



Special Needs Brief

I. Introduction

PowerPoint Slide:  Handout: 

Frequent moves, family separations, and distance from extended family are challenges faced by most military families; however, for those whose family members have special needs, more energy and resources may be needed to meet these challenges. This brief is designed to provide military leaders and personnel with a general overview of the unique challenges faced by military families with special needs, as well as the programs available to assist them. This brief may be used for professional military education, command indoctrination, leadership training seminars, or targeted special interest groups on the installation.

II. Learning Objectives

After the completion of this brief, participants will be familiar with the following:

- The prevalence of special needs families in the military
- The additional challenges faced by Service personnel whose children have special needs
- Legislation concerning the rights of people with disabilities
- Service programs for special needs
- Responsibilities of leaders

III. Preparation and Procedures

Marketing, Target Audience: The target audience is military leaders. It should be marketed directly to unit leadership.

Length: Approximately ten to twenty minutes (dependent on material included)

Training Considerations/Options: This brief may be presented with some slight modifications to “all hands,” key volunteers, and others who would benefit from knowing about the challenges and resources for military families whose children have special needs.

Registration: Not applicable. Brief is presented at the request of a command or interested group.

IV. Training and Materials

Equipment and Materials:

- Seating for all participants
- PowerPoint capable projector and screen
- PowerPoint slides
- PowerPoint capable computer

Handouts:

- Enclosure 4 of DoDI 1315.19 found here at <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/131519p.pdf>
- EFMP Brochures

Resource Materials:

- EFMP enrollment forms DD2792 and DD2792-1
- Have available CD's of the DoD Special Needs Family Tool Kit (This can be found at <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>. Type “DoD Special Needs Parent Toolkit” in the search box. Go to the “Service Provider Exceptional Family Member” area and create copies for workshop attendees.)

Take Note:

Use of additional or alternative handouts is at the presenter's discretion. The information in this brief should be amended or altered to include pertinent local information, and it can be altered to speak directly to the specific Services. For example, if the brief will be presented exclusively to Army personnel, the words “Service member” can be changed to “Soldier.” This brief can be useful for other groups as well, such as Key Wives.

V. Key Terms

- **EFMP:** Exceptional Family Member Program
- **EFM:** Exceptional Family Member
- **SNIAC:** Special Needs Identification and Assignment Coordination
- **STOMP:** Specialized Training of Military Parents

VI. Curriculum Outline for Special Needs Brief

- I. Introduction
2. Military Special Needs Community
3. Laws that Regulate Services
4. Exceptional Family Member Program
 - a. Personnel function
 - b. Family support function
5. Army EFMP
6. Navy EFMP
7. Marine Corps EFMP
8. Air Force EFMP
9. Recommendations for Military Leaders
10. TRICARE and Command Sponsorship
 - a. Extended Care Health Option
 - b. ECHO Home Health Care
 - c. Command Sponsorship

11. Additional Information and Support

12. Summary

VI. Curriculum Detail for the Special Needs Brief

Introduction



Welcome the participants to the Special Needs Brief.

Introduce yourself, including your name, position, and title. Include any relevant personal experience with special needs Service families.

Say: Frequent moves, family separations, and distance from extended family are challenges faced by most military families. However, for families whose children have special needs, additional energy and resources may be necessary to meet these challenges. An important aspect of military readiness is ensuring that the needs of military members and their families are met. Resources are available for military families who have extra challenges. Military leaders should be familiar with these resources in order to encourage their use by Service members who may be reluctant to identify their family as a special needs family, or who may be reluctant to ask for help.

It is important for leaders to understand the mandatory requirements of the special needs programs, to know where to find a point of contact, and to know where they and their subordinates can go to learn more.

