

Office of Special Needs EFMP Podcast— Exceptional Family Member Program Standardization – Family Support Services Enhancements

Office of Special Needs

Episode transcript

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the Office of Special Needs EFMP Podcast. This is an official podcast of the Defense Department. I'm Bruce Moody. The Defense Department recently published a new policy that ensures support provided to families with special needs is consistent from service to service. This podcast series is devoted to breaking down this new policy in order to help families understand what in the Exceptional Family Member Program has changed and why. Joining us to help us through this is Tomeshia Barnes from the Office of Special Needs. Tomeshia, welcome back to the podcast.

Tomeshia Barnes:

Thank you, Bruce.

Bruce Moody:

Well, we're going to continue our conversation talking about this policy. The Exceptional Family Member Program consists of three parts working together. That's identification and enrollment, assignment coordination and Family Support. In previous podcasts, we discussed standardization-driven enhancements to identification and enrollment, and also assignment coordination. In this episode, we'll tackle the third part of the EFMP triangle, which is Family Support. So I'll start by asking, what is EFMP Family Support? How does it fit into the program overall?

Tomeshia Barnes:

Great question, Bruce. EFMP Family Support is the component of the program that assists families with navigating and accessing the services and supports they need. It encompasses information and referral and nonclinical case management support for families with education and medical needs, including the development and maintenance of an individualized services plan. When I think about EFMP Family Support, what I really think about is having that point of contact that can help families access and navigate the wealth of services and supports available to them within their local community and on their installation. And what I love to say about Family Support in relation to identification and enrollment and assignment coordination is that the providers are there, and they're available to assist families with navigating the other components of the program.

Bruce Moody:

What changes will families notice to Family Support services as a result of the standardization of EFMP?

Tomeshia Barnes:

One of the key components with the revisions to Family Support services that I think is important to note is, upon enrollment in the EFMP, the Family Support Office will contact the family to ensure they are knowledgeable about the services and supports available to them. We really want to make sure that families know how EFMP can support them throughout their military life cycle. Also, Family Support providers are required to complete at least one annual personal contact to each family assigned to their caseload. Something else that I really think is important for families to note, although it's not a new practice, it is new within the policy, and it's that families that are moving to a new location are to be offered a Family Support warm handoff to the gaining installation's EFMP Family Support Office. And if it's OK with you, Bruce, I'd like to describe what that warm handoff is.

Bruce Moody:

Yeah, please. Please go ahead.

Tomeshia Barnes:

Thank you. The EFMP Family Support warm handoff is the process of Family Support Office at the losing location contacting the Family Support office at the gaining location to communicate a family's needs to proactively prepare for the family's arrival and the continuation of services. And it's so important for families to know that this is available to them and that this should be happening for them.

Bruce Moody:

Tomeshia, can families enrolled in EFMP reach out to their Family Support provider on their own? And how would they do that?

Tomeshia Barnes:

Absolutely. Families can reach out to their Family Support Office on their own. If a family does not know who to contact to receive this information, I encourage families to go to the online tool MilitaryINSTALLATIONS and utilize that resource to locate and find the EFMP Family Support Office at their installation. And that online tool will have the contact information so that the family can contact the EFMP Family Support Office directly.

Bruce Moody:

What sort of assistance can families expect from their Family Support provider?

Tomeshia Barnes:

Families can expect information and referrals from military and community services, education outreach, information about early intervention, and the available services within the local school system. They definitely should expect that warm handoff to the EFMP program at the next location, and nonclinical case management. And one of the things I love to really emphasize about EFMP Family Support is they're available to support families before, during and after a permanent change of station. So we ask families to really utilize that resource because they're there to help.

Bruce Moody:

Where can listeners find support or additional information about EFMP?

Tomeshia Barnes:

One way to find additional information about EFMP is to contact Military OneSource. You can contact them directly by phone or you could set up a live chat. And if you have any additional questions about EFMP, I just want to emphasize, please contact your EFMP Family Support Office. They are definitely there to help. And again, if you're not sure where your EFMP Family Support Office is located, you can look them up through the online tool MilitaryINSTALLATIONS.

Bruce Moody:

Tomeshia, we really appreciate your help in understanding this new standardization of EFMP, and it's always great to have you on the podcast. Thank you for joining us today.

Tomeshia Barnes:

Thank you for having me, Bruce.

Bruce Moody:

Absolutely. Thanks for joining this episode of the Office of Special Needs EFMP Podcast, brought to you by the Defense Department. Be sure to subscribe because we'll be covering all the EFMP standardization enhancements you'll want to know about. Share your feedback about this podcast as well as your ideas for future episodes for military families with special medical or educational needs, and the leaders and providers who serve them by visiting the Office of Special Needs feedback form. It's a link. We'll put it in the program notes. And as always, you can contact militaryonesource.mil anytime for support. I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you so much for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.