

Confidential Non-medical Counseling Program

Content Guide

The following established style guidelines reflect the longstanding practices of developers and editors of content for the Military Community Support Programs area. They are consistent with rules and guidance outlined in the Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

Background

Non-medical counseling - Confidential non-medical counseling is offered through both Military OneSource and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program and is intended to prevent the development or exacerbation of daily life conditions that may detract from military and family readiness. It is designed to address everyday life issues, such as improving relationships at home and work, stress management, marital problems, parenting, grief and loss issues, adjustment issues, e.g., returning from a deployment and other military-related topics. Non-medical counseling is short-term, solution-focused and provided by mental health clinicians.

Military OneSource confidential non-medical counseling services are available by appointment over the telephone, face-to-face or through a secure real-time video or online chat. Face-to-face sessions occur in a traditional office setting with a Military OneSource provider located in the community within 30 minutes of the participant. Military OneSource non-medical counseling is available to children and youth ages 6-17 under the conditions described in the “Eligibility” section. Eligible individuals can take advantage of Military OneSource by calling 800-342-9647 or visiting the website at www.militaryonesource.mil 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Military and Family Life Counseling Program has military and family life counselors and child and youth behavioral counselors who support service members and their families at installations worldwide. Child and youth behavioral military and family life counselors provide support to military children for a variety of issues, including low self-esteem, behavioral problems and changes at home. MFLC program counselors deliver valuable face-to-face counseling services and presentations to the military community with flexible hours both on and off the installation. Military and family life counselors give service members and their families the level of comfort they need to benefit from a counseling relationship.

Nearly all of those surveyed about Military OneSource non-medical counseling and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program would use counseling services again and would refer the program to a friend.

Eligibility

Individuals eligible for non-medical counseling services through Military OneSource and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program include the following:

- Active-duty service members in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Space Force, and their immediate family members.
- Members of the Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve and Air Force Reserve of the United States, and Air National Guard members, regardless of activation status, including members of the selected reserve, Individual Ready Reserve and standby reserve and their immediate family members.
- Coast Guard members who are activated as part of the Department of the Navy under Title 10 authority, as well as their family members. All Coast Guard veterans and their immediate family are eligible from their separation date until 180 days past end of tour of service.
- Anyone who has legal responsibility for a service member's children during deployment or separation from the family.
- Services requested must clearly benefit the child.
- Retired and separating service members and their immediate family members for up to 365 days following their end of tour of service, retirement date, or discharge date for Military OneSource services, or up to 180 days following their end of tour of service, retirement date, or discharge date for Military and Family Life Counseling Programs.
- Extended family members when they seek assistance on behalf of the service member.
- Any member of the Defense Department Expeditionary Civilians workforce, as defined by DoD Directive 1404.10, and their immediate family members during deployment, the 90 days prior to deployment and the 180 days following deployment.
- Survivors, non-remarried spouses and their children, of deceased active-duty, National Guard and reserve service members, regardless of the cause of death.
- Military academy cadets.

Children are eligible to receive confidential non-medical counseling services through Military OneSource with a few caveats:

- Youths ages 13 through 17 are eligible for individual, face-to-face counseling, but a parent must attend the first session.
- Military children from ages 6 through 12 can see a family counselor with at least one parent attending each session.
- Young children from newborn to 5 years are not eligible for non-medical counseling services.

Children and youth up to age 18 are eligible to receive confidential non-medical counseling services through Military and Family Life Counseling with signed parental consent.

Contact Information

Military OneSource is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

- Stateside: 800-342-9647.
- International: 800-342-9647 or 703-253-7599.
- Calling instructions for specific international locations can be found on the Military OneSource website by clicking on the [OCONUS Calling Options](#) link found at the top of every page.
- Collect from overseas: Dial an international operator first, then ask to be connected with 703-253-7599.
- Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP: If service members or their family members have a VoIP account set up, they can use VoIP to call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.
- En español llame al: 800-342-9647.
- Telecommunications Device for the Deaf/Teletypewriter (TDD/TTY): Dial 711 and give the toll-free number 800-342-9647.

Do

- Pay attention to the overall organization and flow of an article. Information and ideas should be logically organized and there should be some sense of continuity or flow from one idea to the next.
- Avoid redundancy.
- Write in gender-neutral terms, except if appropriate (for example, gender-specific services/groups).
- Write in relationship-neutral terms, such as “partner” or “couple.”
- Flesh out and clarify statements and ideas.
- Ensure that subheads reflect the content of the following text.

- Focus on the positive side of content as much as possible.
- Keep the wide audience range in mind.
- Ensure content is grounded in research or backed by practice and knowledge.
- Highlight that callers will reach a real person, not a computer or a long phone menu.
- Use “softening” or qualifying words, such as “generally,” “may be,” “can be” or “might,” to avoid making blanket statements about how people feel, react, etc., in different circumstances. See the examples below:
 - **Wrong:** “Any time you lose someone close to you, the grief **is** overwhelming.”
 - **Better:** “When you lose someone close to you, the grief **can be** overwhelming.”
 - **Wrong:** “Children **are** more resilient and better able to “bounce back” emotionally after a loss.”
 - **Better:** “Following a loss, children **may be** more resilient and **may** recover more quickly than adults.”
- Use plain language.
- Keep sentences short.
- Write a concluding paragraph of two or three sentences.
- Keep the wide audience range in mind, in general, or speak to the target audience as directed in the job start form.
- Incorporate a friendly, approachable tone and visual imagery.
- Keep blogs and articles short, focused and as concrete as possible.
- Use military family-centric information.
- Focus on resources for military families.