Military Special Needs Community



Say: Just as the diversity of the military community reflects the overall diversity of the United States, the military special needs community reflects the diversity of the special needs community throughout the country. There are about 90,000 Service members enrolled in the Services' Exceptional Family Member Programs. Special needs families exist throughout all ranks and represent a range of functional abilities from being mildly affected by conditions to being severely impaired. The DoD recognizes the extra challenges these families face, and in an effort to comply with federal law and to provide a good quality of life for Service members and their families, processes have been established and programs have been developed to support these valued members of our armed forces. Leaders understand how distracting and sometimes overwhelming family worries can be, and how they can affect the unit's mission. During this brief you will be introduced to the programs developed to support these

members of our military family. For more detailed information regarding these services and organizations, you have been provided with their contact information.



Laws that Regulate Services

Say: With your handouts you have a copy of Enclosure 4 of DoDI1315.19 which defines the DoD criteria for identifying a family member with special needs. There are two areas of special need: medical and educational. There are a variety of medical conditions that will qualify a family member as special needs, including the following: asthma, autism, some mental health issues, or the need to use adaptive equipment. You can see Enclosure 4 for a more detailed list of qualifying conditions. Educationally, a family member is considered to be special needs if an individual has or requires an Individual Education Program, known as an IEP, or has or requires an Individual Family Service Plan, known as an IFSP. However, educational needs alone are not sufficient to prevent a Service member from accepting an overseas tour.



The legislation concerning the civil rights of exceptional family members is the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities, public and private, that receive federal funding, including the DoD. However, Section 504 does not apply to special needs families living outside the United States and its territories, as DoD facilities and programs overseas are subject to the laws of the host nation. All of these policies can be found in the leadership section of MilitaryHOMEFRONT.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) contains wide-ranging legislation intended to make American society more accessible to people with disabilities. The ADA addresses the following areas of discrimination:

- Employment
- Public services
- Public accommodations
- Telecommunications

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, known as IDEA, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (previously mentioned) govern the education of exceptional family members.

IDEA guides public school systems, including DoD schools, today. It requires Early Intervention services for disabled or developmentally delayed children from birth until three years of age and special education for disabled children from three through twenty-one years of age or sooner if a student graduates with a regular diploma.

A link to the DoD Directives concerning the various programs that affect the lives of military special needs families has been provided to you. A key policy is DoD Directive 1020.1. This Directive implements Section 504, and, among other protections, it directs all organizations under the Secretary of Defense to make all services and facilities accessible to people with disabilities.

Exceptional Family Member Program



Say: The Exceptional Family Member Program is a mandatory enrollment program for all active duty personnel and active duty reservists in the Army and Marine Corps who have a family member with special needs as defined by DoD criteria. EFMP enrollment is not just for children but also for spouses and even parents if they are considered dependents.

The primary objective of the EFMP is to identify Service members who have family members that have medical and/or educational needs so that their needs can be considered when assignments overseas are a possibility. This is especially critical in overseas assignments where the provision of medical or educational services may be limited.

Assigning Service members to locations that can support the medical or educational needs of their family members ensures that the sponsor's performance of duty is not inordinately affected by the demands of caring for an EFM. Enrolling in EFMP also can help improve the quality of life for military families with special needs.

The Navy and Marine Corps use the term Exceptional Family Member Program, or EFMP, to describe two separate functions performed in compliance with DoD policy. This first is the personnel function, which is mandatory for all Services, and the second is the family support function.

The Army uses the term Exceptional Family Member Program, or EFMP, to describe comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical, and personnel services to families with special needs.



Say: The personnel function is a system that documents and codes the medical and special education needs of eligible family members during the assignment process. The screening consists of a medical and special education records review for all family members. This is so that the needs of the exceptional family member can be considered during the assignment process. Once eligible family members are screened and enrolled, the Service member will be assigned to an area with the necessary medical or educational resources and for which command sponsorship/family member travel is authorized.

It is the responsibility of the military Services to verify the availability of medical and, when moving overseas, special education services necessary for meeting the needs of exceptional family members. When pinpointing a location to assign an active duty Service member with an

EFM, there must be available services as well as a valid requirement for the Service member's grade and military occupational specialty.

