



Module One

Birth to Age Three: Discovering Delay or Disability

I. Introduction

PowerPoint Slide:  Handout: 

This workshop is designed to provide information for Service members and their families whose young children are suspected of having, or have already been diagnosed with, a disability or developmental delay. The emotional impact of realizing a child has special challenges will be addressed, and the Early Intervention System, or Educational and Developmental Intervention Services (EDIS), will be introduced. Information will be presented on the importance of parents' roles in educating their children and working as a team with the Early Intervention professionals who offer services to children.

II. Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the unit, the participants will be able to do the following:

- Understand common emotional reactions to learning a child has a disability
- Be familiar with the Early Intervention System and the importance of an early start
- Describe components of an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Identify three resources available to help parents as they navigate through life in the military with a special needs child

III. Preparation and Procedures

Target Audience: The target audience for this workshop is military personnel and their spouses who have infants or young children with special needs and who may now or in the future be involved in Early Intervention or EDIS. Marketing should be conducted through the installation family center, the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), military treatment facilities (MTFs), childcare centers, and schools. Remember that childcare may be an issue for participants. Consider this when scheduling a time and, if possible, have suggestions available for childcare arrangements. If parents are not comfortable leaving their children, let them know that they are welcome to bring their children with them, as this may be the only way they can attend. Keep this in mind when selecting the location of the workshop.

Module length: Approximately 1 hour. Time may vary depending on the needs of the particular group and the amount of participant interaction.

Registration: Registration is recommended. All participants should receive a reminder phone call or email about three days prior to the workshop. During the reminder call, ask if childcare is an issue, and again encourage parents to bring their children if that is their only option.

Training Considerations/Options:

- This can be a stand alone workshop offered to military parents of young children with special needs, or it can be part of a series of workshops concerning parenting children with special needs while in the military.
- An interactive group discussion is favored since part of the purpose of the workshop is to help parents make personal connections as well as gain knowledge.

IV. Training Materials and Tools

Equipment and Materials:

- Tables and chairs to accommodate all participants
- Separate table for resource materials
- Brochures from resources list
- Name tags and markers
- Projector and screen (PowerPoint capable)
- PowerPoint slides
- Microphone
- Sign-in sheet
- Extra pens
- PowerPoint capable laptop computer
- Large sheets of paper and markers

Take Note:

You have the option of showing a brief video, produced by a Marine Corps spouse, Jenny Rooker, who has 2 children with special needs. The video, titled *Welcome to Holland*, describes her experiences. You may wish to show the video before you begin the *Birth to Age Three* PowerPoint presentation, or you may choose to share it after a break. The video can be viewed at the following link (which is located on MilitaryHomefront): <http://mfile.akamai.com/8778wmv/doditc.download.akami.com/12038/MHF/holland.wmv>

Handouts:

- A copy of the PowerPoint presentation, with room for notes (To do this open the PowerPoint file. Click on “File” from your menu. Choose “Print.” Under “Print What,” choose “handouts,” and then choose three per page.)
- Contact your local Early Intervention office(s) and ask if they have a standard form for parents requesting an Early Intervention evaluation (If they do, provide these forms. If they do not, have copies of the included sample letter, “Request for Early Intervention Referral,” provided at the end of this module. Also provide contact information and coordinator name(s) and address(es).)
- Resource list

Take Note:

Handouts should be provided to participants upon arrival or as they sign in. You may tell participants that the resource list has contact information for any of the resources you mention during this workshop. It is very important that you include local points of contact for area public and/or DoD schools, childcare programs, Early Intervention, and other disability organizations.

Resource Materials:

Materials may include extra copies of handouts and/or single copies of books or videos for participants to look at. Consider asking the local library to set up a display of relevant books that could be checked-out at a later date.

- State specific Parent Training Center brochures with training events flyers
- County/city school Parent Resource Centers
- Local area support group fliers
- Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) brochures
- Child Find brochure
- Specialized Training for Military Parents (STOMP) brochure
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) brochure (call 1-800-695-0285)
- Obtain a copy of your state's Individual Family Service Plan (contact your state Family Training and Information Center for this information)
- 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.)

