



Department of Defense

PRIMER FOR CIVILIAN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS:

# Providing Support to Our Military Families

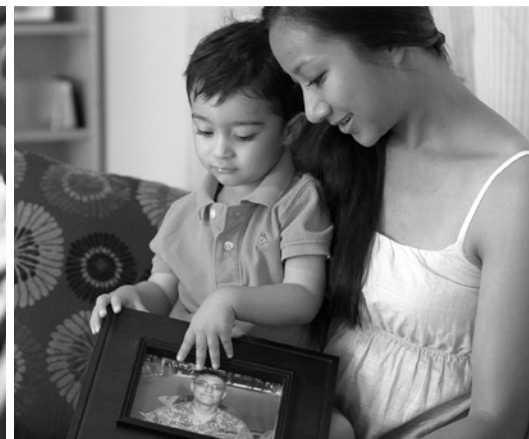
December 2014



The Magellan Awards are a League of American Communications Professionals LLC competition, recognizing outstanding communication campaigns and organizational achievements. The Primer for Civilian Nonprofit Organizations received the prestigious Gold Award in the Community Relations competition category for the 2013 Communications Campaign competition. The competition routinely includes hundreds of entries from some of the most well-recognized organizations around the world, including Fortune 500 corporations and nonprofits aiding individual communities.

PRIMER FOR CIVILIAN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS:

# Providing Support to Our Military Families





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# Introduction

Service members make many sacrifices to protect our nation. Military families share the challenges, often managing households and raising their children as single parents while their loved ones are away. The community-based services you provide are an important part of supporting our service members and strengthening military families.

This guide provides demographic information that highlights the factors that make military families unique, along with some general information about the types of ongoing and occasional support they may need. It will help you understand the challenges service members and their families face, what support is available through the military community and how to link military families to existing resources. Finally, you will learn how you can best support them through delivery of services in the communities that you share.

## *Military service members: who they are<sup>1</sup>*

The military is made up of 1.37 million active-duty service members who serve in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force. Of these active-duty service members:

- ▶ There are 43 percent who are age 25 or younger.
- ▶ There are 55 percent who are married.
- ▶ There are 15 percent who are female.
- ▶ There are 43 percent who have children.  
More than half of those children are 8 years old or younger.

Another 842,510 service members make up the Selected Reserve, which includes members of the Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Army National Guard and Air National Guard. Of these reserve members:

- ▶ There are 34 percent who are age 25 or younger.
- ▶ There are 46 percent who are married.
- ▶ There are 18.5 percent who are female.
- ▶ There are 42.5 percent who have children.

<sup>1</sup>2013 Demographics Report Profile of the Military Community. Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Military Community and Family Policy.

## *Military families: where they live*

Service members and their families live in big cities and small towns across the country and around the world. They share the same concerns other families do; they worry about keeping their families safe and healthy and about providing a quality education for their children. But military families move seven times more often than non-military families, usually over long distances or overseas.<sup>2</sup>

- ▶ Eighty-six percent of active-duty service members live in the United States.
- ▶ Approximately 70 percent of active-duty military families in the United States live in civilian communities and not on a military installation.
- ▶ Active-duty service members live in more than 4,000 civilian communities around the world.
- ▶ Seventy percent of active-duty service members live in California, Virginia, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Washington, Florida, Kentucky, Hawaii and Colorado.
- ▶ Most Reserve Component families — 99 percent — live in the United States.
- ▶ Fewer military families own homes than their civilian counterparts.
- ▶ Many active-duty military families don't get to decide on their own when or where they will live next, meaning they don't get to select their next duty station.

## *What makes military families unique*

Military families are much the same as other non-military families, but they face additional challenges. Despite these challenges — or maybe because of them — military families are surprisingly resilient. Here are some of the ways military families are unique from most civilian families:

- ▶ Service members often marry and have children younger than their civilian counterparts.
- ▶ Military families are more culturally diverse.
- ▶ Military families may live in remote locations.
- ▶ Military families often live far from extended family and the help and support they can provide.
- ▶ The military member's job entails the risk of injury or death.
- ▶ The military member's job routinely involves irregular hours and an unpredictable schedule.
- ▶ The military member may be frequently absent due to training and deployment.

<sup>2</sup>The U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, 2007-2009.



## *Military support: core services*

The Department of Defense recognizes that taking care of military families is an important part of keeping our military strong. The DoD has a broad set of programs and services that support military families and ensure they are ready to meet the challenges of military life. The list of programs and support services is extensive and varies by military service and by installation, but these programs are at the core of military family support:

- ▶ Child care
- ▶ Deployment support
- ▶ Financial management services
- ▶ Confidential help through non-medical counseling
- ▶ Relocation assistance
- ▶ Military spouse employment assistance
- ▶ School transition services for military children
- ▶ Support for youth development
- ▶ Services for families with special needs
- ▶ Counseling, advocacy and support for domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect
- ▶ Programs serving National Guard and reserve members and other service members who are geographically dispersed from a military installation

This military support is part of the Military Family Readiness System, a network of programs, services, people and agencies on military installations and in civilian communities. The Military Family Readiness System promotes the readiness and quality of life for service members and their families. Service providers working within these programs work closely and collaboratively to meet the varied needs of the military families who come to them for support.

This guide will help you identify some of the key issues military members and their families face and the support services available through military programs, whether on military installations, in local communities or online. This information can help you understand how the services you provide as part of the Military Family Readiness System can be tailored to meet the needs of military members and their families.





# Healthy Relationships

Everyone faces challenges at one time or another. But the additional challenges of military life can strain even the strongest relationships. Like their civilian counterparts, service members and their families must work hard to maintain good communication and keep their relationships strong.

The Department of Defense offers a broad range of support programs to help service members and families meet those challenges. However, if they have recently moved to a new community, a military family may not know where to turn for help. There may also be times when they prefer to seek counseling in the local community. In each case, it is helpful for the local community to understand the military family support system in order to help link military families with the care they need when and where they need it.

## *Military support*

For the DoD, helping service members and their families build healthy relationships is an important part of keeping the military strong. Many of the core services offered by the DoD are designed to help support military families and promote positive relationships. Support for healthy relationships may be obtained through the following:

- ▶ **Military and Family Support Centers** located on military installations around the world provide a wide range of confidential services and support for military families, including those listed on page 3 under Military support: core services. This support is tailored to the needs of the local installation, so newly arriving

military families will need to discover how those core services are delivered at that location and what else may be offered to meet their needs. Most installations offer a newcomers' orientation and provide additional outreach to newly arriving families.