Family members who wish to travel overseas at government expense may be denied if the services required to meet a family member's medical needs are not available. The sponsor always has the option of accepting an assignment while the family is supported in another location.

Say: The second function of EFMP is family support, which is not mandatory. The DoD policy on installation family centers allows, but does not require, the Services to offer family support services to exceptional family members within the Services' family support systems. The Army and Marine Corps have designated EFMP personnel who are typically located in installation family centers and can provide troops and their family members with information and resources that can help with their special needs. EFMs in the Navy can find support at family centers, but there are no designated EFMP personnel there. EFMs in the Air Force may find assistance in Airmen and Family Readiness Centers, but there are no designated personnel assigned specifically to address EFM needs separate from other families.



Take Note:

You may choose to use all four of the following slides containing details about each Service's EFMP, or you may choose to only use those of importance to the participants' specific branch of Service.

Army EFMP

Say: The Army Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) works with other military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical, and personnel services to families with special needs. Once a Soldier becomes aware of a family member's special need, enrollment in EFMP becomes mandatory.



The following Soldiers with exceptional family members must enroll in the program:

- Active Army
- U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers in the USAR-Active Guard Reserve program
- Army National Guard personnel serving under authority of Title 10 and Title 32, United States Code

Soldiers can access EFMP through their nearest Army military treatment facility (MTF), where they can begin the assessment process and obtain the enrollment forms.

Army Community Services has a designated EFMP manager who can help families with referrals, advocacy, respite care, and connections with other special needs families.

A concern for many Soldiers is that enrollment in EFMP will adversely affect their career; however, enrollment in EFMP does not affect selection for promotion, schools, or assignments. Information concerning enrollment in EFMP or any of the data used in the program is not made available to selection boards.

Navy EFMP



Say: In the Navy, EFMP enrollment is mandatory and required immediately upon identification of a special need. The Navy EFMP Coordinators provide services for personnel assignment functions. Families requesting family support services are referred to the Fleet and installation family centers for assistance. The Navy EFMP Coordinators serve both personnel and family support functions, with an emphasis on the personnel function.

The Navy's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) is designed to assist Sailors by addressing the special needs of their exceptional family members during the assignment coordination process. The special needs taken into consideration may include any medical, dental, mental health, developmental, or educational requirement; wheelchair accessibility; adaptive equipment; or assistive technology devices and services. Enrollment in EFMP enables Navy detailers to proactively consider a family member's special need requirements during the assignment process and to pinpoint the assignment to a location with appropriate resources to address these needs.

Once enrolled, the exceptional family member will be placed into one of six categories based on the type of diagnosis and the severity and frequency of medical or educational intervention required. For example, a Sailor with an EFM placed in category one will be monitored with no limitation of assignment. A Sailor with an EFM placed in category five may receive a long-term assignment in an area where he or she can fulfill both sea and shore duty requirements with the necessary family support available.

Sailors may be reluctant to enroll because of misconceptions that EFMP enrollment may limit assignments and career advancement or preclude family members from accompanying sponsors on overseas tours. However, Sailors enrolled in the EFMP will receive equal consideration for accompanied assignments and for promotions. Detailers, promotion, and selection boards have no access to EFMP records.

Marine Corps EFMP

Say: The Marine Corps Exceptional Family Member Program is a mandatory enrollment program for all active duty personnel. Marines can enroll in the EFMP program through the EFMP Coordinator at Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS).



The primary objective of the EFMP is to ensure that Marine sponsors are assigned to locations where services exist to support their exceptional family member (EFM). This is especially critical in overseas assignments where the provisions of services may be limited.

The Headquarters Marine Corps EFMP Manager will work with the monitor to determine the best assignment based on both the special needs of the family and the needs of the Marine Corps. When arbitration is required, the Marine Corps Medical Officer will make the final determination on the suitability of the assignment. Marines always have the option of accepting assignments where services do not exist while the EFM is supported in another location.

