

## Military OneSource Podcast — Defense Health Agency

**Program title:** Military Health System

**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](http://militaryonesource.mil).

**Bruce Moody:**

Welcome to the podcast. Bruce Moody here. We're doing another episode about moving. We move a lot in the military, of course. So, it's something to get into and there's a lot to get into, a lot of moving parts, and we're going to focus on one of those moving parts today.

And that's health care. Health care is one of those things that works best when it can continue even as your life is changing, like during a military move. I should say at this point that when we talk about military moves during this episode, we're going to do something that I generally try to avoid, and that's using military acronyms.

But the acronym PCS, that's one that military families either already know, or they're soon going to become quite familiar with. PCS stands for permanent change of station, but just think of PCS as military slang for a move. And with that, let's bring in our guests.

First up, we have Dr. Nicholas Polizzi; he is a clinical psychologist and an action officer for the Defense Health Agency's inTransition program.

And we also have Dr. Krys Bienia, who is a clinical psychologist in the mental health directorate at the Defense Health Agency, and a senior policy analyst and clinical lead for the autism care demonstration. Krys is also the program manager for the Complex Pediatrics Clinical Community.

It is great to have you both with us, and welcome to the podcast.

**Dr. Nick Polizzi:**

Thank you.

**Dr. Krys Bienia:**

Thanks. Glad to be here.

**Bruce:**

Well, it is summer season; it's the season for PCSing, for moving. We know people have a lot of questions about this and health care is just one of those things that splinters off into several directions.

There is TRICARE, and there's your local treatment facility, and maybe you're seeing somebody out in town. So, let's just kind of go over some of these topics and give people an idea of what to do, how to get started as they move about the planet. That said, we're going to have links to what we're talking about in the program notes. So, when you need more information, just go down into the links and click your way through to the information that you need.

Let's just start with TRICARE enrollment. All right, so how does a family, how do service members and families TRICARE enrollment while they're PCSing?

**Krys:**

Great question. The most important thing to know is that you cannot transfer your DEERS enrollment until you arrive at the new location. But once you get there, contact the DEERS office immediately and get that transfer going.

**Bruce:**

OK, so next question. Should I get copies of medical records before I leave, or does the gaining command military treatment facility request copies on their own? What's the best advice you have here?

**Krys:**

Your medical records at the MTF, the military treatment facility, are stored in what's called an electronic health record. And so all of that should be available and transferred automatically. It's not a bad idea to get a copy of the records anytime you PCS, and you'd have to go to your patient administration office at the MTF to get those. For records, though, within your civilian care, so out in the TRICARE network, if you're seeing a private sector provider, those aren't centrally housed. I would recommend you go and ask for those [records] before you leave.

**Bruce:**

All right, next question. Should we get our medications refilled before we PCS?

**Krys:**

I think that is an excellent plan anytime you're traveling or transitioning, moving from location to location. I would check with your PCM or your prescribing provider, but sometimes, depending on the medication, you can get several weeks, several months of

medication. So, again, it depends on the medication, but that's always a good plan to get your meds refilled before you go.

**Bruce:**

OK. So, Nick, a question for you. How do we find a provider once we're at our new assignment?

**Nick:**

Right, and especially for finding a new behavioral health or mental health provider, if you try doing a Google search, it's kind of like the Wild West, and you're not sure what you're going to get. So inTransition, the DOD's inTransition program, is there to help service members and veterans get connected to care wherever it is that they're located and wherever it is they want to go.

So, if the service member or veteran isn't sure where to go for mental or behavioral health, just call the inTransition program, 24/7/365, at 800-424-7877. That's 800-424-7877. And inTransition can assign the service member or veteran to a coach who can identify care in their area that the person may be interested in, and we can help them along every step of the way until they're connected to that care.

**Krys:**

And then for the family member or child who may need services or may need to find a new provider, there are a couple of options for them, too. If you're in panel to the MTF, you can certainly connect with your primary care and they can connect you to services in the MTF, or contact the managed care support contractor who can help you find providers; either you can call them by phone or you can check their TRICARE directories on each of the contractor websites.

**Nick:**

Thanks. Yeah, I mean that's a really excellent point. When someone is PCSing, we don't want to leave the family members or certainly the children out in the cold in terms of getting connected to care as well.