- ▶ **Reserve Component Family Programs** provide services and support to military families, directly or via referral, with an emphasis on supporting those who do not have easy access to installation-based support. These services are provided by the National Guard and reserves.
- ▶ **Military chaplains** provide confidential counseling, guidance and referral on issues that affect service members and their families. On many installations, chaplains lead secular marriage enhancement programs.
- ▶ **Military and family life counselors** provide non-medical, confidential, short-term counseling to members of the active force, the National Guard and reserves, Civilian Expeditionary Workforce members and their families. Service members and their families can receive up to 12 sessions per person, per issue at no cost. The MFLCs may be assigned to military installations with services provided at the following locations: Military and Family Support Centers, child and youth programs, schools, youth summer programs and camps. They may also be embedded within military units, provide surge support counseling support for up to 90 days for emerging

issues (planned and unplanned events, military contingencies, natural disasters and/or crisis, deployment-related issues) and provide on-demand support for up to five days for the Active and Reserve Components to support events such as, but not limited to, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs and other deployment support events, drill weekends, family events, annual training and Strong Bonds. Service members can schedule support via <http://jfsap.militaryonesource.mil>.

- ▶ **Military OneSource** provides online, telephonic and in-person support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (800-342-9647) to military members and their families on a broad range of topics. Service members and their families can access confidential help through counseling for short-term, non-medical concerns such as relationships, grief and parenting issues. They can also access additional educational materials, social media tools, blogs and webinars on a wide range of topics including relationship and family wellness. <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>
- ▶ **Military OneSource specialty consultations** are online or telephonic meetings between eligible individuals and consultants with various areas of expertise. Consultants can offer assistance in areas such as wounded warrior, special needs, adoption, adult and elder care and more that may help families build stronger relationships and work through challenges.

The MFLCs and Military OneSource counselors, as well as non-medical counselors working at Military and Family Support Centers possess a master's or doctorate degree in a mental health field and are licensed or certified in a state, territory or the District of Columbia to practice independently. Their non-medical support is aimed at preventing the development or exacerbation of mental health conditions that may detract from military and family readiness. Issues amenable to non-medical counseling include, but are not limited to, the following: relocation adjustment, separation, reintegration, relationship issues, parenting skills, communication, anger management, grief, stress, adjustment, deployment, life skills, coping skills, interpersonal skills, and academic or occupational problems. Issues not amenable to non-medical counseling include, but are not limited to, the following: active suicidal or homicidal thought or intent or other threats of harm to self or others, sexual assault, child abuse/neglect, domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, mental health conditions that have required recurring in-patient hospitalizations, someone currently receiving therapy by another practitioner, fitness for duty evaluations and court ordered counseling. Counselors are mandated reporters of situations that include harm to self or others, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, violence against any person, and any present or future illegal activity.



## *Online resources*

### **MilitaryINSTALLATIONS**

MilitaryINSTALLATIONS offers profiles for each military installation worldwide where there are at least 500 military members stationed.

<http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil>

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### **Joint Services Support**

Joint Services Support provides information for National Guard and reserve members, including event schedules and links to programs specific to National Guard and reserve members and their families.

<http://www.jointservicesupport.org>

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### **Department of Veterans Affairs**

The Vet Center Program, a community-based Department of Veterans Affairs program, provides readjustment counseling and other services to veterans and their families.

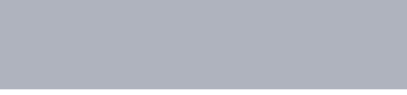
<http://www.vetcenter.va.gov>

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### **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week (800-342-9647) to support military members and their families with information and support on a broad range of topics. Service members and their families can access confidential help through counseling for short-term, non-medical concerns such as relationships, grief and parenting issues. They can also access additional educational materials, social media tools, blogs and webinars on a wide range of topics including relationship and family wellness.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil>





# Spouse Education and Career Opportunities

Military spouses are a tremendous source of strength and talent with the ability to navigate the unique challenges of military life. They work to maintain their homes and keep their families strong and resilient, while often pursuing education or striving to build careers. Frequent relocations and extended deployments often interrupt education, limit career options and impact the financial well-being of their families.

While many are well-educated and highly qualified for a wide range of careers, military spouses face a 25 percent unemployment rate, a rate that increases dramatically with junior enlisted spouses who face a 33 percent unemployment rate.<sup>3</sup> Military wives face a 25 percent wage gap compared to their civilian counterparts. Some of the challenges include:

- ▶ When military members move to a new duty station, their spouses often lose valuable career seniority when they must leave one position and find a new one.
- ▶ Overseas moves can be particularly challenging for spouses because employment opportunities are often limited.
- ▶ When military members deploy, their spouses may need to balance additional responsibilities with regard to child care and managing a household.

<sup>3</sup>Defense Manpower Data Center, 2012 Active-duty Spouse Survey.

- ▶ Military spouses may be hesitant to self-identify with potential employers due to a perceived stigma that military spouses move too often to be valuable contributors in the workplace.

### *Military support*

The Department of Defense is working to ensure that every military spouse has the opportunity to choose and pursue a career that is personally and professionally rewarding. The DoD realizes that spouses must overcome unique obstacles to reach educational goals or maintain meaningful careers as they navigate military life. To address their needs, the DoD has established the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program, which in collaboration with installation employment readiness programs, provides military spouses comprehensive resources and tools to strengthen their education and career opportunities. The program includes:

- ▶ **Career exploration** — Certified career counselors help spouses identify their career interests and aptitudes. They provide information about today's job market and work opportunities, including portable skills and careers, entrepreneurship and federal employment options.
- ▶ **Information on education, training and licensure** — Counselors help spouses learn about education options and licensing or credentialing requirements. They also help spouses identify, compare and weigh the costs of potential schools and programs to help them reach their career goals. The My Career Advancement Account Scholarship helps provide the financial means for eligible military spouses to meet those goals.

- ▶ **Employment readiness** — Spouses are prepared to join or re-enter the workforce and receive information and assistance with job search strategies, resume writing, interviewing, networking and self-marketing skills.
- ▶ **Career connections** — The Military Spouse Employment Partnership connects spouses with more than 260 partner employers who are actively recruiting for a wide range of portable career positions. These employers have pledged to recruit, hire, promote and retain military spouses. To help with their introduction, spouses are encouraged to self-identify when applying with or contacting these employment partners.

To connect with the services offered through the SECO program, visit Military OneSource.

