

Episode 3: PCS

EFMP & Me podcast transcript

Karen Terry:

You are a family in EFMP moving overseas for the first time. What steps should you take to prepare? We'll talk about that and more in this podcast for EFMP families. Hi, I'm Karen Terry and we're talking today about PCS.

Hi, and welcome to our podcast series about EFMP & Me and the Exceptional Family Member Program. I am Karen Terry, program analyst for the Office of Special Needs, and your host for today's episode. Our topic today is PCS. I am sure it is no secret to any of our listeners that a PCS move is stressful under the best circumstances. And that a family in EFMP may face additional challenges and concerns when they move. We'll be discussing some of the ins and outs of PCS moves, and as always, we will share tips, resources and information that can assist you in preparing for your next move. Our guest today is Jenne Funk. She is a program analyst with the Office of Special Needs. And because TRICARE coverage often becomes a big part of any PCS discussion, we're very happy to have our very own TRICARE liaison, Evangeline Tenor. So glad you were both able to join me today. Evangeline, can you tell us who you are, and just a bit about your expertise?

Evangeline Tenor:

Karen, I'm happy to be here and looking forward to a great discussion. I've worked with OSN since 2019, and have over 20 years of experience in the military health system. As a TRICARE liaison, I respond to families' questions on their complex medical or TRICARE benefits and claims. And these are through referrals from the Military OneSource special needs consultants.

Karen Terry:

Oh, OK, fantastic. And Jenne, you work at OSN as well, you're my office mate. Can you share a little bit about who you are and what kind of projects you're working on for our families in EFMP?

Jennifer Funk:

Hi, Karen, sure I can. I've worked at OSN since 2016. I've worked with military families for over 15 years with the majority of those years in EFMP. One of my main areas of responsibility in OSN is working with the services on family support guidance resources for providers and families and program development.

Karen Terry:



Well, thank you both for being here and for the lovely introductions you gave yourself. Now let's just jump right in to PCS. We all know moving is difficult. In fact, you may not know, but experts outside of DOD list moving as one of the top five most stressful life events. So even though our military families do it more often and have considerable support, there are a lot of moving parts in every PCS. So Jenne, how can EFMP help families manage the process so it is just a little bit less difficult?

Jennifer Funk:

As your listeners may know, EFMP is made up of three separate but interrelated components that work together to assist military families with special needs. These components are Identification and Enrollment, Assignment Coordination, and EFMP Family Support Services, with the last two being primary to a PCS move. EFMP enrollment is mandatory for sponsors and families with special needs, because it helps to ensure that medical and or educational special needs are considered during the assignment coordination process. Medical services and military personnel departments work with service members and families on the assignment coordination. There are a lot of places families who are preparing to move can go for assistance, and many of the resources can be found on EFMP & ME.

Karen Terry:

If I'm PCSing and I know where I'm going, is there anything I can do to get started and hopefully make sure I'm on the right track?

Jennifer Funk:

That's a really good question, Karen. First contact your installation EFMP Family Support office. They can help provide a warm handoff to the gaining locations' EFMP Family Support office. This will help you maintain consistent support services during a move. EFMP & Me also has great checklists for things to consider when PCSing. For example, we have a fact sheet called Preparing for Your Move, developed by our DOD family advisory panel, with representatives from all services who provided valuable input from the military families' perspective. The fact sheet lays out how to prepare for a move before, during and after, from both the medical and educational point of view. Another great resource for all families PCSing is Plan My Move. Plan My Move is an online tool on Military OneSource that allows you to build, organize and manage your PCS move through your own personal and customizable checklist. That's a really good one to check out too, Karen.

Karen Terry:

OK, so where can families go to find specific contact information for their future installation?

Jennifer Funk:

They can go to the military installation site that can be found on Military OneSource too. It's a free online directory, full of up-to-date installation information, stateside and overseas, which provides contact information for installation programs, services and more.

Karen Terry:

Oh wow.



Jennifer Funk:

You can also find links to services and other installations on the EFMP & ME PCS checklist.

Karen Terry:

So Jenne, if I'm moving overseas, is there anything different I should know?

Jennifer Funk:

Thanks for asking that question, Karen, that's a really important one. One thing to note is that before moving OCONUS, all family members are screened, not just those enrolled in EFMP, to ensure that all medical and or educational needs of the family members are considered during the Assignment Coordination process. Contact your EFMP office or the Family Member Travel Screening office at your local military treatment facility for more information. Remember to start the process as soon as you receive official notification of an assignment to an OCONUS location. That's the best way to go, start early.

Karen Terry:

Absolutely. And Evangeline, speaking of starting early, when would you recommend a family alert TRICARE about their move and what do they need to do?

