



Key Message

Federal law requires the Defense Department to request state reports regarding instances of child abuse and neglect involving military family members. States can assist military Family Advocacy Programs in providing needed support by requiring child protective services to report cases to the military at the onset of their investigations.

Discussion Points

1. Title 10 United States Code Section 1787 directs the secretary of defense to request each state to provide for the reporting of any known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect in which the victim or suspect is a member of the armed forces (or the spouse of the member).
2. The DOD established FAP to address the prevention of and response to child abuse and neglect involving military families. The program incorporates prevention, education and training efforts to make all personnel aware of the scope of child abuse and neglect, domestic abuse and problematic sexual behavior in children and youth, as well as to facilitate collaborative and cooperative efforts.
3. There is often no corresponding state statute directing when state and local governments should share case information with the appropriate military authorities, including Family Advocacy Programs.
4. Child protective services may lack direction to collect information concerning the military affiliation of families. Consequently, these agencies may not be aware of military family cases that should be reported to FAP.
5. As 70% of military families live off a military installation and in your communities, statutory authority would support the development of more consistent memorandums of understanding, allowing better coordination of local child welfare and military protective and rehabilitative services in support of military children and families.



A 2020 Government Accountability Office report to Congress highlighted the importance of state statutes that require the collection and reporting of military affiliation to the appropriate military authorities as part of state child abuse cases. The bottom line, particularly for those who do not know the military way of life, is that unlike civilian employers, the military services have the obligation to know what is happening with our service members and families 24/7. It is part of how we do business.