

EFMP & Me Podcast, Season 2, Episode 1: The Medical Component of EFMP Transcript

Transcript

- **[Jen Wong]** You are a service member with a family member enrolled in EFMP, and you've just received a new duty assignment. How can you make sure their medical needs will be met at your new location? We'll talk about that and much more in this podcast for families enrolled in EFMP. I'm Jen Wong and today, we're going to talk about the medical part of EFMP.

- **[Jen Wong]** Hi, and welcome to the EFMP & ME Podcast brought to you by the Office of Special Needs and Military OneSource. I'm Jen Wong, program analyst with the Office of Special Needs and your host for today's episode. This podcast series highlights a variety of topics that can be further explored by visiting EFMP & ME on Military OneSource. EFMP & ME is a digital tool that provides valuable Exceptional Family Member Program-related topics, resources and checklists to service members, families, providers and leaders, 24/7. In today's episode, we will be talking about the medical part of EFMP. Our guest for today's episode is Becky Tucker. Becky, welcome and thank you so much for joining us today.

- **[Becky Tucker]** Hi, Jen. Thanks. I'm happy to be here.

- **[Jen Wong]** Can you tell our listeners a little bit about what you do with EFMP for the Army?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Well, I do quite a bit. I manage the medical piece of EFMP and ensure enrollments, updates and dis-enrollments get processed within our mandated time period. I also ensure that family member travel screenings, referred to later as FMTS, are completed using current policy and guidance. And FMTS is for those service members who have received an assignment to an overseas area. I continue to look for ways to improve our processes. And a couple years ago, I developed a map on our Army Medicine EFMP website for soldiers and their families to use, to connect with the appropriate medical facility for their needs, whether it's screening or FMTS processing.

So we take care of soldiers and families, no matter where they're located worldwide. Each region and each medical office has a set area of responsibility. So if we don't have a medical facility in a certain state, we do have a medical facility assigned to service that state. I also coordinate, facilitate PCS moves for family members who cannot travel by vehicle or commercial air due to their medical condition. And lastly, I compile data for various reports, analyze that data to ensure timelines are met and identify issues and trends for targeted training that may be needed.

- **[Jen Wong]** Wow. Becky, that sounds like you stay very, very busy.

- **[Becky Tucker]** Yes.

- **[Jen Wong]** Wow. Before we continue our discussion on the medical part of the EFMP, I do want to clarify a few things. As some of our listeners may know, the medical part may have

slightly different nuances in each branch of service, but today we'll be talking about EFMP medical on a cross-service basis as much as possible. And if our listeners do have specific questions, be sure to contact EFMP medical for your specific service branch. And let me even back up from there. For our listeners who may be new to EFMP, it is a mandatory enrollment program that assists military families with special medical or educational needs. And there are three parts of the program. EFMP medical, EFMP Assignment Coordination, and EFMP Family Support. And each part plays a unique role, but works in tandem with each other to support the family. So, Becky, can you explain to our listeners what EFMP medical does?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Sure, Jen. Medical piece of the program is responsible for identifying family members who may have a medical condition that meets enrollment criteria, which has been established by the Office of Special Needs, or OSN. Medical is also responsible for enrolling those family members with a medical or educational need into EFMP. When that enrollment's completed, the service member's personnel record is annotated, indicating they have a family member enrolled in EFMP. When a service member is being placed on an assignment to a new location that annotation tells the assignment manager or detailee that they have to coordinate with a projected duty location medical facility to determine whether or not the needs of the family member enrolled in EFMP can be met at that projected location.

So information about service availability is then relayed to the assignment manager detailee who is responsible for making that assignment for that service member. It's really important to note the only ones who can see the specific medical information are the medical EFMP staff. The assignment manager only sees the annotation indicating EFMP enrollment. And it's also important to note the services differ slightly in how this is done. Some do that assignment coordination after orders are generated and some do it before they place a service member on orders.

- **[Jen Wong]** OK. That makes sense, Becky. So it doesn't sound like EFMP is generating the assignment.