Evangeline Tenor:

Well, Karen, I would say, talk with your current primary care provider about your impending move. They can connect you with a medical case manager to help facilitate an easy transition, finding specialty providers and other resources. You can also contact your MTF, your nearest TRICARE contractor or a beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator to locate a medical case manager. Make sure you have copies of your child's or adult dependent's medical records, including shot records, prescriptions and dosages, and hand carry these important documents to your new location. As you leave your current duty station, make sure you have an adequate amount of medication and medical supplies. You can request up to a 90-day supply, but depending on the type of medication, you may get less. You can reach out to a Military OneSource special needs consultant to review Medicare, Medicaid and supplemental security income information at your new location. You are covered by your current plan on your way to your new location. Once you arrive, update your DEERS record with your new address. This is necessary to maintain your military benefits at the new duty station. After DEERS is updated, it's important that you contact your nearest TRICARE contractor to transfer your TRICARE enrollment and connect with a new primary care provider.

Karen Terry:

Thanks, Evangeline. Jenne, if the special need is educational rather than medical, what should the family do to prepare?



Jennifer Funk:

Sure, Karen. Families moving with educational needs should make sure they hand-carry a copy of their child's latest individualized education program or IEP, or the latest individualized family service plan or IFSP. I would suggest they hand carry the entire record, including meeting minutes and the most recent progress report. It can also be helpful to save those important documents on a thumb drive or a CD for safekeeping and for easy retrieval. We encourage families to connect with their local EFMP Family Support staff and school liaison to ask for a warm handoff with their counterparts at the new installation. And to also ask about the possibility of advanced registration.

Karen Terry:

Oh, advanced registration, I've heard about that, but I'm not sure many of our families have. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Jennifer Funk:

Sure, I can. Advanced registration allows a family to register their child in the school district they anticipate they will be moving to. But it is only available in certain states. So check with your school liaison to see if your new location allows it. You can also find useful information on school districts, the possibility of advanced registration and more on the education directory, which is linked on EFMP & ME. To help organize your important paperwork, there's also a variety of what we call, special care organizational records to help you.

Karen Terry:

Oh wow.

Jennifer Funk:

There's so many resources I would love to mention. So maybe we could link them in the episode description, Karen, to make it easier for those listening.

Karen Terry:

Oh, of course, that sounds like a great idea, I'll do that. Evangeline, is there anything families should consider when it comes to specialized medical care?

Evangeline Tenor:

Well, Karen, there are several things to consider. Depending on your TRICARE plan, such as TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Prime Overseas, or Remote, US Family Health Plan, you might need a referral or authorization to see new specialty providers. At your new location, talk with your medical case manager who can help you find new specialty providers and other resources. You should try to see network providers instead of non-network providers to lessen your out-of-pocket fees.

Karen Terry:



Thanks, Evangeline. Well, this next question is for both of you. Can you tell me one thing that is a common concern for or challenge for families in the EFMP? Jenne, maybe you can focus on educational concerns with this answer and Evangeline medical and or TRICARE.

Jennifer Funk:

Yeah, that sounds good. One thing that the services and families often tell us is that it can be difficult setting up a new IEP at a new school. This is why it's very important to hand carry the current IEP for your family member or members and other important documents. Also, it's important to connect with your current local school liaison for a warm handoff to their counterpart at the gaining installation. Connect with both your school liaison and your local EFMP family support staff, and ask for a copy and explanation of your parental rights and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. It's also helpful, to understand the concept of comparable services. Every public school district must comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. But how they comply can vary by state and even within a state by school district. It's important to know that a service provided by one school may look different in another, but the end result is intended to be the same. The IDEA allows for this. If you, as the parent do not feel your child is being offered comparable services, ask for an explanation during the IEP meeting. Also be sure to request a copy of the parental rights at the new school. That document will explain what you need to do if you don't agree with the decisions made on your child's IEP. That's very important. And there are also many EFMP e-learning videos and modules related to special education, the dispute process, IEP and post-secondary education on the MillLife Learning website for families with educational needs. It's a really good place to check out some new and interesting topics there related to special education, Karen.

Karen Terry:

Great, thank you. Evangeline, can you tell me one thing that is a common concern for or challenge for families in the EFMP?

Evangeline Tenor:

Well, a common concern for our military families is getting care as soon as they move to a new location. I'd like to emphasize again, talk with your medical case manager and TRICARE regional contractor before you move, and at your new location. They can help you with any needed referrals or authorizations, so you have little or no interruptions.