Military installations also offer programs and services designed to support military spouses in reaching their education and career goals. Contact the Military and Family Support Center on the local installation to learn more about available support and resources or visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS for contact information.

Nearly all states provide a combination of endorsement, temporary licensing and expedited processes to reduce the time required for most occupations to relicense in a new state. The SECO program page on Military OneSource provides the details for each state. Additionally, nearly all states now offer military spouses leaving their employment because of a military move an opportunity to file for unemployment compensation.





## *Online resources*

### **Hiring Our Heroes job fairs**

Military job fairs are held in 200 communities nationwide in coordination with local chambers of commerce. Many of these fairs are designed specifically for military spouses.

<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events>

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### **Military Spouse eMentor Leadership Program**

The Military Spouse eMentor Leadership Program connects spouses with more experienced military spouses, career mentors and military spouse-friendly employers.

<http://www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/about>

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### **State Licensure Initiative**

The USA4 Military Families initiative encourages states to adopt legislation that allows spouses to work in their profession in a new state through licensure endorsement, or through temporary licensure while they work toward meeting new state licensing requirements.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/seco/licensing-and-certification>

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### **My Career Advancement Account Scholarship**

The My Career Advancement Account Scholarship helps eligible military spouses achieve their career goals by providing financial support to eligible applicants.

<https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>

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### **Military Spouse Employment Partnership**

This partnership helps military spouses connect with more than 230 employers.

<https://mseppjobs.militaryonesource.mil>



# Personal Finances

Like many people, service members may not always know the best ways to save, budget and plan for their financial futures. They can also become targets for predatory lenders and money scams. For many military families, a move or deployment can put a strain on their budget. National Guard and reserve members face additional financial issues if they are called to active duty from jobs or businesses in which they were earning more money than their military salary.

Besides causing financial troubles for the service member, poor financial management can impact individual and unit readiness through loss of work hours and poor performance on the job.

## *Military support*

In order to provide service members and their families with the tools and information they need to develop individual strategies to achieve financial goals and address financial challenges, the Personal Financial Management Program offers proactive life cycle financial management services. The program addresses the effects of financial decisions on personal and professional lives and provides resources needed to make prudent consumer decisions.

Each military service branch has a Personal Financial Management Program, which helps service members and their families keep their finances in good shape, save for the future and resolve financial issues.





To obtain financial stability education, the program offers confidential counseling and training both online and in-person for service members and their families to help with:

- ▶ **Creating a spending plan** — Classes and one-on-one counseling can help service members and families set up a spending plan, find ways to pay down debt and plan for unexpected expenses.
- ▶ **Avoiding financial traps and scams** — The program helps educate service members on money traps, such as high-interest loans and credit repair scams.
- ▶ **Resolving credit issues** — Counselors can help write letters and contact creditors to repair credit and clean up a credit report. They also provide information on consumer rights and civilian resources responsible for resolving credit complaints.
- ▶ **Coordinating with emergency financial assistance organizations** — Counselors can help service members learn more about the military service branch financial aid organizations.
- ▶ **Taking advantage of military savings programs** — Counselors can help service members and their families learn about unique military savings programs, such as the Saving Deposit Program for eligible deployed service members and the Thrift Savings Plan.

Financial education services are offered at no cost through PFM offices, and personal financial counselors are available on installations at Military and Family Support Centers. Military OneSource offers face-to-face financial counseling, telephonic and online financial counseling, as well as tax services. For service members who are geographically dispersed, personal financial counselors are available via surge and on-demand event support.

Service members and their families also have additional consumer and financial protections afforded them through the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and through the Military Lending Act (for service members and families on active duty).





## *Online resources*

### **Consumer Sentinel/Military**

Service members can file complaints concerning identity theft, deceptive lending practices, debt collection or other scams to help law enforcement identify and target problems.

<http://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/consumer-sentinel-network>

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### **Defense Finance and Accounting Service**

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service website provides information on military pay and allowances, financial issues and military savings programs.

<http://www.dfas.mil>

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### **Military OneSource Money Management**

Military OneSource offers resources and tools to help military families manage their finances, get out of debt and save.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/pfm>

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### **Military Saves**

Military Saves, a national campaign, encourages military service members to create a savings plan and offers information on high-interest saving and overall financial well-being.

<http://www.militarysaves.org>

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### **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Office of Servicemember Affairs**

Service members can file complaints with the CFPB when they believe they have been unfairly treated by financial service providers. The CFPB also offers tools to help service members compare student financial aid and loans, as well as mortgage information.

<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/servicemembers>

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### **Thrift Savings Plan**

The Thrift Savings Plan is a government-sponsored program providing retirement income for service members and federal civilian employees.

<http://www.tsp.gov>

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### **Better Business Bureau Military Line**

The Better Business Bureau Military Line provides online consumer protection and financial literacy resources, data collection on complaints and dispute resolution of these complaints at no cost.

<http://www.bbb.org/council/programs-services/bbb-military-line>

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### **Financial Industry Regulatory Authority**

The FINRA is a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to protect investors by making sure the securities industry operates fairly and honestly through educating investors, fostering market transparency and more.

<http://www.finra.org>



# Relocation

Military families move when the service member receives orders to a new duty station. Many times, the family moves over a long distance — to another part of the country or overseas.

Many service members and their families learn to thrive on the new experiences and opportunities afforded them through this mobile life. But that doesn't mean moving is easy. Frequent moves can put strain on even the most resilient families. Here are some of the ways frequent moves can impact military families:

- ▶ The logistics of preparing for a move can be stressful, especially when the move is to a far-off duty station or when the service member moves to a new assignment without his or her family.
- ▶ Saying goodbye to friends may be hard for everyone in the family.
- ▶ Frequent moves often take military families far from the help and support of their friends and extended family.
- ▶ Moving can be disruptive to children and teenagers who must adjust to a different school every few years.
- ▶ The family budget is often strained when the spouse must leave one job and find a new one at the next duty station.
- ▶ Parents must find new child care each time they move to a new duty station.



## *Military support*

The Department of Defense recognizes moving can be tough on service members and their families. The military's Relocation Assistance Program helps families navigate move-related challenges by offering:

- ▶ **Move planning** — One-on-one consultation at the installation's Military and Family Support Center is especially helpful for those service members making their first military move, those moving overseas, those with challenging situations such as a family member with special needs, or those with a spouse concerned about finding employment at their next location.
- ▶ **Online tools** — MilitaryINSTALLATIONS offers profiles for each military installation worldwide where there are at least 500 military members stationed. Plan My Move has a customizable calendar with planning tools and a suggested schedule for accomplishing tasks.
- ▶ **Loan closets** — Most installations have a loan closet where service members will find basic household items, such as bedding and cookware, to bridge the gap while waiting for household goods to arrive at their new duty station.
- ▶ **Workshops and briefings** — Service members and their families can attend workshops on move-related topics, such as real estate and setting up a spending plan.
- ▶ **Post-move tours and classes** — Newcomer briefs, local area tours and introductory language and cultural classes (at overseas locations) help families feel at home at their new duty station.

