

Introduction

Life in the military is challenging. When you have a child with special needs it is even more so. Families in the military have an array of resources available to them, from within and beyond the military community. Help yourself and your family by becoming educated about the support services and resources that are available.

Military Community Resources

Family Support Centers (FSC)

Family Support Centers throughout the military exist to help military families. Most military installations have Family Support Centers that offer a variety of free services and support designed to assist service members and families with the unique challenges of military life. Available offerings may vary due to the size and mission of the installation. Types of assistance offered may include the following:

- Relocation counseling and lending lockers.
- Information and referrals for special needs.
- Employment workshops.
- Volunteer coordination.
- Parenting classes.
- Individual and family counseling.

- Personal financial management.
- Spouse education and support programs.
- Deployment support.
- Family life education and workshops.



When military members are in receipt of orders to a new duty station, they can request and be assigned a sponsor. Ask the EFMP coordinator at your new duty station for a sponsoring family with similar special needs.

Family Support Centers can connect you with the Exceptional Family Member Program. This will ensure that your child's medical and educational needs will be considered as a duty station is



There are resources and referrals available from the Child Development Center to help parents find childcare when arrangements cannot be met on the installation.

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selected. Your FSC is also a good place to ask for information about local organizations and support groups concerned with specific disabilities. To find the Family Support Center nearest you, go to www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil



Most military installations have special resource teams to help parents of special needs kids find appropriate child care. 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 Army calls this service the Special Needs Accommodation Process (SNAP), the Navy and Marines use Special Needs Resource Team (SNERT), and the Air Force does not have this service.

New Parent Support Program

The New Parent Support Program (www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil) assists expectant and new parents through a variety of services. Services are matched to the needs of individual families and include home visitations, education, counseling, and referrals to other resources to include special needs organizations and services aboard the installation and within the

local community. Parents who take advantage of the classes offered will gain hands on training that will help them make informed and responsible decisions for their children.

Family Advocacy Program (FAP)

The military community is not immune to personal or family problems. Problems may range from experiencing stress due to a deployment to experiencing domestic violence including spouse or child abuse. Fortunately, vital services and support are available to military families. FAP sponsors activities and services to include public awareness briefings, individual and couples counseling, crisis intervention, support groups, stress management, and other well-being workshops. FAP services may be found at military medical facilities or at installation Family Support Centers. For more information, go to www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil

Child, Youth and Teen Development Programs

Military families face greater challenges than most other families. Shifting work schedules that are often longer than the typical eight hour day and the obligation to be ready to deploy anywhere in the world on a moment's notice requires a child development system that is flexible, yet maintains high standards. Add to these challenges

a child with special needs, and finding quality childcare can be a formidable challenge.

- **Child Development Centers.** DoD Child Development Centers (CDCs) provide care for children 6 weeks to 12 years of age. To help ensure the needs of your exceptional child are met in the daycare setting, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps offer special needs resource teams. Contact information for all DoD CDC's is available at www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil
- **Family Child Care (FCC).** FCC homes operated on base are certified by the military child development program. These providers deliver critical services to service members on shift work, working extended hours or weekends, and for those who prefer a home-based environment for their children. A family childcare home may be the best option for special needs children who need the consistency of a single caregiver or who require complex procedures that must be learned by the caregiver.
- **Youth Centers.** Ask about available youth programs at your FSC. You will find an array of programs that will help your child become involved and make friends. Frequently available are

sports leagues for soccer, basketball, and baseball and a center where your child can play Ping-Pong or video games. For information regarding Child Youth and Teen services visit www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil.

- **Summer Camps and Recreation.** Several bases have special camps and activities for children with special needs. Camp Lejeune offers *Camp Special Time* several weekends a year, giving parents some well deserved time off. Fort Campbell offers *Camp We Can*. Ask about what is available on your base and in your community.

School Liaison Officers

The Army sponsors a program providing a school liaison officer at each Army installation whose role is to work with local schools in support of children from military families. The School Liaison



Ask your CDC about summer camps and activities. You may find an array of activities for your children ranging from sports camps to fishing tournaments.