- **[Becky Tucker]** Correct. The EFMP does not generate the assignment, that personnel assignment manager, detailee monitor, whatever that assignment person is called in their respective branch of service, because they're all different, they ask the person who's working the assignment just like for any other service member, but before they give the green light on that assignment, they see that annotation to let the medical professionals do their part.

- **[Jen Wong]** OK. Got it. So EFMP doesn't give assignments, but they do provide a recommendation about the availability of services for the family, right?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Right, right. Jen, that is so correct. So EFMP does not generate the assignment. EFMP medical staff just provide the recommendation on whether or not the services required by those family members are available at the projected duty location.

- **[Jen Wong]** OK. OK. Good to know. So how might a family interact with EFMP medical when it comes to identification and enrollment?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Well, Jen, there's a variety of ways that this can be done. Service members can self-report to the Medical EFMP office to initiate an enrollment, or a medical provider can complete the medical enrollment form, the DD Form 2792, and either send the document or have the family member take the form to the Medical EFMP office. If there is early intervention or special education, the early intervention or school personnel will complete a DD Form 2792-1

to enroll the child in EFMP and either send the form to the medical EFMP office or have the family take the form to the medical facility, to have the enrollment processed into EFMP.

So families do need to ensure that when they submit the 2792, the medical enrollment form and/or the 2792-1, the educational enrollment form, that the information being submitted is factual, accurate, complete and correct before they sign the form. They should never sign a blank form. By signing that certification block on the form, the parent or individual majority age is agreeing with all the information that's on that form, whether it's completed by the treating provider, the primary care manager or the early intervention special education staff, the accuracy of that information is very important, especially when it comes to coordinating military members to next duty assignment.

- **[Jen Wong]** Absolutely. Becky, I cannot agree more. One thing I always tell families is to own your paperwork. That paperwork is yours. It's about you or your family member. You own it. So it's very important that it depicts you or your family member's needs accurately and make sure it paints that picture. Talk about frequency of care. Do you need home modifications? What's the impact, let's say for a child, when it comes to adult supervision or safety? What's important about your care or your family member's care now that's going to be important at the next duty station? And so for our listeners, if you'd like to go back to Season 1, we do have a podcast episode all about EFMP enrollment, and it has a lot more information about that as well. So Becky, the family sees the front end of what EFMP medical is doing, sort of like what we just discussed with the identification, the enrollment into the program. But in reality, EFMP medical plays a role in the assignment coordination as well. What might families not see that's happening on the back end?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Well, so we talked about earlier, the assignment manager detailer sees that EFMP annotation on the service member's personnel record. That indicates the needs of the family member needs to be taken into consideration during the assignment process. In order to do that, the assignment manager detailer must coordinate with a projected duty location either by coordinating directly with the medical facility at the projected location or coordinating with the centralized office. Each military service does this a little differently, but the goal is to ensure services are available so orders can be published to the right location where care is available.

- **[Jen Wong]** Mm-hmm. Let's see, we've talked about EFMP medical facilitating that identification and enrollment into EFMP. And then we talked about EFMP medical being a part of that assignment coordination process when it comes to verifying medical availability of services and access to care at the new duty location. I'm going to ask, Becky, just to clarify, EFMP medical does not provide a medical service, right?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Correct. Jen. EFMP is not a medical program. Even though all the enrollment pieces are done through medical, it's actually part of the assignment coordination process. It does not set up appointments, it does not do referrals. It does not interact with your medical care in that way. Some folks believe that they have priority for medical appointments, however, access to care timelines, as well as priority for medical appointments are set in the law, totally unrelated to EFMP. So active duty are the first priority, with dependents of active duty are second. Routine appointments with a person's primary care provider are to be made within seven days, and with a specialty provider within 28 days. So EFMP is considered a wellness appointment and those appointments then are to be made within 28 days. And that's for routine updates or disenrollment requests. Family member travel screening for overseas movement falls into the seven-day timeline. So reporting to the medical facility, as soon as the

sponsor is notified of an overseas assignment, can actually help facilitate proper coordination and completion of that paperwork and that process.