Marine Corps Community Services will be staffed with an EFMP Coordinator who will aid families with referrals, advocacy, and building connections with other special needs families. Most of the EFMP Coordinator positions are collateral duties with only a few installations providing full-time dedicated EFMP personnel. After the DD2792 and DD2792-1 enrollment forms are completed, a Central Screening Committee, comprised of medical professionals, will provide Headquarters Marine Corps with a recommended EFMP category. If HQMC agrees with the Central Screening Committee's recommendation, the category will be assigned and the Service member will be notified of his or her enrollment. A category one rating generally has no assignment limitation, while a category four will require an assignment in an area with a major medical center. However, this does not mean EFM sponsors cannot receive unaccompanied assignments overseas. Category four families are given priority housing assignment.

Assigning Marine sponsors to locations that can support the needs of their family members ensures that their performance of duty is not inordinately affected by the demands of caring for their exceptional family member, and thus contributes to the operational readiness of unit. Successful execution of the EFMP improves the quality of life for Marine Corps families with special needs without negatively affecting careers. Monitors and selection and promotion boards have no access to EFMP information.

Air Force EFMP

Say: Enrollment in the EFMP is mandatory for active duty Air Force sponsors whose family members have special needs.



The Air Force separates the personnel function of EFMP into two components: SNIAC and EFMP. The Special Needs Identification and Assignment Coordination (SNIAC) refers to the system that collects medical and education information needed to make the best assignment decisions. This information is then passed on to personnel where the decision is made. The Air Force keeps these two systems separate to ensure privacy laws are respected by telling the personnel office only “yes they can travel” or “travel is not recommended” without sharing details of the family’s needs.

The Special Needs Identification and Assignment Coordination process is critical to determining the availability of services for spouses and children with special needs. The process links the services of the Military Personnel Flights, the MTFs, and the installation family centers.

Participation in EFMP does not adversely affect careers. Selection and promotion boards have no access to EFMP information.

TRICARE and Programs for Families with Special Needs



Say: To help families in the military with special needs, TRICARE offers expanded programs to those who are eligible.

The Extended Care Health Option, or ECHO, provides financial assistance and additional benefits for services, equipment, or supplies beyond those available through TRICARE Prime, Standard, or Extra.

ECHO Home Health Care, or EHHC, provides homebound family members with intensive home services and supplies if they generally require more than twenty-eight hours per week of home health services or respite care.

Both programs offer respite care, giving parents an opportunity to recharge while their child is cared for by a qualified caregiver.



Say: Command sponsorship of dependents is very important to families with special needs. It is defined as dependents of a Service member residing with the Service member at his or her duty station outside the Continental United States (OCONUS), where the accompanied tour is authorized and the Service member is authorized to serve said tour.

There are many benefits to command sponsorship. Dependents who are granted command sponsorship are eligible to access the exchanges, commissaries, and TRICARE Prime Overseas. They can also have their household goods shipped to and from the overseas area at government expense when applicable. If command sponsorship is terminated, the dependent children will be allowed to complete the school semester.

Non-command-sponsored dependents are those with the Service member at his or her duty station OCONUS, where the accompanied tour may or may not be authorized. These dependents shall not be

provided transportation to and from the Service member's overseas duty station at government expense. Depending on the individual Status of Forces Agreements DoD policy or Military Service regulations, these dependents may be denied access to certain dependent support facilities (DoDI 1315.18).

When military members are ordered overseas, command sponsorship is crucial for those needing healthcare. TRICARE policy requires Service members with overseas orders to verify command sponsorship for accompanying family members for enrollment in TRICARE Overseas Program Prime, including TRICARE Global Remote Overseas.

When TRICARE Standard beneficiaries seek care overseas, they may have to pay the entire bill at the time of service and then file a claim for reimbursement. Under TRICARE Standard, family members must pay an annual deductible and cost share each time they get care outside of the MTF. TRICARE Standard and Plus beneficiaries are only eligible for space-available care at an MTF overseas. This is a considerable burden on most Service members.