Officer is particularly helpful when a student is transitioning from one school system to another and may be able to advocate on the parents' behalf when they believe their child's special education needs are not being met. For more information about this program, go to www.militarystudent.dod.mil.

Relief Societies

Military communities pride themselves on taking care of their own. Relief societies exist to help families with unexpected problems or financial emergencies. Help may be available for the following needs:

- Emergency transportation.
- Funeral expenses.
- Disaster relief assistance.
- Childcare expenses.
- Essential vehicle repairs.
- Unforeseen family emergencies.
- Food, rent, and utilities.
- Medical/dental bills (patient's share).

Each of the Armed Forces has established its own relief society.

Army Emergency Relief Society
www.aerhq.org
 1-866-878-6378

Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society
www.nmcrs.org
 1-703-696-4904

Air Force Aid Society
www.afas.org
 1-800-769-8951

Service Sponsored Websites

Each branch of the military sponsors a website that provides an overview of programs and support available to military personnel and family members. These websites also provide news articles and information relating to life in the military and online tutorials.

U.S. Army
 MyArmyLifeToo.com
www.myarmylifetoo.com

U.S. Navy
 LIFELines Services Network
www.lifelines.navy.mil

U.S. Marine Corps
 Marine Corps Community Services
www.usmc-mccs.org

U.S. Air Force
 Air Force Cross Roads
www.afcrossroads.com

Additional Military Resources

MilitaryHOMEFRONT's Special Needs/EFMP Module
 Military HOMEFRONT's (www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/efm) Special Needs/EFMP module is the Official Department of Defense website that was designed to help troops and their family members

who have special needs. This site is packed with information. MilitaryHOMEFRONT maintains a Military Community Directory that has a searchable list of family center addresses, websites, phone numbers, and email addresses world-wide. Here you will also find resources to support the following:

- Exceptional Family Member Program.
- Parenting.
- Relocation.
- Tip sheets.
- Military Spouse Resource Center.
- Military Saver.
- List of benefits and services.
- Pre-separation guide.
- Military Teens on the Move.
- General legal information.



Do you need to talk? Military OneSource is available to you 24 hours a day.

From the US: 1-800-342-9647

International Toll Free:
1-800-3429-6477

International Collect:
484-530-5908

- Deployment connections.
- Employment and transition assistance.

Military OneSource
Military OneSource (www.militaryonesource.com) provides information, referrals, and assistance to the military community. Accessed by telephone or the Internet, Military OneSource provides special needs consultation, research, resources, and materials intended to enhance current military services available to families with special needs.

A Military Education Specialist is available and is devoted to military families who need assistance with issues related to educating your children. Services are provided on a scheduled appointment basis via telephone and are focused on special needs children ages



For access to a vast amount of information on a wide variety of support websites dealing with disease, disorders, and syndromes go to www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/efm.

parent
to parent

“The Military OneSource consultant spoke to me calmly and with a good sense of humor, and helped me find my sense of humor. If it weren’t for them, I probably would still be stressing.”

~Navy parent of child with behavioral challenges.



birth to 21. Specialty services can be accessed through the main telephone number for Military OneSource, and an appointment with a military special needs specialist should be requested.

Many tip sheets covering a wide range of topics of interest to military families with needs are available. All services are free of charge.

Military Teens on the Move (MTOM)

MTOM (www.dod.mil/mtom) is a website specifically for military teens and kids who are facing yet another move. Here they will find age appropriate information about how to deal with the feelings they have about moving, information about the new installation, and advice on handling the move and how to begin to fit in at their new home.

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!

TRICARE

TRICARE offers several programs to assist families with special needs. Extended Health Care Option (EHCO) offers financial assistance and additional benefits for services, equipment, or supplies beyond those available through TRICARE Prime, Extra, or Standard. Also available is ECHO Home Health Care (EHHC). EHHC provides home bound family members with intensive home health care services. For more information, go to www.tricare.mil or see module three, *Health Benefits*, of this Parent Tool Kit.