- **[Jen Wong]** So, what happens if a service member or a family member is confused in that process? So maybe they went through that overseas family member travel screening, and they're reviewing the family member's needs to ensure they'll be met overseas. And maybe while going through that process, they mistakenly think that that was an intake to get into EFMP. And now that they're automatically enrolled in EFMP, even if there was no enrollment criteria, we hear this often and sometimes service members believe not only that they were enrolled in EFMP, but that they are assigned a medical case manager. So how do they know whether or not they were enrolled in EFMP and where can they go for assistance or answers to some of these questions?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Well, to answer some of those, they can talk to their medical EFMP coordinator, ask for a full explanation of what everything means. The FMTS process, the documentation that was completed, what happens to it, how it can help them when they move to a new location. If a family member does get enrolled into EFMP, because many times the whole family has no issues and no need, and so they may go wherever they want at that point. They can also inquire about nurse case managers. And if they would benefit from being assigned a nurse case manager, they can ask that of the EFMP coordinator or the medical screener. The treating provider that they see can recommend and send a referral for case management services, either from an MTF or the managed-care support contractors' case management program. Once that's done, a nurse case manager will reach out to the family to discuss the medical needs of the family member.

And once that assessment's completed, the nurse case manager will determine if the family member has met criteria to be in the case management program. A treatment plan is then developed and that assists with the family member's medical needs. So individuals enrolled in the Extended Care Health Option, commonly referred to as ECHO or the extended home health care, are typically assigned a nurse case manager who assist them when they move from one location to another. And they do a lot of coordination with the gaining medical folks. So the family support EFMP staff can also assist the family by providing non-medical case management services and system navigators can also assist with getting them to the right point of contact to answer questions that they may have.

- **[Jen Wong]** It sounds like there's a lot of helpful people out there to assist the family. Let's transition and talk a little bit about another valuable resource, which is EFMP & Me. So part of the intent behind the creation of EFMP & Me on Military OneSource was to create a place where families or their providers or leaders could access resources and information to answer their questions regardless of where they were or the time of day. Can you tell us a bit about how the checklists are organized on EFMP & Me and what medical needs or diagnoses are covered in these checklists?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Sure, Jen. It's true. We did want this to be a way for families to find answers and give them the power to self-advocate. With that in mind, we decided to focus the medical checklist on associated processes rather than specific diagnoses. When you go into the medical checklist, you'll see there's eight of them. They address things like organizing information, seeking behavioral health care, navigating TRICARE, among other topics the family may want to explore. As we stated, EFMP is not medical care, but we do want to help families find the right medical information or people to reach out to for support. That's why, for example, the TRICARE

checklist provides great tips on the TRICARE regions, accessing medical benefits and services such as specialty care, the Autism Care Demonstration, pharmacy coverage, TRICARE nurse case managers, and TRICARE ECHO program.

- **[Jen Wong]** And so let's say there is a family enrolled in EFMP for a medical need. I'm assuming that the TRICARE checklist is not the only place for them to look on EFMP and Me.

- **[Becky Tucker]** Correct. There is so much more. Don't just start with the TRICARE checklist.

- **[Jen Wong]** There's a lot.

- **[Becky Tucker]** There's a lot. There's even a checklist for families looking into government assistance programs like Medicaid and Medicaid waivers, which of course differ from state to state. So they need to know which one they may fall into, even if it doesn't seem like that's the right one. And Supplemental Security Income commonly known as SSI. And that helps with medical and associated expenses.

- **[Jen Wong]** For someone enrolled in EFMP for a medical reason, where is a good place to start on EFMP & Me?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Oh, Jen. That's easy. I'd start with Organizing for Success checklists.

- **[Jen Wong]** Yes.

- **[Becky Tucker]** It provides resources like the Special Care Organizational Record or SCOR, which can help them keep their notes organized. Items that should be placed in the SCOR are medication lists, dosages, when they're taken, how often it's taken, prescriptions, doctors' names and numbers, appointments and so much more. The SCOR keeps all the items, which quickly pile up around the house, organized in one place. And that checklist also prompts you to look into TRICARE options, reminds you about the importance of self-care and similar items that the family may want to explore. It's a good place to start, and then go from there.