And so, from a mental health standpoint or behavioral health standpoint, we often get asked, "Wow, that coaching to care service is fantastic, but is it only for service members and veterans?" It is, but if there's a family member or a dependent, spouse, child, whomever that is interested in getting connected to mental health care in their area, you can call inTransition.

We actually have a sister organization called the Psychological Health Resource Center. And you can call that inTransition number I just gave you, or a new one, 866-966-1020. And that's also 24/7. And we can help identify mental or behavioral health care resources in your area for your particular dependent or child, or whomever. We can help find out what's available in that area, too.

**Krys:**

Can I add one more note? I would also recommend families connect with non-clinical services, such as Military OneSource, which has a wealth of resources and you can connect for the non-medical services, they can start those as well as can help connect and find providers in the area.

**Bruce:**

Well, we always like it when people want to mention Military OneSource. So, thank you. We appreciate that. OK, let's transition a little bit briefly. A family with special needs. How do we connect a family who has a member with special needs with specialty providers at their new location?

**Krys:**

OK. For kids with special needs, there are a wide range of services available. For those who are involved in case management or who have opted for case management services in the MTF or within the managed care support contractors, those individuals can help with those transitions of care. Remember, case management is optional. If you're not currently enrolled, you can certainly ask both the MTF or your managed care support contractor. For those who are not in case management, you can certainly have providers assist with that warm handoff, but, ideally, you're having somebody in that primary care setting who's helping you with that transition of care.

**Bruce:**

OK, good, good. Here's the scenario. The family has left the one installation and they're driving across the country to go to their new one, and they're out in the middle, and one of their kids has a mishap with a skateboard and they need to go to the ... well, they need medical care. What should they do at that point?

**Krys:**

Well, in any emergency, go to the nearest emergency room and get those services, but don't worry. Your TRICARE benefit, your coverage, you're covered for that emergency care. I've left the East Region and I'm traveling across the country. And now I'm in the West Region and this skateboard incident occurs, you're still enrolled into the East Region contractor. And that emergency service will be covered. Routine services are different. They're not covered because you have to establish your enrollment and you have to respectively get that referral for a specific benefit. But that emergency service will be covered.

**Bruce:**

OK. I never had a skateboard, but I was prone to going over my handlebars. That was my specialty growing up. But all right, so let's transition to mental health. And Nick, if you

could help us out. I'm seeing a therapist here and as I go into my new location, what's the best way to find a new therapist at my new location?

**Nick:**

Absolutely. Well, my first bit of guidance would be to say, talk to your therapist. Sometimes you're in therapy and you're halfway through and you're making great progress, and then the PCS move can actually sneak up on everybody. And then you're at your last appointment and it's like, oh, well, here we are.

As an example, here we are in Gulfport and you're PCSing to Guam. Yeah. When you get to Guam, just call the MTF and see what happens. It can happen like that or hopefully your therapist will be able to get you connected and have points of contact at your next care destination or MTF wherever you're PCSing. But if not, or if the provider isn't so sure, the provider or the service member themselves with say three or four sessions to go, pick up the phone. Call into inTransition, say, hi, I'm here in. I'll use the example again, Health Clinic Gulfport, and I'm PCSing to Naval Hospital Guam. And I'd like to get connected to mental health care there.

InTransition can do a brief intake and then help you get connected, help that service member get connected to a provider, in this case, Guam, but wherever. And what's great about it is it takes the burden off of the provider who may not know any providers at the next care destination, may not know somebody in Guam, for all we know. And then also can take the stress and burden off the service member.

And also, and I think this is important. As people PCS, health care can sometimes fall to the bottom of the priority list. If you're PCSing, well, I've got to get my housing squared away. Is my spouse working, if I have one? Do I have kids? Do they need to be in school? Where's the grocery store?

And on that list is health care probably, but even further [down] on that list is mental health care. And what inTransition does is help keep your mental health care and getting connected to care top of mind and actually has action steps in place. And they work with you so that you get connected to care as quickly as you can. If you think of it analogously, if you're seeing a cardiologist, the cardiologist would say, "Well, we have an appointment today. When you PCS on Sunday, you should have an appointment next week."

All things considered, they're not going to be thrilled if, and you're not going to be thrilled if you say, "Well, maybe it'll take six months for me to see my cardiologist again." Mental health care, behavioral health care, it's [just] health care, just as important as anything else you, inTransition is there so your mental health care continuity remains strong and it doesn't fall through the cracks at the most important time, which is PCS time.

**Bruce:**

So, can spouses and children use these programs?