Federal, State and Community Resources

American Red Cross

Today's American Red Cross is keeping pace with the changing military. The Red Cross sends communications on behalf of family members who are facing emergencies or other important events to members of the U.S. Armed Forces serving all over the world. Both active duty and community-based military can count on the Red Cross to provide access to financial assistance, counseling and assistance to veterans, and emergency communications that link them with their families back home. Contact the Red Cross at www.redcross.org or 1-202-303-4498.

Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program (CAP)

The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program provides assistive technology and services to people with disabilities, federal managers, supervisors, IT professionals, and wounded service members. "We buy it, we pay for it, we get it to the users, it's just that simple." — Dinah Cohen, CAP Director. You can find additional information about CAP's EFMP initiatives at www.tricare.mil/cap or call 1-703-681-8813 (voice) or 1-703-681-0881 (tty).

Disabilityinfo.gov

This website, www.disabilityinfo.gov, exists to connect people with disabilities to the information and

resources they need to pursue their personal and professional ambitions. Disabled individuals can look here for information about travel, work place support and fair housing.

Cadre (National Center on Dispute Resolution)

Cadre encourages the use of mediation and other collaborative strategies to resolve disagreements about special education and early intervention programs. Cadre offers a spectrum of services including promoting ways to prevent conflict and help with early dispute assistance, education about conflict resolution options, mediation, resolution sessions, and due process hearings. To contact Cadre, go to www.directionservice.org or call 1-541-686-5060 (voice) or 1-541-284-4740 (tty) or send a fax to 1-541-686-5063.

Food Stamps and FSSA

The Food Stamp Program (www.fns.usda.gov) serves as the first line of defense against hunger. It enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Food stamp recipients spend their benefits to buy eligible food in authorized retail food stores, including the commissary. To pre-qualify online, go to the website and click on "Pre Screening Tool."

Food stamps are not available for military families stationed overseas. However, you can apply for the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA). Although



*NICHCY
welcomes com-
munication
in English or
Spanish.*

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this allowance does target those families currently using food stamps, all total force members may apply because it is based upon household income and family size, not whether one is currently receiving food stamps. Nothing in the law prohibits service members from receiving both FSSA and food stamp benefits at the same time. However, the FSP will count any FSSA benefits as income, just like any other military income in determining eligibility and allotment amounts under the FSP. For more information, go to www.dmdc.osd.mil.

Medicaid

Medicaid (www.cms.hhs.gov) is a program that pays for health care for some individuals and families with low income and few resources. Medicaid is a national program with broad guidelines, but each state sets its own eligibility rules and decides what services to provide. Be aware of this as you move from state to state. In most states, children who qualify for SSI will also qualify for Medicaid. States can also choose to cover other groups of children under the age of 19 or those who live in higher income families.

Many states qualify children through programs that allow disabled children to qualify without considering their parents income. To find information on Medicaid and Medicaid waivers in your state go to www.cms.hhs.gov.

National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice (EDJJ)

EDJJ is concerned by the number of youth with disabilities at risk for contact with the courts or already involved in the juvenile delinquency system. They provide assistance, conduct research, and disseminate resources in three areas: prevention of school failure and delinquency, education and special education for detained and committed youth, and transition services for youth returning to schools and communities. For more information, go to www.edjj.org or call 1-301-405-6462.

NICHCY

NICHCY (www.nichcy.org) has a wealth of information on disabilities. NICHCY stands for the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities and serves the nation as a central source of information on the following:

- Disabilities in infants, toddlers, children, and youth.
- IDEA, which is the law authorizing special education.
- No Child Left Behind (as it relates to children with disabilities).
- Research-based information on effective educational practices.



NICHCY is a valuable resource for all parents of disabled children and is linked to the BrowseAloud text reader. This means all the information on this site can be read to you.

Shriners Hospitals for Children

Shriners Hospitals are a network of 22 pediatric hospitals in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico that provide specialized care for orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries and cleft lip and palate. All services are provided at no charge.

If you know of a child, Shriners Hospitals might be able to help. Please call the toll-free patient referral line.

In the U.S.: 1-800-237-5055

In Canada: 1-800-361-7256.

Specialized Training of Military Parents

STOMP is the only National Parent Training and Information Center for military families that provides support and advice to military parents regardless of the type of medical condition their child has. The STOMP Project hosts a list serve for military families and professionals to use to share ideas. The list serve enables military families all over the world to connect, learn, and help each other as they raise their special needs children in military communities.