- **[Jen Wong]** Becky, I really like that you suggested the checklist about Organizing for Success. That's exactly where I would start. I love organizing. There's a wealth of information in the checklist. So diving right in can sometimes create a rabbit-hole effect. Like you mentioned earlier, you look at TRICARE and then there's TRICARE ECHO and then there's government programs and then there's the Medicaid waivers and it just keeps going, right? And so I swear in every conversation, I always mention the SCOR because it's just that useful. And it's great to organize those medical and educational records for children, young adults, adults or elder care. I like that you can print it or download it. You can even download those EFMP & Me checklists and add it to it. So whether you are a print-it kind of person or download-it kind of person, let's say you download it to a thumb drive. It's great to have in the event that you need to leave quickly in an emergency, or if you need to pass that information along to a caregiver in your absence.

- **[Becky Tucker]** Yes. Jen, that SCOR is very user friendly and we see natural disasters occurring more and more frequently and very unexpectedly. So it's a really good idea to have something that can be easily transported in case a family has to evacuate. And the SCOR is just that. It's simple, it's easy to carry on a thumb drive like you said or you can, you know, it's small, easily accessible, or you can save it digitally to a small laptop so you can quickly grab it and go.

- **[Jen Wong]** Absolutely. Absolutely. And you know, EFMP & Me is also for all audiences. So for service members and family members, there are those checklists and the checklists have links to

resources and information. And for service providers and leaders, it provides valuable information that can be used when assisting families who are enrolled in EFMP or maybe who are going to enroll in EFMP. And so Becky, from an EFMP medical perspective, what do you think are the useful parts of EFMP & Me that you'd like to highlight for those service providers and leaders who may be listening right now?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Well, Jen, the service providers and leaders should really be aware of how they can assist their service members enrolled in EFMP. Work with them to ensure they have the services they need so the service member can focus on their mission. They really need to know local resources in order to refer the service member to the right activity for assistance, whether it's medical, personnel or family support.

- **[Jen Wong]** And lastly, Becky, what would you say is the most important piece of advice that you can offer families for helping them manage medical concerns?

- **[Becky Tucker]** Oh, Jen, that's pretty easy. The most important, whether it's family or leaders, write down and ask questions. Write them down, write down their questions, their concerns, their issues, talk to their local EFMP office or their provider so they understand what you need to do and when it needs to be done. And start early. You also have the installation EFMP Family Support staff at the Family Support Center who can assist with navigating unfamiliar territory and other community resources as they have access to federal and state programs, as well as local.

- **[Jen Wong]** That's right. Thanks, Becky for bringing up the EFMP Family Support staff, because it is a good reminder that there are three parts of EFMP. And so I do like to keep in mind that there's those EFMP Family Support folks there on the installation who can help connect families to where they need to go. And so, Becky, I want to thank you so, so much for participating in this discussion and providing such great information and valuable resources to our listeners.

- **[Becky Tucker]** Jen, thank you for having me. It's been my pleasure.

- **[Jen Wong]** Absolutely. And thank you to our listeners for joining us today. We hope you have a better understanding of how EFMP medical works and how important it is to manage your paperwork. Keep it organized, keep up with changes and stay on top of those processes to make sure PCS moves and other transitions flow more smoothly. Never hesitate to ask for help when you need it and check out EFMP & Me and review the medical section checklist to get more in-depth information. If you have questions or need additional assistance, check in with your EFMP Family Support staff or Military OneSource EFMP special needs consultants. Again, thanks so much for joining us, Becky.

- **[Becky Tucker]** You're welcome.

- **[Jen Wong]** And thanks for listening.

- **[Jen Wong]** You've been listening to a podcast for families enrolled in EFMP brought to you by the Office of Special Needs and Military OneSource. Come back to catch our episode on Advocating for Yourself and Others. I'm Jen Wong. Thanks for listening.