Relocation services are available on military installations worldwide. Service members can find a Relocation Assistance Program office online at MilitaryINSTALLATIONS or by visiting their installation's Military and Family Support Center.







## *Online resources*

### **MilitaryINSTALLATIONS**

MilitaryINSTALLATIONS offers profiles for each military installation worldwide where there are at least 500 military members stationed.

<http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil>

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### **Military Youth on the Move**

Military Youth on the Move provides information and resources for elementary, middle and high school-age children, and parents to navigate the challenges of a mobile military life.

<http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/myom>

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### **Plan My Move**

Plan My Move offers access to information about military move entitlements and benefits, points of contact, checklists and planning tools.

<http://planmymove.militaryonesource.mil>



# Child Care

Like many other families, military families want quality, affordable child care. With more military spouses working or going to school than ever before, more military families now rely on child care.

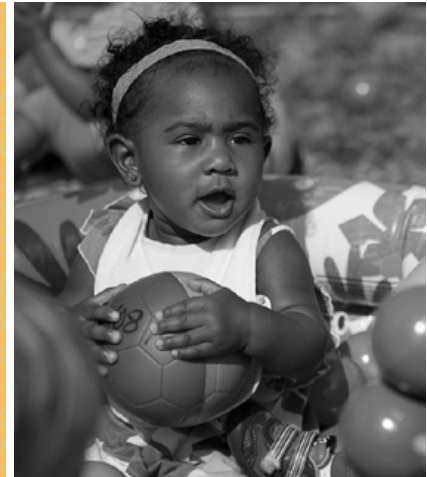
Frequent moves mean that military families face the challenge of making new child care arrangements more often than civilian families. Unpredictable schedules and long work hours often make finding flexible child care a necessity. Some service members, including National Guard and reserve members, live far from installation support services and finding affordable child care can be more difficult.

## *Military support*

The Department of Defense recognizes the importance of child care and has created a program recognized for its quality, affordability and high standards. The DoD sets clear standards for child care and uses an inspection process to ensure those standards are met. Collaboration with nationally accredited community-based child care programs helps fill the gap for service members who don't live near a military installation. These are some of the DoD child care programs available to service members:

- ▶ **Child development center program** — Installation CDCs typically offer child care for children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. Some offer part-time or hourly care. They are typically open from 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. weekdays, but installation commanders may extend those hours to meet the needs of service members on the installation.







- ▶ **Family child care program** — This program allows providers to care for a small group of children in their own home, which may be on or off the installation. These providers often offer flexible hours and may work well for families who prefer a home setting.
- ▶ **School age care program** — This program provides care to children from kindergarten to 12 years of age before and after school, during holidays and during summer vacations.
- ▶ **Community-based child care** — The DoD partners with child care providers in local communities to help military families find child care when they are wait-listed for installation care or live too far from a military installation.

To find contact information for installation child care programs, visit [MilitaryINSTALLATIONS](#).



### *Online resources*

#### **Child Care Aware of America**

Child Care Aware of America helps military families locate child care in local communities and is a great resource for anyone looking for available child care in their community. <http://www.naccrra.org/military-families>

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#### **Military OneSource**

Service members and families can contact a Military OneSource consultant for information on childhood services. <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>





# School Transition

Relocating to a new community can be a great adventure for military children, but moving every few years can also be tough. Military children attend, on average, six to nine different school systems between kindergarten and 12th grade. Whether it's their first or their fifth move, the challenges of changing schools can be unsettling for both children and parents.

Recognizing that military life creates unique academic and social challenges for the 1.2 million school-aged military children, the Department of Defense provides outreach on many levels with the overarching goal of helping all military children receive a quality education and the supports and resources they need to be successful.

## *Military support*

Military families have approximately 1.2 million school-age children. The DoD Education Activity provides quality education programs to approximately 81,000 eligible children of DoD military service members and civilian employees stationed in 12 foreign countries overseas, certain areas of the United States and select U.S. territories and possessions. The DoDEA is one of the largest, most diverse and geographically dispersed school jurisdictions, and its educational programs consistently rate at or near the top in comparison with other school systems.

The DoDEA is also responsible for providing educational support in defraying the costs of educating approximately 3,000 military and DoD civilian children assigned in overseas areas where a school operated by the DoD is not available.

Recognizing the need for a catalyst to provide support to school-aged military children, DoDEA shares resources with military-connected public school districts to increase student success, provide professional development for teachers, implement support practices that minimize the impact of transition and deployment and provide access to rigorous educational opportunities through the Educational Partnership Program.

Because the majority of the 1.2 million school-aged military children attend public schools in the United States, support programs and services help these military children transition to new schools, whether they are moving across the state or across the country.

- ▶ **School Liaison Program** — For children enrolled in schools in the civilian community, installation school liaison officers provide information on the surrounding school districts and help relocating children smoothly adjust to their new schools. Each branch of service has school liaison officers ready to work with relocating families and local schools to assist with the transfer of credits to their new school districts. A directory can be found on the [Military K-12 Partners](#) website.
- ▶ **Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children** — This statutory agreement between states provides for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and states. The goal of the compact is to replace the widely varying policies affecting transitioning military students. The compact leverages consistency; it uses a comprehensive approach that provides a consistent policy in every school district and in every state that chooses to join. The compact addresses key educational transition issues encountered by military families including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility and graduation requirements.
- ▶ **Child and youth military and family life counselors** — These non-medical counselors play a key role in giving military children the support they may need during challenging periods of military life, including adjusting to change, relationships at school, conflict resolution and more. Service members and their families can access confidential non-medical counseling services at no cost through various access points including Military and Family Support Centers, child development centers and DoDEA schools.







## *Online resources*

### **Military K–12 Partners**

This Department of Defense Education Activity Educational Partnership Program provides information and support to increase understanding of the unique needs of military children, as well as academic support to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for military children.

<http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/index.cfm>

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### **Military Youth on the Move**

Military Youth on the Move provides information and resources for elementary, middle and high school-age children, and parents to navigate the challenges of a mobile military life.

