providers. Depending on the state's rules, it may be necessary to pay a small part of the cost (co-payment) for some medical services. Many states have special



If because of separation from the military, divorce or a dependent child reaching the age of 21 or 23, you lose your TRICARE coverage you will be issued a Certificate of Creditable Coverage (CoCC) which is proof to your next healthcare plan that you had previous healthcare, and limits the amount of time your new healthcare plan can exclude your participation because of preexisting conditions.

Medicaid programs for people with disabilities, and not all are income based.

The Special Needs Trust

Special Needs Trusts are discretionary trusts created for people with disabilities to supplement, but not replace public benefits. This type of trust will allow a disabled individual to continue to receive SSI, Medicaid, Section 8 housing, and other public programs while benefiting from trust fund money. The money from this trust can be used to purchase special wheelchairs, handicapped accessible vans, as well as to pay for vacations, a personal attendant, or recreational and cultural experiences. SSI is designed to pay for food, clothing, and shelter. Medicaid will pay for medical bills. The trust fund can be used for all other needs that are identified in the

trust document. Contact a lawyer who has experience with Special Needs Trusts. Don't hesitate to act because of concerns about paying for the service. Make some calls and explain your situation. Many lawyers will consider reducing their fees or allowing payment on a monthly basis for their services. If you think you do not have the assets needed to fill a trust, remember that life insurance is an asset, as is a home if you own it.

Letter of Intent

This letter provides parents with an opportunity to speak to whoever will be caring for and making decisions for their child after they have died. This may be the person who is the trustee for the Special Needs Trust. You may want to write out your child's story in the letter, including medical history and educational background. Describe the child's favorite activities, foods and people. Include places he or she has gone, and places he or she would like to visit. This tool will help whoever is taking care of your child to better know you and your child. It will provide information to help them understand your wishes and expectations as they make decisions about your child's future.

Guardianship and Declaration of Incapacitation

Usually, when a child turns 18, it is assumed that he or she is capable of making decisions about health, finances, and the future. Once your child turns 18, you will no longer be able to talk to your child's physician about his or her health. You will



If you are considering obtaining guardianship for your child, you should begin the process before your child turns 18.



For more information about wills, guardianship, and Special Needs Trusts, contact STOMP.

have no control over financial decisions or contracts your child might sign. If you are concerned that a child will not be capable of making these decisions responsibly, consider asking the courts for guardianship.

Guardianship is a court approved relationship between a legal guardian and the person with a disability. The court will define the degree of legal authority that the guardian will have to act on behalf of the disabled person. Detailed documentation from a physician will be needed to show that your child is not mentally capable of becoming independent. Be aware that if you move to another state, it is necessary to apply for guardianship in the new state.

existed prior to the child's 21st birthday are entitled to TRICARE benefits. These adult children are eligible to retain their military ID cards as well. In the Navy and the Marine Corps, this program is called The Incapacitated Dependents Program and in the Army the program is called Incapacitated Children Over 21.

Army families can call:
317-510-2774/2775

Navy families can call:
910-874-3360

USMC families can call:
703-784-9529/30
If you are retired or a former spouse, call 1-800-336-4649

Air Force families can call:
210-565-2089



If your child has more than \$2,000 of his or her own, SSI and Medicaid will be affected. Should you or a grandparent die and leave a child money, the child will lose these public benefits unless the money is left to the child's Special Needs Trust.

ID Cards for Adult Children

Unmarried children of military sponsors who are age 21 and over, severely disabled, and are disabled due to a condition that

Hospice Care

Hospice care is available for terminally ill patients and their families when the patient has been given a terminal, life-limiting prognosis. The goal of Hospice care is to provide dignity and comfort to the dying. Eighty percent of hospice care occurs in homes or in nursing homes, and TRICARE will cover most of the costs.

If you live on base and your child is in hospice care, arrange a meeting with the Military Police, your chaplain, and your EFMP coordinator. This will help ensure all parties understand your wishes for your child. This is very important,

as without this meeting, well meaning but misguided Military Police or emergency response personnel may insist on trying to resuscitate your child against your wishes. Module three, *Health Benefits*, of this Parent Tool Kit contains detailed information about hospice and long-term care.

For More Information

Obtain the other modules of this Parent Tool Kit at www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/efm or from your EFMP coordinator.

- Module One, *Birth to Age Three*
- Module Two, *Special Education*
- Module Three, *Health Benefits*
- Module Five, *Advocating for Your Child*
- Module Six, *Resources and Support*