**Nick:**

Absolutely. Well, inTransition is there and anybody can call in. And what's great about it is, is if there is a spouse or service member that's concerned about their child and getting connected to care within inTransition, we have a sister organization, and you can just call the regular inTransition number and they'll get that to you.

And what we can do is identify resources either at the MTF or in the community, all the resources that are in your new geographic location. What inTransition won't do unless you're a service member or a veteran is we won't provide that coaching to care support, like I mentioned. But we can give you resources and information, and that's a great starting point for anybody.

If you're going to use Dr. Google, who knows what you're going to get. Use inTransition; we'll have resources that are available in your area that are verified. And then you can start and reach out to them as you wish. It's just another great way to keep family members and spouses and dependents, getting them support as well during this PCS season.

**Bruce:**

And Krys, did you want to add to that?

**Krys:**

I did. I wanted to put a plug as a reminder about the TRICARE benefit and the directory and the managed care support contractors. If you can't find resources, your next call should be to the managed care support contractor. They will help find available providers. And the other plug that I want to put is a reminder that for mental health outpatient services, so if you go to your psychologist's office or the psychiatrist outpatient office, those services, those office-based outpatient, mental health services do not need a referral for non-active-duty family members who are prime beneficiaries going to a network provider. If you are active duty, you always have to have a referral and authorization for network care, but for the non-active-duty family members, if you go to that network provider, you can just call and make that appointment once you're enrolled in that region.

**Bruce:**

OK. Do you have to do anything special with regard to the transfer of mental health records?

**Nick:**

That is a great question. My best understanding is that if you are receiving mental health care, behavioral health care at the MTF, then those records should stay in the electronic medical health record and transfer over to your new location. However, if you're seeing care out in the community, that may not be the case. But regardless, ask.

Ask the MTF, “Hey, how are my medical records getting connected to the next MTF?” And, hopefully, they have a quick and easy answer and hopefully it’s done. But if not, ask, and ask in the community, “Hey, I’m moving. I’ve had a great time with you. We’ve made a lot of progress, but I need my records to get transferred over to my new provider.” Ask how that happens. And they will let you know, but don’t just suffer in silence; ask these questions.

**Krys:**

And if I could put a plug as a practitioner in my private practice life, I would say I’ve had families ask me for summary notes. “I’m moving, I’m discharging, share a discharge summary.” I don’t know if that’s consistently done, but you can certainly ask for providers to do a discharge summary and you can take that with you for sure.

**Bruce:**

That’s great. Hey, any final words from either of you before we wrap up?

**Nick:**

Well, I’d just like to say thank you for this opportunity. When I first started in this job at inTransition, there was a little joke that said more senators and Congress people know about inTransition than clinicians and providers and service members, the people that actually use the product, so to speak. So, I’m glad to say that’s changing, thanks to great opportunities like this. But this is another great DOD resource for service members and veterans that’s available 24/7/365.

You don’t need to go it alone. If you don’t know where to go, and you want to initiate mental health care, even if it’s for the very first time, or you are PCSing, or you’re separating and getting out of the service, and you’re just not sure what options are available, or if you’re separating, if you’re VA eligible and how all that works and everything, it’s a lot of questions, frankly. I hear it’s a lot of confusion. Luckily, inTransition is there, 800-424-7877. We can help address your concerns and help you get connected to care at your next care destination, wherever that might be.

**Krys:**

And I just want to add, too, thank you for the opportunity, but also the opportunity to share the resources. There is a wealth out there, and I think it can be overwhelming sometimes. And whether you reach the TRICARE providers or your managed care support contractors, or maybe even just asking questions at the MTF, there are also lots of web-based resources on the [tricare.mil](http://tricare.mil) website, but also the managed care support contractors each have a wealth of resources or ask even at your EFMP office. There are lots of ways to get connected. So, ask, ask, ask.

**Bruce:**

Ask, ask, ask. Got it. Got it. Got it. Dr. Nicholas Polizzi and Dr. Krys Bienia. Thank you so much to the both of you for joining us today. Hey, I want to let you know, before we wrap up, that Military OneSource is an official part of the Defense Department. For real, our boss works in the Pentagon.

We're a website, a call center and now we're a podcast. So, of course, we want you to subscribe, but it's really a good idea, because we get into a whole range of topics designed to help military families navigate military life.

Thanks very much for listening. I'm Bruce Moody. Goodbye.