You should always discourage your troops from taking their family members overseas without command sponsorship.

Recommendations for Military Leaders

Say: It is important to remember that the disability of one member of a family touches every other member and influences the family as a unit. In a similar way, the concerns of one member of a unit may affect other members of the unit. When a Service member is not enrolled in or is unaware of the Exceptional Family Member Program and his/her family member's needs are not considered during the assignment coordination process, it can have a negative impact on the family's quality of life. Also, Military families may remain unaware of what assistance is available to help with medical and educational issues, childcare, finances, or respite care.

Failure to provide information about a family member's special need can be an expensive mistake because of the expense the DoD incurs when a Service member and/or his or her family members have to return to CONUS simply because the accurate and up-to-date medical information was not provided. The lack of information can potentially put the family member at unnecessary risk as emergency or specialty care may be unavailable or too far away for regular access. A Service member who fails or refuses to enroll or provides false information may be subject to disciplinary action for offenses under Article 92 (failure to obey a lawful order or regulation or dereliction of duty) or Article 107 (false official statement), in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) (reference (k)). In addition to UCMJ disciplinary action, the Service member may also be subject to administrative sanctions, to include denial of command sponsorship.





Say: As leaders, you can help get troops enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) by establishing an environment in which Service members are comfortable asking for help and are certain that their concerns will be dealt with. It is important to be proactive on behalf of the Service member instead of reactive. The greatest obstacle to Service members is the perception that asking for help with personal or family problems will negatively impact their military careers. It is important for you to emphasize that promotion and selection boards do not have access to EFMP information.

Leaders should support recommendations from family support professionals and encourage open communication with troops. Periodically ask how the family member is doing and if the medical and community support needs are being met. Allow reasonable time for medical appointments or other related obligations.

Military special needs families have a responsibility to make sure they are aware and prepared to handle the needs of their exceptional family member if the primary caregiver is not available. A Family Care Plan is required of families in the EFMP. This plan outlines the legal, medical, logistical, educational, religious and monetary arrangements for the care of the Service member's family. The plan should be detailed enough to provide for a smooth transfer of responsibilities to the designated caregiver should the Service member be absent due to military duties.

Be aware that Service members are not required to divulge the nature of a family member's medical condition to their command due to the Privacy Act of 1974; however, you should be aware of any family readiness concerns the Service member and his family may have and watch for "red flags" that may indicate the need for additional support: fatigue, excessive time off, or talking to peers about family issues.

Additional Resources and Support



Say: Here are a several additional resources you may find helpful in supporting Service members with exceptional family needs. The contact information for these resources has been provided to you. Included are the links to several Services Leaders Guides that tell you what to look for, what to do, and what specific resources are available to help Service members who are in distress.



STOMP (Specialized Training for Military Parents) is a federally funded Parent Training and Information Center established to assist military families who have children with special education or health needs. The staff of the STOMP project includes parents of special needs children who have experience in raising their children in military communities and traveling to different locations. Every member of the military with a special needs child should know about STOMP.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT is a one-stop source of information designed especially to fit the needs of Military Leaders, as well as troops and families. There is an extensive section regarding healthcare, the EFMP, and other special needs issues. An especially useful feature is the “MilitaryINSTALLATIONS” section which locates military services and installations around the world.

Military OneSource is a valuable resource for stressed members of the military and their families. There are people waiting to listen and support military families twenty-four hours a day. Military OneSource provides dedicated special needs consultation, research, resources, and materials intended to enhance current military services available to families with special needs.

You have also been provided with a link to the DoD Directives concerning military families with special needs.

Summary

Say: Services members whose children have special needs are highly motivated personnel and an integral part of our military. The programs we have discussed are important to maintaining a good quality of life for our Service members and their families. Thank you for supporting our Service members by coming here today.

Take Note:

You may want to ask if there are any questions. Should a question be asked that you do not have the answer to, simply ask for the contact information from the individual and follow up after you have found the necessary information.