<http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/myom>

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### **Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children**

The compact is overseen by a commission comprised of representatives from member states. More information about the compact and state commissioners is available on the website.

<http://www.mic3.net>

# Youth Support

Of the approximately 1.9 million children being raised by military families in the United States and overseas, more than 1 million are between the ages of 6 and 18. Military children and teens know a lot about sacrifice, adaptability and getting through challenging times. Military youth face many of the same issues that other, non-military youth face, but they also have to deal with the unique challenges of having a parent deployed to a war zone or moving to a new neighborhood every few years.

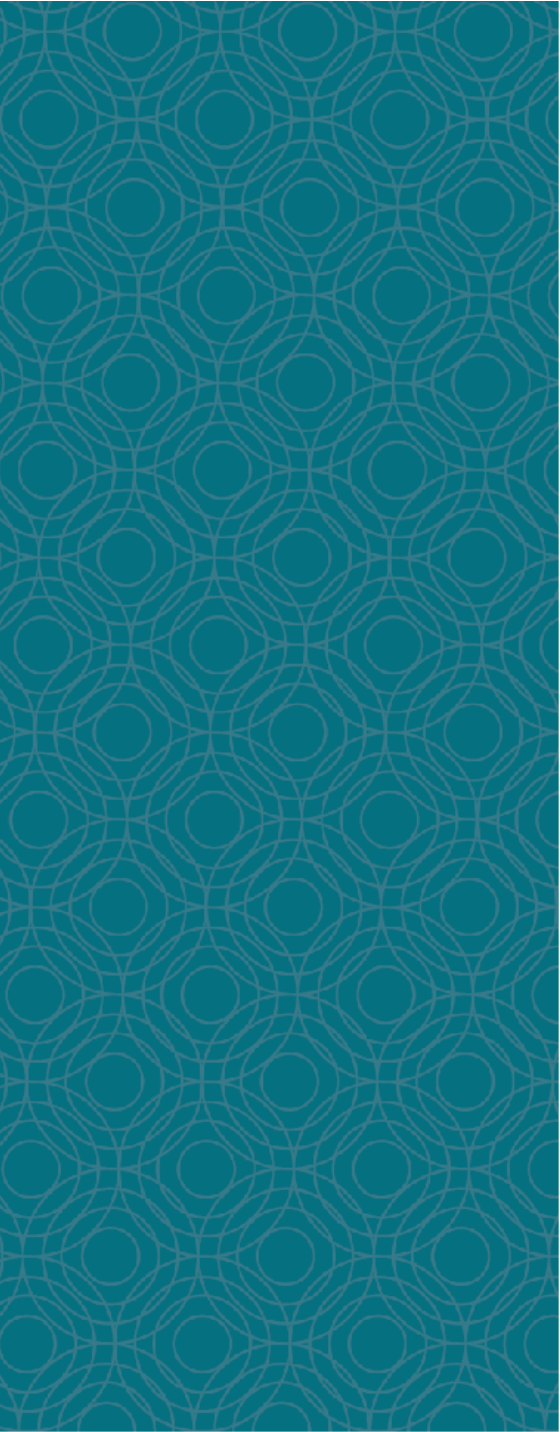
## *Military support*

The Department of Defense has a long history of providing positive alternatives for youth during out-of-school hours. The Youth Program is committed to offering stable and dynamic services that promote positive youth development and support systems. Military service branches offer a variety of quality, age-appropriate activities in structured, developmental settings both on and off the military installation. Programming may include the following:

- ▶ **Instructional programs** — Instructional programs provide opportunities to develop new skills and learn in a hands-on, informal setting. Programs cover subjects such as photography, woodworking, science and technology, gardening, health and safety.







- ▶ **Team sports** — These programs are often offered through the installation youth center on a year-round basis. They provide numerous opportunities for youth to challenge themselves physically while developing life skills such as good sportsmanship and teamwork.
- ▶ **Recreation programs** — Geared toward individual interests such as golf and tennis, these programs are often offered through installation Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities like the golf course or the bowling center.
- ▶ **Educational and youth development programs** — These programs focus on topics such as citizenship, character-building, public speaking and leadership.
- ▶ **Camp opportunities** — The DoD provides several camp opportunities for military children, including adventure camps and deployment support camps. Activities can include sailing, rock climbing, kayaking and more. In addition, child and youth military and family life counselors may be available at many camps for confidential non-medical counseling services for issues such as trouble communicating and adjustment issues.



## *Online resources*

### **4-H Military Partnerships**

The 4-H program impacts youth through 4-H clubs established on military installations and through local community-based 4-H club programs. In addition, 4-H is a resource to children whose parents are serving in the National Guard and reserve.

<http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org>

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### **Boys & Girls Clubs of America**

Youth programs on the installation are affiliate members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. They, along with community-based clubs, provide youth development programs to the children of military personnel, including National Guard and reserve.

<http://www.bgca.org/meetourpartners/Pages/MilitaryPartnership.aspx>

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### **Military Youth on the Move**

Military Youth on the Move provides information and resources for elementary, middle and high school-age children, and parents to navigate the challenges of a mobile military life.

<http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/myom>





# Family Members With Special Needs

Between frequent relocations and deployments, military families often have to adjust to new communities and the absence of loved ones. For the more than 128,000 military families who have a member with special needs, those adjustments can be even more challenging.

A family member who has special needs is:

- ▶ A spouse, child or dependent adult who, regardless of age, has special medical needs and
  - › Requires medical services for a chronic condition such as asthma, multiple sclerosis, attention deficit disorder, diabetes, etc.
  - › Receives ongoing services from a medical specialist or
  - › Has significant behavioral health concerns
  
- ▶ A child (birth through 21 years) with special needs who is eligible for or receives:
  - › Special education services through an individualized education program or
  - › Early intervention services through an individualized family service plan

## *Military support*

The Exceptional Family Member Program supports military families with special medical and educational needs. The program has three components:

- ▶ **Identification and enrollment** — When a family member identified with chronic medical needs requiring specialty care, or a child with an individualized education program or individualized family service plan is identified, the special needs are documented through enrollment in the EFMP. This allows medical and educational personnel to review the availability of medical and educational resources at projected assignment locations.
- ▶ **Assignment coordination** — Enrollment in the program means that family member needs will be considered when the military service assigns the service member to a new duty location. Because access to medical and educational services may be limited in some locations, such as overseas areas, this process helps ensure special needs and services described on the enrollment forms are considered prior to sending a family to their new duty station.
- ▶ **Family support** — The program provides information and referral services by helping families identify and access programs and resources such as community services, local school information and early intervention programs. The EFMP family support office may also help families access respite care offered by military support programs or community-based programs. Family support providers also provide non-medical case management to families who desire additional assistance and support obtaining services.