On STOMP parents can ask question and get answers about the resources available to them, as well as receive advice on educating their children and navigating the healthcare system. STOMP offers workshops addressing an array of topics. You can contact STOMP at www.stompproject.org or 1-800-5-PARENT (v/tty).



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Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI (www.ssa.gov) is a Federal supplement program that can provide a monthly payment to

those with low incomes and few resources who are 65 or older, blind, or disabled. Children may qualify. If you think you or your child might qualify, visit the nearest Social Security Office or call the Social Security Administration Office at 1-800-772-1213. If the application is denied, it is good practice to appeal the decision.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

The WIC website (www.fns.usda.gov) has a link to toll free numbers across the country. If you can't access the Internet, call the state Nutrition Counseling office or nearest military family support center. WIC offers nutritional help to women and children who are low-income and nutritionally at risk. This includes women who are pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding and infants and children up to their 5th birthday. WIC provides nutrition education, nutritious foods, as well as screening and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services.

Service members living overseas may be eligible to participate in the WIC Overseas program. For more information about this program, go to www.tricare.mil

Wrightslaw

Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys go to Wrightslaw (www.wrightslaw.com) for reliable information about special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities. Wrightslaw includes thousands of articles, cases, and

free resources on dozens of special education topics. This an excellent source for parents who are learning to navigate through the Special Education System.

Resources for Families with Seriously Ill or Hospitalized Children

Fisher House

Members of the military and their families with loved ones who are hospitalized because of illness or injury must often travel far from home for specialized medical care. To help ease this difficult time, Fisher House™ Foundation donates “comfort homes,” which are built on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers. There is at least one Fisher House™ at every major military medical center providing families in need with the comforts of home in a supportive environment. The average cost of staying at a Fisher house is less than \$10 a day, and many locations offer rooms at no cost. For more information, go to www.fisherhouse.org or call 1-888-294-8560.

Make-a-Wish Foundation

The mission of the Make-A-Wish Foundation® is to grant the wishes of children between the ages of 2 ½ and 18 with life-threatening medical conditions. Children must be referred to the Foundation and determined to be medically eligible for a wish by their physician. All wish expenses are fully covered, and family income is not a consideration in determining whether a child is

eligible to receive a wish. Contact Make-A-Wish at www.wish.org or call 1-800-722-WISH(9474).

Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation

Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to making a world of difference for seriously ill children and their families. Starlight Starbright softens the hard edges of what a family experiences when a child has a serious illness. They work hard to meet a family's needs by building playrooms and teen lounges in hospitals and providing PC Pals and Fun Centers so kids can play games, e-mail, chat with friends, and even do their homework from their hospital bed. They bring in entertainers and sponsor parties for kids who are in the hospital. When the kids get to go home, Starlight Starbright helps keep them connected through online chat rooms and special outings for the entire family. For more information, go to www.starlight.org or call 1-800-315-2580.

A Special Wish Foundation

A Special Wish Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to granting the wishes of children who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening disorder. A Special Wish Foundation is the only major wish-granting organization in the United States that grants wishes to qualifying infants, children, and adolescents from birth through and including the age of 20 years.

For more information, go to www.spwish.org or call 1-800-486-WISH(9474).

The Dream Factory

The Dream Factory, Inc. began with an idea to create a volunteer organization dedicated to granting the dreams of children with critical or chronic illnesses. Currently, there are more than 30 chapters across the United States with over 5,000 volunteers who work to produce and deliver dreams, visit children and their families in the hospital and their homes, arrange special celebrations, and conduct fundraising events for individual children. For more information, go to www.dreamfactoryinc.com or call 1-800-456-7556.

Give Kids the World Village

Give Kids the World Village is a non-profit resort that creates magical memories for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Wish-granting organizations coordinate transportation to Orlando, while Give Kids the World provides accommodations at its whimsical resort, donated attractions tickets, and meals for a week-long fantasy vacation. For more information, go to www.gktw.org or call 1-800-995-KIDS(5437).

