

Military OneSource Podcast — The Exceptional Family Member Program Survey

Program title: EFMP Survey

Episode transcript

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the podcast. I'm Bruce Moody.

When you have a family member with special needs, you have a special set of considerations, things that you need to do in order to take care of the family. Managing the care and services for a family member with special needs, and that can be a spouse, a child or a dependent adult, it's a lot easier with the right support.

And that's why the Defense Department has the Exceptional Family Member Program. If you are enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program, also known as EFMP, you need to know that we have a survey. It's just for you, and we want you to complete the survey. Why? Because your responses will ensure the program meets the needs of families like yours.

My guest today is Jen Wong. She's a colleague and works with the Defense Department's Office of Special Needs. And it's great to have you with us, Jen. We'll talk about this survey.

Jen Wong:

Thanks for having me, Bruce.

Bruce:

Absolutely. Welcome back to the podcast.

Well, let's just jump right into it. What is the 2022 Exceptional Family Member Survey?

Jen:

Sure. It's actually very exciting because this is the first-ever Defense Department-wide EFMP survey. It's a web-based survey for service members who have family members

who are enrolled in EFMP. The survey is being conducted by the Office of People Analytics, and that's within the Defense Personnel Analytics Center.

Bruce:

And so, that's really part of the Defense Department. So, this is an official DOD survey?

Jen:

Absolutely. And so, what's really great about that is it's a wonderful chance for service members who are enrolled in EFMP to have their voices heard at the DOD policy level to help create meaningful change.

Bruce:

All right. Let's talk about the survey, but let's first step back and really talk about the program itself. Tell us a little bit about the Exceptional Family Member Program.

Jen:

Sure, no problem. The Exceptional Family Member Program is a Defense Department program to support military families with special medical or educational needs. And within EFMP, there are three components; identification and enrollment, assignment coordination and family support. And those three components work together to assist the family in getting enrolled, identifying what those medical and educational needs are, ensuring the family's needs will be met when a PCS is going to occur and the gaining location has the services necessary. And providing that family support in the form of information referral, non-clinical case management, and opportunities for EFMP families to get together and network.

Bruce:

All right then. OK, good. Let's get back to the survey itself. What kind of questions will be asked in the survey?

Jen:

Sure. The survey asks questions about EFMP and about those three components that I just talked about. There will be questions about what it was like for a service member to enroll into the program. It'll ask questions about assignment coordination, with your most recent PCS, what was your family's experience before, during and after that PCS? There are questions about family support. Family support is voluntary, so if a family is taking advantage of family support, what was their experience? Were their needs met? Were the opportunities out there for them to access family support? And then outside of EFMP as a program, there will also be a few questions about other services, such as medical and educational services.

Bruce:

OK. So how does that work? Why is it important for service members to complete the survey? In other words, what does an answer that goes to the Pentagon, how does that answer become something that a family member experiences?

Jen:

Absolutely. So, what's in it for you, right? Why take this survey? What happens with these results? This is a very important survey. It's very high visibility, like I said, first-ever Defense Department-wide EFMP survey.

It's a chance to be heard on issues that are directly affecting our families who are enrolled in the program. And it's important for us at the Defense Department at the policy level to have that feedback about real life experiences. What are our families encountering? And those results will go straight back to the Office of Special Needs and other key offices. And it's going to help us make informed decisions about DOD policy and programs that are impacting families enrolled in EFMP.

Bruce:

And so, you actually sent this survey out to literally every family in the Exceptional Family Member Program. Am I correct in saying that?

Jen:

Absolutely. Every active-duty service member enrolled in EFMP should have received an email to their official email account.

Bruce:

OK. So how is a service member going to receive this survey?

Jen:

OK, absolutely. So, every active-duty service member enrolled in EFMP should have received an email and it includes an invitation to the survey. And the survey should take only about 15 minutes. It can be taken on a computer, a tablet or a smartphone. And there should be a few email reminders going out as well, if you did miss the first email.

But let's say a service member doesn't have access to their official email address right now, they lost the email, whatever the case may be, we're going into the holidays, it's going to be very busy right now. But even with how busy things are, it's still so important to take this survey so it's still easily accessible, don't feel like you have to dig around, you can find it at www.DODsurveys.mil. And the service member can enter their DOD ID number and their date of birth and still easily access the survey.

Another group that I forgot to mention is maybe a service member recently enrolled and so we didn't have their email address to email them. No worries. If you are an active-duty service member enrolled in EFMP, just go to DODsurveys.mil, enter your information, and you can easily access that survey.

Bruce:

All right. Now, how should a family take this survey? I mean, should a spouse or somebody from the family take it or should it be more of a collaborative kind of a discussion? What are your recommendations here?

Jen:

Absolutely. Although it is the active-duty service member who received the invitation or the email, we highly encourage the service member to collaborate with their spouse or other adult family members to complete the survey. I encourage families to sit down together, like I said, it should only take about 15 minutes, because we really want to know the experience of the whole family.

Bruce:

All right. Now, what about the confidentiality of the information that families are providing?

Jen:

Yes. I can understand that would be a concern, but individual responses will be kept confidential, and the overall data will be used by the Office of Special Needs to help guide future improvements that are impacting your family and the military community at large.

Bruce:

All right. Hey Jen, it was great to talk to you about the survey. Any final words about the Exceptional Family Member Program?

Jen:

Yeah, I'd just like to close out by saying I am very passionate about the program and our families who are enrolled in EFMP, and I highly encourage them to go in and take this survey. It's so important for us to understand families' needs and we want to support. And in order to do so, we have to know and have those testimonials and that data to know what's working and what's not working for families so that we can make improvements. And so, I do encourage families to visit DODsurveys.mil or also visit Military OneSource to learn more about the survey.

Bruce:

Well, we thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Jen:

Thank you for having me, Bruce.

Bruce:

And I should mention, we have a separate podcast series that we produce exclusively for family members who have special needs. We'll put a link in the program notes, but it is two series, working on a third, and it is a deep dive with information for families who have special needs. So, I really hope that you give it a listen and share with people that you know. Yeah. Again, great. Jen, please come back to the podcast.

Jen:

Yeah, absolutely. Always a pleasure.

Bruce:

I want to remind you all that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We are a website, a call center, we're on social media and we're a podcast now. So go ahead and subscribe wherever you listen to your podcasts because we cover a whole range of topics that help military families as they navigate military life.

I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you for listening. Have a great day. Bye-bye.