The EFMP family support providers can be found at installation Military and Family Support Centers. For a locator, visit [MilitaryINSTALLATIONS](#).

Special note: Through DoD intervention, some states are beginning to change Medicaid waiver requirements to allow family members with special needs to sign up in their state of legal residence while their sponsor is on active duty, so that services will be available for them when the family separates from the military.







## *Online resources*

### **Department of Defense Education Activity Special Education**

The DoD school system's site for special education offers information on eligibility and services available in DoD schools.  
<http://www.dodea.edu/Curriculum/specialEduc/index.cfm>

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### **Military OneSource EFMP/Special Needs**

The Military OneSource EFMP/Special Needs page has articles and information for families with special needs, including links to the Special Care Organizational Record and the Exceptional Advocate newsletter. Specialty consultants can help families assess their special needs and find ways to address their concerns at 800-342-9647.  
<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/efmp>

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### **TRICARE Extended Care Health Option**

The military health care program, TRICARE, offers the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option as a supplemental program providing financial assistance to eligible active-duty family members. To take advantage of ECHO, the family member must be enrolled in the EFMP.  
<http://www.tricare.mil/echo>

### **States supporting Medicaid waiver enrollment while on active duty**

Information on states providing support is included on the USA4 Military Families website.  
<http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil>

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### **The Education Directory for Children With Special Needs**

The directory includes state-specific information and resources about education and early intervention services to help families make a smooth transition as they relocate with a family member with special needs.  
<http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/efmp/directory>







# Domestic Abuse and Child Abuse and Neglect

Domestic abuse and child abuse are serious and pervasive public health problems that affect military and civilian families alike. Like their civilian counterparts, military service members and their families can be affected by the stresses of everyday life. For military families, those stresses may be complicated by military duty, a deployment or a recent move.

Many military families live far from the help and support of extended family. When the stress becomes too much, military families, like other families, may experience abuse. There may be times when these families are afraid to get help. The reasons can be complicated, but often include the following:

- ▶ Fear that reporting the abuse will only make things worse
- ▶ Fear of ruining their spouse's military career
- ▶ Shame for tolerating the abuse for so long
- ▶ Fear of losing the financial support provided such as housing and medical benefits when the service member is the abuser
- ▶ Pressure to keep the relationship intact for the sake of the children

## *Military support*

The Family Advocacy Program works to promote healthy relationships and family wellness. The program is focused on prevention and providing counseling and support before an incident of abuse happens. The program has a vast array of classes (parenting, stress management, anger management, couples communication) and counseling support for military families, as well as child trained clinical staff. The program's goal is to strengthen family functioning in a manner that increases the competency and efficacy of military families and to preserve families in which abuse has occurred, if possible, without compromising the health, welfare and safety of victims. If abuse occurs, the program works to ensure the safety of victims and provide services to help military families overcome the effects of violence. The program's key services include:

- ▶ **Life skills education** — Couples communication, anger management, stress management and effective parenting are just a few of the programs available to help military families learn how to build and sustain healthy relationships.
- ▶ **New Parent Support Program** — This prevention program is for active-duty service members who have or are expecting a baby. The program stresses key protective factors that all families need in order to thrive. It offers home visitation, parenting education and other services to help young families provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

- ▶ **Counseling** — One-on-one support helps couples and families learn positive parenting techniques and skills to support and strengthen family relationships.
- ▶ **Transitional compensation** — This compensation program helps alleviate the financial hardship of family members if a service member's career is ended due to a dependent abuse offense. Other benefits, such as medical care, commissary privileges and exchange privileges may be available.
- ▶ **Victim advocacy** — Victim advocates help domestic abuse victims develop a safety plan, find shelter, provide accompaniment to medical and court appointments and refer victims to other resources. Victims can, in most cases, receive services without triggering an investigation or notification to the service member's command. Advocates help victims understand their military reporting options so they can make an informed decision about how to address the incident without risking safety.

Staff members offer prevention services, respond to reports of neglect and abuse, intervene to protect and support victims and provide treatment to offenders when appropriate. To locate an installation's FAP, visit [MilitaryINSTALLATIONS](#).

Military family members who live far from a military installation can call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) (800-799-7233) for support. Referral to helpful resources is also available through [Military OneSource](#) (800-342-9647).



### *Online resources*

#### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

This nonprofit organization provides 24-hour support with advocacy, safety planning and other resources to anyone affected by domestic violence.

<http://www.thehotline.org> (800-799-7233)

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#### **Military OneSource**

The Military OneSource Child Abuse and Domestic Abuse page has articles and links to resources about the Family Advocacy Program and on prevention, intervention, treatment and victim assistance.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/abuse>

# Deployment

With the demand placed on the military, there is a good chance most military families have had some experience with deployment. When a service member deploys or travels with a military unit on a mission, the whole family can be affected.

Families may face many challenges when a service member is deployed, including added responsibility resulting from shifting roles, financial concerns and anxiety over the service member's safety. Because National Guard and reserve families live far from military support systems, they often feel especially isolated when their loved one deploys. Some military families in your community may be caring for a loved one returning home who may be profoundly changed by his or her deployment experience.

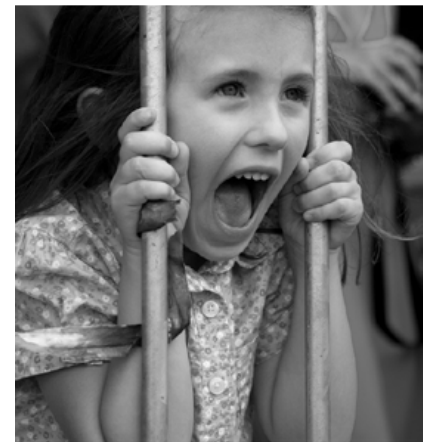




## *Military support*

Many families will be able to overcome these challenges with the support of family, friends and community. Others, however, will need additional help from military support services to help handle the stress and readjust to life post deployment. In addition to the sources of support noted on page 3, Military OneSource offers additional support that may be of particular assistance with deployment-related issues:

- ▶ **Military OneSource consultants** are individuals assigned to work full-time within each state, territory and the District of Columbia to collaborate with military and community support services to better understand the military population within the state and their needs, identify actual and potential resources to meet needs, encourage community capacity building that will benefit the military population, and provide information and referral services. Military OneSource consultants educate service and family members of all branches and components on the support services available through Military OneSource. Military OneSource consultants also provide briefings and information at military sponsored events, conferences, trainings and other appropriate venues.