Do Not

- Make assumptions.
- Tell people how they feel.
- Tell people what they should/need to/must/ought to/can’t/won’t do.
- Tell people what they always/never do.
- Use clinical jargon or phrases like “as best you can.”
- Use statistics, unless vetted through the Office of the Secretary of Defense Family Advocacy Program, MC&FP’s Resources and Oversight directorate (Research) or a state’s point of contact for its central registry of child abuse and neglect.
- Use acronyms when the audience is unfamiliar with Military Community and Family Policy-specific programs.

- Provide general advice. Content should include support and resources Military OneSource offers.

Formatting

- “Less is more” — be concise.
- Use bulleted formatting for clarity when appropriate.

Preferred Terms

| Preferred | As opposed to |
|--|--|
| Army Community Service | Army Community Services |
| confidential non-medical counseling | counseling |
| Confidential non-medical counseling is NOT anonymous. | Non-medical counseling is both confidential and anonymous. |
| consultants | triage consultants |
| doctorate | Ph.D. |
| experienced | credible |
| Financial counseling is available in person, by phone or video conferencing through Military OneSource. | Financial counseling is available online through Military OneSource. |
| Incorporate the tagline “free, personalized support for everyday military and family life challenges” when referring to non-medical counseling services. | |
| issue | problem |
| Within MC&FP’s portfolio, financial counseling services are only available through Military OneSource and are no longer a part of the MFLC program. | |
| JFSAP is no longer part of the MFLC contract. | |
| Military and Family Life Counseling Program | Military and Family Life Counselor Program |

| Preferred | As opposed to |
|--|--|
| Military and Family Life Counseling Program is available face-to-face. | Military and Family Life Counseling Program is available online, by chat or phone. |
| Military and Family Life Counseling Program is confidential, and counselors do not take notes or keep records on individuals. | |
| military and family life counselor (lowercase) | Military and Family Life Counselor |
| military life | military lifestyle |
| Non-medical Counseling (in a title) | Non-Medical Counseling (in a title) |
| non-medical counseling options | consultations |
| non-medical counseling or counselor | non-medical consulting or consultant |
| non-medical counseling provider | professional |
| some or many | most or all |
| on-demand support | on demand |
| often or generally | always |
| Remove all references to mental health issues: depression, anxiety, those who have been prescribed psychoactive medication or who are currently receiving therapy with another practitioner, fitness-for-duty evaluations or court-ordered counseling. | |
| (regardless of their activation status) | "90 days before and 180 days after a period of active duty of at least 180 days" |
| secure online | online |
| secure online chat | online, real-time chat format or live chat |
| short-term, confidential non-medical counseling | solution focused or problem solving |
| some or many | most or all |
| tend to | usually |

| Preferred | As opposed to |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Use "confidential help" to refer to all services/support under the Military OneSource umbrella. | |
| Use "non-medical counseling" to refer to the counseling services that support everyday life issues. | |
| Use the term "free" when the audience is not specified. | no cost |
| Use the term "free" when the audience is the service member or family members. | no cost |
| Use the term "no cost" when addressing leadership about Military OneSource policy or contract. | free |
| Video counseling is a platform that allows people to securely transfer information over the internet in real time. | secure video conferencing program |
| video-enabled computer or mobile device | video-enabled computer |

Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|--|--|
| child and youth behavioral military and family life counselors | Master’s or doctorate-level mental health clinicians, specifically trained to work with children and youth, and licensed to practice and provide non-medical counseling independently. |
| face-to-face non-medical counseling | Available for individuals to see a licensed counselor or therapist in their local community. |
| Military and Family Life Counseling Program | A Defense Department-wide program that provides short-term, confidential non-medical counseling and presentations focused on problem-solving and life skills development. |
| military and family life counselors | Master’s or doctorate-level mental health clinicians, licensed to practice and provide non-medical counseling independently. |

| Term | Definition |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Military OneSource | Provides a key access point to a network of support for service members and their families, while offering call center and online support for consultations on any number of issues, such as spouse education and career opportunities, issues specific to families with a member with special needs, and financial support and resources. |
| non-medical counseling | Involves a discussion, or series of discussions, during which the counselor helps the participant or participants identify feelings or problems, talk about them, and find ways to cope with or solve them. Non-medical counseling may address general life skills, for example, conflict resolution, stress, and parenting or relationship issues, or topics unique to military life, such as deployment and relocation. |
| non-medical counselors | Master’s or doctorate-level mental health clinicians, licensed to practice and provide non-medical counseling independently. |
| on-demand support | A service delivery option that provides face-to-face, confidential, non-medical and financial counseling, briefings and presentations at unit events, such as Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs, drill weekends, family events, annual training, and marriage retreats, for one to three days, through the Resource Request System. |
| online non-medical counseling | Help is available online, in a secure, real-time chat format. |
| Resource Request System | Military Community and Family Policy’s online system (https://supportrequest.militaryonesource.mil/) that allows military units and military-connected organizations to request Military OneSource representatives, military and family life counselors, child and youth behavioral military and family counselors, and personal financial counselors. |
| surge support | A flexible, timely and tailored service delivery option available through the Military and Family Life Counseling Program that provides face-to-face, confidential non-medical counseling and presentations to active-duty members, National Guard and reserve service members, and their families for up to 90 days in targeted locations for emerging issues, such as planned and unplanned events, military contingencies, natural disasters or crises, and deployment-related issues, like reintegration challenges. |

| Term | Definition |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| telephonic non-medical counseling | Counseling conducted over the phone. |
| video non-medical counseling | Takes place using a secure video conferencing program in real time – that requires the participant have a video-enabled computer or mobile device – with the participant and the counselor capable of seeing and hearing each other throughout the session. |