Karen Terry:

Great, thank you. So we've talked a lot about several things to consider during a PCS move. And along the way, we've mentioned quite a few of the available resources that have been created to help. So let's talk about those just a bit more. Let me start by reminding everyone listening, that all these resources can be found in the episode description. And they're also linked in the PCS checklist that you can find on EFMP & ME. If you haven't been to EFMP & ME yet, it has checklists to help with CONUS moves, OCONUS moves, moving with children, unaccompanied assignments and more. So I encourage you to go in there and check it out. Jenne, in your opinion, what is the most helpful resource every family in the EFMP should use when they are in the PCS process?



Jennifer Funk:

Sure, Karen. It's hard to think of just one, so I'm going to give you two. First, the local EFMP Family Support office is a great place for families to start. As I said earlier, they can provide a warm handoff to the gaining location's EFMP Family Support office to help maintain support services, even if it's at a sister service or joint base location. As far as a good go-to resource, I really like the Preparing for Your Move fact sheet. It goes over the many things families need to consider before, during and after a move. It separates them out by medical and education concerns and lists links to helpful resources. The fact sheet is broken out into clear manageable steps to help both first-time and the more well-experienced PCS in military families with special needs.

Karen Terry:

Oh, that's one of my favorite resources. I agree, it is great. Evangeline, what do you recommend to our families?

Evangeline Tenor:

Karen, I'd recommend that families take some time to view the resources on [Tricare.mil/lifeevents/moving](https://www.tricare.mil/lifeevents/moving). From there, you'll select your TRICARE plan, whether you're moving within the same TRICARE region, to another TRICARE region or overseas. The site breaks it down step by step for you. So it's easy to follow.

Karen Terry:

The TRICARE website has a lot of good information and I'm glad you told them exactly where to go, just to make that search a little bit easier. But if you didn't have a chance to write that down, it is also directly linked on the PCS checklist and you guessed it, EFMP & ME.

OK, so what I'm hearing you both say, is that the key to a successful move is being proactive. And I think that's the key to success in just about everything, when it comes to a special needs loved one. The PCS is especially important because there are so many things to consider. Another way to proactively plan is through one of my favorite resources the DOD Education Directory for Children With Special Needs. I think you mentioned it earlier, Jenne, but I want to talk about it again, because it can be found on the Military OneSource website. And it has so much good information for parents of children with an IFSP or an IEP.

OK, wait, I have two favorites, and because you also mentioned school liaisons, Jenne, a few times, I want to highlight them because they are a great resource, and I want to just make sure I mentioned it again. They are on all the military installations and their job is to help build a relationship with the local school system and then provide assistance to military families when it's needed. It's important to know that school liaisons are not in EFMP, but they do work hand-in-hand with EFMP Family Support providers, and together the EFMP Family Support provider and the school liaison can help families find answers to their questions and concerns.



This has been so much fun talking to you, both. I miss you, I haven't seen you for a year and I'm thankful that you could both join me today and help me share this great information about PCS with our listeners. Do you have any final comments before we wrap up this episode?

Evangeline Tenor:

Well, Karen and Jenne, it's been a pleasure. And I'd like to say thank you to all our families listening out there. And whether you're moving near or far, we're here to help you make a smooth transition.

Jennifer Funk:

I agree with you both. It's been nice talking with you and they're all getting used to this whole new virtual experience. But I also want to thank families all across the services, stateside and overseas. We hope that you check out the many resources we talked about today, including EFMP & ME, and also that you get to know your local EFMP Family Support staff to help address your specific family needs and support a successful move.

Karen Terry:

All right, then, don't forget all the resources mentioned can be found on EFMP & ME and Military OneSource. They're also directly linked in the episode guide. Service members and families, you can learn all about PCS on EFMP & ME, but there are also free online courses available through MilLife Learning that you might want to check out. There's a really great one called PCS Travel Considerations. You can find it on militarylearning.militaryonesource.mil. You can also go to [efmpandme](http://efmpandme.militaryonesource.mil), all one word, and it's spelled out in the URL. So efmpandme.militaryonesource.mil. And service providers and leaders, check out the recently added section just for you on EFMP & ME. It's again efmpandme.militaryonesource.mil.

Thanks to all of you for listening in. If you have feedback or questions you can go to, you guessed it, EFMP & ME, click on the contact button in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, and then click Feedback. It's easy as that. During our next podcast discussion, we are going to be talking about another really great topic, and that is legal and long-term financial planning. These are two very important topics. So we are going to be discussing things like, legal services you can find on installation, establishing guardianship, creating a special needs trust. There's lots of great information there, so much in fact, that we had to break it up into two parts. So I'm looking forward to it and I hope you are, too, please join us.

You've been listening to a podcast for EFMP families brought to you by the Office of Special Needs and by Military OneSource. Come back to catch our episode on long-term and financial planning. I'm Karen Terry. Thanks for listening.