## *Online resources*

### **AfterDeployment.org**

The Defense Centers of Excellence site for service members, veterans and their families offers information and resources on issues such as post-traumatic stress, anger and resilience.

<http://www.afterdeployment.org>

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### **American Red Cross**

The Red Cross provides assistance specifically for service members and their families, including emergency communication with deployed service members, social services and disaster assistance.

<http://www.redcross.org>

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### **Military Kids Connect**

This online community supports military children whose parents are in a deployment cycle. The interactive website offers secure message boards, age-specific articles and fun activities.

<http://www.militarykidsconnect.org>

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### **Military OneSource**

Military OneSource offers information and support services on a broad range of topics to service members and their families 24 hours a day by phone, online or via email. The Deployment page offers tools, articles and resources to make every stage of deployment smoother.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment>

### **Department of Veterans Affairs**

The Vet Center Program, a community-based Department of Veterans Affairs program, provides readjustment counseling and other services to veterans and their families.

<http://www.vetcenter.va.gov>

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### **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program helps National Guard and reserve service members and their families connect with local resources before, during and after deployment with Yellow Ribbon events. These events provide information on health care, education and training opportunities, financial services and legal benefits.

<http://www.yellowribbon.mil>

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### **Joint Services Support**

Joint Services Support provides information for National Guard and reserve members, including event schedules and links to programs specific to National Guard and reserve members and their families.

<http://www.jointservicesupport.org>





# Bridging the Gap for Military Families

Military support services go a long way to help families deal with the challenges of military life. But the help and support of organizations like yours is an important part of the Military Family Readiness System. Service members and their families depend on community providers to bridge the gap that military support programs are not designed or available to fill.

The Department of Defense is committed to enabling your organization and others like it to help address issues that impact our military families. Whether your organization provides services that complement existing military support programs, or works to support military members in other ways, your efforts are appreciated and are a key part of keeping our military families strong. As you move forward in serving the military members in your community, keep the Military Family Readiness System in mind. Together we can best serve those men and women who serve our country.

## *Supporting military families*

Like others in your community, military families face concerns with relationships, health issues, parenting and money. You can connect with them and support them in the same ways you would other clients. However, it also helps when volunteers and community-based support organizations working with military families understand military culture and are aware of the support services that may be available. This awareness will help you identify where community support may be able to best augment existing services. You can encourage service members to use your services by adapting them in ways that address the needs of service members and families in your community.

Your organization can reach out to the military community in your area to become a part of the network of support by joining with military support programs — either on a local, state or national level — to augment their services. Organizations may help service members and their families by:

- ▶ Offering counseling services and programs that consider military culture and stressors when serving military families
- ▶ Easing the transition for military children as they move to new schools by allowing for minimum academic impact
- ▶ Providing effective training and education programs for service members transitioning to post-military careers
- ▶ Promoting employment opportunities and career growth for military spouses
- ▶ Providing flexible accredited child care services to meet the needs of military families
- ▶ Offering quality programs for military youth considering their unique challenges
- ▶ Encouraging prevention and early intervention programs for service members and their families to decrease the incidence of high-risk behaviors
- ▶ Working to reduce the stigma and eliminate barriers associated with seeking mental health care
- ▶ Encouraging service members and their families to seek information and education on suicide prevention
- ▶ Providing information and counseling focused on financial literacy, as well as consumer counseling and consumer protection

# Legislative Issues Impacting Military Members

On a national level, many support organizations are working to promote state legislation that will positively impact military service members and their families. The [USA4MilitaryFamilies](#) initiative addresses several key issues for military families. Your organization may play a role in:

- ▶ **Credit for military education and experience on state licenses for separating service members and veterans** — Changing state regulations to recognize military training makes it easier for service members and veterans to translate their experiences into professional credentials. Nearly three-fourths of the states have modified statutes to accommodate this initiative.
- ▶ **License and credential portability for military spouses** — Licensing portability between states makes it easier for spouses to find employment when they move. Nearly all states have already enacted legislation allowing licensing boards to grant military spouses a transfer of their license through endorsement or temporary license if they have a similar license in another state.
- ▶ **Unemployment compensation for military spouses** — Nearly all states now offer military spouses leaving their employment because of a military move an opportunity to file for unemployment compensation.
- ▶ **Retention of earned priority for Medicaid home and community-based waivers** — In many states, military families who are eligible for Medicaid services are placed on long waiting lists to receive state services. This is of particular concern when military families leave the military and no longer have TRICARE supplemental support. States now allow service members to sign up their family member with special needs in their state of legal residency to earn their place on the Medicaid waiting list in order to have service available when they separate from the military.
- ▶ **Waiver for separating service members to qualify for in-state college tuition rates** — Veterans who settle in states other than their states of residence are initially charged the out-of-state tuition rate. Nearly two-thirds of states now waive the time requirement for residency for veterans, allowing them to attend the first year of school at the rate paid by the GI Bill.

- ▶ **Identifier for military children in education data systems** — Some states have included a non-accountable identifier in their data systems providing data for military children, which assists school districts and the DoD in developing policy and child education initiatives.
- ▶ **Increased access to quality, affordable child care for military families** — Many military children do not live near an installation with access to affordable, quality child care. In support of quality, nearly all states have adopted annual inspections of centers and family day care programs, and more than two-thirds of states have fingerprint-based background checks of state and federal databases for centers and family day care programs.
- ▶ **Improved absentee voting process for military members and their families** — Nearly all states have enacted legislation to help ensure the rights of military and overseas voters using absentee ballots.
- ▶ **Veteran Treatment Courts** — Most states offer these courts as a treatment alternative for veterans (and members of the Reserve Component) who may have mental health and/or substance abuse problems. Proven results have shown better outcomes for the veteran and community with much lower rates of arrest recidivism.
- ▶ **Consumer protections and enforcement of predatory lending regulations** — Nearly three-quarters of states enforce the Military Lending Act, which restricts opportunities for active-duty service members and their families to obtain payday, vehicle title and refund anticipation loans, protecting them from developing a cycle of using high-cost debt.
- ▶ **Considering military service when determining child custody** — Nearly all states have recognized that absences due to military service should never be the sole basis for a loss of custody or diminished visitation rights (even though the effects of such absences could be an appropriate consideration).
- ▶ **Comporting state laws with DoD rules on disposition** — States require disposition of remains be determined through state-specific documentation or by a priority sequence of next of kin; however, nearly all states recognize the person authorized to direct disposition selected by the service member on DD Form 93, “Record of Emergency Data,” which alleviates potential family disharmony during a time of bereavement.
- ▶ **Minimizing school disruption for military children during transition and deployment** — Military life creates challenges for military children who attend an average of eight schools in 12 years and endure parental separation during deployments. Almost all states participate in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which establishes common guidelines for handling enrollment, class and course placement, records transfer, immunization, attendance, eligibility, graduation and extra-curricular opportunities.

