

## Office of Special Needs EFMP Podcast— Exceptional Family Member Program Standardization – Monitoring and Oversight 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 with this is Tomeshia Barnes from the Office of Special Needs. Tomeshia, welcome back to this episode as we continue our discussion on this new policy.

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

Thank you, Bruce.

**Bruce Moody:**

Let's begin, as we should, with an overview of the Exceptional Family Member Program, how it helps military families with special needs. And then please, kind of get into the recent enhancements made to the program.

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

The Exceptional Family Member Program, commonly referred to as the EFMP, is comprised of three components: identification and enrollment, assignment coordination, and Family Support. Identification and enrollment is the entry point into the EFMP. But when we really talk about how the EFMP supports families, the biggest and the most visible component of the EFMP is EFMP Family Support. And what EFMP Family Support does for families is help them navigate and access the wealth of resources and supports that's available to them within their local community. Federal and non-federal supports.

The recent enhancements to the EFMP include the establishment of standard processes and procedures for the facilitation of the EFMP in the areas of enrollment, disenrollment, the continental United States assignment coordination and Family Support. And within Family Support, there were quite a few enhancements to the EFMP respite care program.

**Bruce Moody:**

How will the EFMP process continue to be reviewed and adjusted to meet the needs of military families?

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

Enhancing and improving the EFMP is a continuous effort for the Office of Special Needs. To do so, that's where monitoring and oversight of the EFMP comes in, and why it's a critical function of the office. Monitoring and oversight of the EFMP involves the collection of data that really provides information on program efficiencies.

We also are looking at data on program satisfaction as well as where we have needs, and we look for gaps and trends within that data. And so, as we collect data, we're collecting data that really talks to us about the program and provides us with the necessary information to proactively identify needs. And not just identify the needs, but proactively provide solutions to better support our families.

And I think another piece that I like to highlight is, yes, we're going to collect data, performance metric data on the program, but it also involves getting feedback from military families that are enrolled in the EFMP as well.

**Bruce Moody:**

Let's talk about that. What does monitoring and oversight of EFMP involve?

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

So, monitoring and oversight of the EFMP involves the reporting and analysis of performance metrics, as well as the DOD Coordinating Committee. And so when you look at the reporting analysis of performance metrics, it is obtaining data that allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, as well as identify needs within the program so that we could better support families.

**Bruce Moody:**

So who convenes the overarching Defense Department Coordinating Committee for EFMP activities, and how often does it meet?

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

So the DOD Coordinating Committee is convened by the assistant secretary of defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and meets at least biannually to review the implementation of policies, procedures and programs that support military families with special needs.

**Bruce Moody:**

What are the mandatory functional areas that the committee focuses on during its meetings?

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

So the mandatory functional areas that the committee focuses on during its meetings is military medical, military and civilian personnel, housing, education, legal services, child and youth services, morale, welfare and recreation. Within this committee, it's designed to look at all of the various functional areas that support families. So that as we're looking at policies, we're looking at procedures and programs, is from the lens of how we could better support military families enrolled in the EFMP.

**Bruce Moody:**

Tomeshia, what are some of the performance metrics and effectiveness measures included in the reporting requirements for EFMP oversight and monitoring?

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

Some of the performance and effectiveness measures include the total number of problematic assignments, including early return of family members or reassignments of the service member. And that's for both CONUS and overseas assignments. We also look at the process cycle time, and that is for identification and enrollment, disenrollment, and assignment coordination.

Another important metric is the total number of reassignments. And within that metric, we also collect data on how often service members request reassignments, the reason for the request, and from what military installation reassignments are requested. As we continue to work to enhance and improve the program, we will definitely look at expanding performance metrics, to ensure that we are collecting data that enables us to proactively improve the program for families.

**Bruce Moody:**

Now we're covering a lot of ground here and trying not to get too deep in the weeds. So where can listeners find support and more information in general about EFMP?

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

Listeners could find support or additional information about EFMP from their EFMP Family Support provider. I encourage any listener, any family to talk with the EFMP Family Support Office, and that is one area that can help you navigate EFMP, as well as any other question you may have.

**Bruce Moody:**

So, Tomeshia, what we've been doing in the past several episodes is taking this new Defense Department policy and breaking it down, to go over the various aspects of how we've standardized the support across the services. Having completed that, we are going to continue the work of developing podcast episodes for this series to support families who have special needs. And on that note, I really invite you to just sort of share what you, what your team feels, kind of about the work that you do in the community that you serve.

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

The department is committed to enhancing and improving services and supports provided to military families with educational and medical needs. The effort of the Office of Special Needs is not a one-time effort. There is a continuous commitment and focus on improving and enhancing the EFMP for families. Therefore, we're talking today about one set of enhancements to the policy. But as we continue to enhance and improve the program, there'll be additional updates and enhancements to the program that is reflected in this policy.

The population that we serve is our focus area, and we are committed to ensuring that we have a program that is designed and reflective of their needs. And so as we continue this effort, our commitment is not only on improving the program, but from the lens of proactively improving the program for families, and taking in what their needs are and finding ways to best support them. And so, for the Office of Special Needs, this is a continuous effort, and you'll continue to see enhancements and improvements as we focus on doing what we need to do to better support families.

**Bruce Moody:**

Tomeshia, to sort of illustrate what you're saying, it's really interesting that as your new policy was posting, you and your team were already having meetings and working on the next iterations to support for families with special needs. So the work definitely continues. This program will continue to grow, and in large part through the feedback that we get through the communities that we serve. So, wonderful to speak with you as always, and we look forward to having you back on the podcast.

**Tomeshia Barnes:**

Thank you, Bruce.

**Bruce Moody:**

Thank you. And thank you for joining this podcast of the Office of Special Needs EFMP podcast, brought to you by the Defense Department. Be sure to subscribe because we're covering all the aspects of the Exceptional Family Member Program, and you can share your feedback about this podcast and send us a note using the feedback form. And as always, you can connect with support anytime at [militaryonesource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil).

I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you so much for listening. Bye-bye.