# Resources

## **Family readiness groups**

A key component of the military support network, family readiness group programs vary by military service branch, but generally include trained volunteers, along with chaplains, school liaison officers and other military personnel who work together to support families before, during and after deployment.

## **Military and Family Support Centers**

Military and Family Support Centers are located on most military installations around the world. Although services vary by installation and by branch of service, most include deployment support, relocation assistance, spouse employment assistance, support for families with special needs, personal financial management and information and referral services.

## **Military OneSource consultants**

Military OneSource consultants collaborate with military and community support services to understand the military population within the state and their needs, identify actual and potential resources to meet needs, encourage community capacity building that will benefit the military population, and provide information and referral services. Military OneSource consultants work full-time in each state to educate service and family members of all branches and components on the support services available through Military OneSource. Military OneSource consultants also provide briefings and information at military sponsored events, conferences, trainings and other appropriate venues.

## *Online resources*

### **AfterDeployment.org**

The Defense Centers of Excellence site for service members, veterans and their families offers information and resources on issues such as post-traumatic stress, anger and resilience.

<http://www.afterdeployment.org>

### **American Red Cross**

The Red Cross provides assistance specifically for service members and their families, including emergency communication with deployed service members, social services and disaster assistance.

<http://www.redcross.org>

### **Child Care Aware of America**

This program helps military families locate child care in local communities and provides information on states' efforts to support quality child care.

<http://www.naccrra.org/military-families>

### **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Office of Servicemember Affairs**

Service members can file complaints with the CFPB when they believe they have been unfairly treated by financial service providers. The CFPB also offers financial tools.

<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/servicemembers>

### **Consumer Sentinel/Military**

Service members can file complaints concerning identity theft, deceptive lending practices or other scams to help law enforcement identify and target problems.

<http://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/consumer-sentinel-network>

### **Defense Finance and Accounting Service**

The DFAS website provides information on military pay and allowances, financial issues and military savings programs.

<http://www.dfas.mil>

### **Department of Defense Education Activity**

The DoDEA serves military children and children of DoD civilians with schools that operate throughout the United States and overseas.

<http://www.dodea.edu>

### **Department of Veterans Affairs**

The VA provides a wide range of benefits information for veterans including health care, disability, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, dependent and survivor benefits, life insurance and burial benefits. Community vet centers provide readjustment counseling and other services to veterans and their families.

<http://www.va.gov>

### **Hiring Our Heroes job fairs**

Military job fairs are held in 200 communities nationwide in coordination with local chambers of commerce. Many of these fairs are designed specifically for military spouses.

<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events>

### **Joint Services Support**

Joint Services Support provides information for National Guard and reserve members, including event schedules and links to programs specific to National Guard and reserve members and their families.

<http://www.jointservicesupport.org>

### **Military K–12 Partners**

Military K–12 Partners provides information to increase understanding of the unique needs of military children, as well as academic support to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for military children.

<http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/index.cfm>

### **Military Kids Connect**

This online community supports military children whose parents are in a deployment cycle. The interactive website offers secure message boards, age-specific articles and fun activities.

<http://www.militarykidsconnect.org>

### **MilitaryINSTALLATIONS**

MilitaryINSTALLATIONS provides profiles for military installations worldwide where there are at least 500 military members stationed.

<http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil>



### **Military OneSource**

Information and support on a broad range of topics are available to service members and their families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone, online or via email. Confidential specialty consultations on subjects such as education, adoption, elder care and special needs are also available. Confidential non-medical counseling services may be accessed telephonically, online or with a referral to a counselor in the local community.  
<http://www.militaryonesource.mil>

### **Military Saves**

This national campaign encourages service members to create a savings plan and offers information on high-interest saving and overall financial well-being.  
<http://www.militarysaves.org>

### **Military Spouse Employment Partnership**

The MSEP helps military spouses connect with more than 260 military-friendly employers.  
<https://msejobs.militaryonesource.mil>

### **Military Youth on the Move**

Military Youth on the Move provides information and resources for elementary, middle and high school-age children and parents to help navigate the challenges of the mobile military life.  
<http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/myom>

### **Military Spouse eMentor Program**

The Military Spouse eMentor Program connects spouses with more experienced military spouses, career mentors and military spouse-friendly employers.  
<http://www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/about>

### **My Career Advancement Account Scholarship**

The My Career Advancement Account Scholarship helps eligible military spouses achieve their career goals by providing financial support to eligible applicants.  
<https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>

### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

This nonprofit organization provides 24-hour support with advocacy, safety planning and other resources to anyone affected by domestic violence.  
<http://www.thehotline.org> (800-799-7233)

### **National Resource Directory**

The National Resource Directory provides access to services and resources at the national, state and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, their families and those who support them.  
<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/nrd>

### **Plan My Move**

Plan My Move provides access to information about military move entitlements and benefits, points of contact, checklists and planning tools.  
<http://planmymove.militaryonesource.mil>

### **Thrift Savings Plan**

The Thrift Savings Plan is a government-sponsored program providing retirement income for service members and federal civilian employees.  
<http://www.tsp.gov>

### **TRICARE**

The TRICARE website provides information pertaining to health care resources and benefits for active-duty and retired military families.

<http://www.tricare.mil>

### **USA4MilitaryFamilies**

USA4MilitaryFamilies provides information on key issues impacting military service members and their families.

<http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil>

### **Wounded warrior care**

The Wounded Warrior section of Military OneSource provides articles and links to other resources specific to the needs of wounded warriors and their families.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/wounded-warrior>

### **Caregiver Resource Directory**

This directory includes the most commonly referenced resources for caregivers of recovering service members.

<http://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/caregiver-resources>

### **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program helps National Guard and reserve service members and their families connect with local resources before, during and after deployment with Yellow Ribbon events. These events provide information on health care, education and training opportunities, financial services and legal benefits.

<http://www.yellowribbon.mil>





**Connect with Military OneSource**

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Military1Source>