V. Key Terms:

- **Service Coordinator:** A parent's contact and resource in the Early Intervention System (a service coordinator will be assigned after a referral is made)
- **Eligibility:** Refers to whether a child qualifies for services
- **Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP):** A plan to aid the family in minimizing the effects of the child's disability or delay (the IFSP is unique to the family for whom it is written)
- **Available Services:** These are the services that a qualifying child may receive in Early Intervention

VI. Curriculum Outline for Developmental Delay, Birth to Age Three Workshop

1. Introduction

- a. Introduce yourself
- b. Ice Breaker
- c. Define purpose of workshop

2. The Emotional Impact of Discovering a Child has a Disability or Delay

- a. Common feelings
 - Denial
 - Anger
 - Guilt
 - Sorrow
 - Anxiety
 - Acceptance
 - Hope
- b. Taking action/reaching out
 - Learn about child's condition
 - Talk to family
 - STOMP
 - Contact other parents
 - Parent Training Center

3. Early Intervention

- a. Start early
- b. Aids families
- c. Early Intervention System
 - Referral/Service Coordinator
 - Evaluation
 - Eligibility
 - Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP)
 - Services
 - Transition
- d. Areas of evaluation
 - Physical
 - Language and speech
 - Social and emotional
 - Adaptive
 - Cognitive

4. Parents as Advocates

a. Your rights

5. Challenges

6. Additional Resources

7. Summary

VII. Curriculum Detail

Introduction



Welcome participants to the Birth to Age Three: Discovering Disability or Delay Workshop.

Introduce yourself to the participants, to include your name, position, and any relevant personal information.

Ice Breaker:

Take Note:

This is a suggested activity to help the participants feel comfortable, get to know each other and join in discussion. Modify this activity to suit the participants' needs or interests.

Before the workshop, post easel paper around the room with markers hanging from each poster. Have one question per poster listed and ask participants to rotate around the room visiting each poster and making some contribution. Questions should be open-ended and may include any questions related to parenting young children. Hang enough posters to average several people at each one.

Suggested questions:

- What is the most important part of being a parent?
- What do you hope to learn today?
- What has been the biggest challenge you have faced with your child in the last month?
- Describe a special moment for you and your child in the last month.
- What is the one piece of advice that you wish someone had told you before you had children?

As parents come into the workshop, direct them to the posters and ask them to respond to at least several of the questions. Encourage discussions around the questions while at the poster. Highlight responses when they have finished and refer back to the posters as you hit on relevant topics during the workshop, asking each parent to choose one or two responses from the posters to share with the group.

Say: The purpose of this workshop is to help parents to become familiar with the Early Intervention System, to identify common emotions and challenges associated with parenting a child with special needs, and to learn where parents of special needs children can go for additional assistance. All of the contact information for the organizations and websites discussed today can be found in your handouts.



The Emotional Impact of Discovering a Child has a Disability or Delay

Say: Many new parents find the task of raising a child to be overwhelming at times. Parents whose children are born with a disability or who are discovering their child is delayed have even greater challenges to face. You may feel bewildered by the amount of information being presented to you. You may be exhausted from lack of sleep. Your heart might ache with love and concern for your child. Remember as you learn how to best raise your child that you are the expert on your child. You know your child more intimately than any doctor or teacher. Also remember that you are not alone.



This morning we will discuss the emotional aspect of learning that your child has a disability or delay, as well as explore steps you can take to connect with other families and utilize support systems available to strengthen your family and your child.

Take Note:

Double click on slide three for movement.



Say: When first confronted with the news that a child may have a disability or a delay, many parents' first reaction is denial. They may think that there must be a mistake. Whether the diagnosis offered to you is accurate or mistaken, it is always a good idea to ask for a second opinion. Doctors are not perfect, and the perspective of a second health care professional might help parents to understand their child better.

Some parents get angry, which is an understandable reaction to the news that a beloved child faces struggle. Anger may be directed at medical personnel or other professionals who are providing information. Anger may flare up between family members as they try to absorb the new information. You are entitled to feel angry and you may ask, Why me? Why my child? Eventually many parents turn their anger into energy that is useful in getting the best services possible for their child.

Guilt may occur as parents worry that something they have done or neglected to do may have caused the child's impairment. This can be especially true for mothers who worry if action taken in pregnancy might have caused the child's impairment.

Sadness and disappointment may be inevitable as you realize that the future you had envisioned for your child might never materialize. Grief is a natural reaction to loss, and you may need to grieve for the healthy child you have dreamed of as part of accepting the lovely, though different child you have.

Many parents feel fear and anxiety when they discover their child will not or is not developing in a typical way. Fear may come from uncertainty about the future or fatigue, as coping with a child who has a disability or who is chronically ill can be exhausting and confusing. Worries about your own ability to be a good parent are common as well.

Finally, as time goes by and parents become more accustomed to having a child who has special challenges, the roller coaster ride begins to level out a little. Your child's disability still exists, but you have a greater understanding of his or her condition, and you realize that you can be a competent and loving parent. You also realize that while your child may not be typical, he or she is loving and lovable.



Say: The first action many parents take upon learning that a child may have a disability is to ask many questions of health care and educational professionals. You may want to keep paper nearby throughout the day to write down questions as they occur to you. Do not be embarrassed to say to your doctor or other professionals, "I don't understand, would you please explain that again?" You are trying to learn a lot at once, and it is the job of these professionals to help you.

Every state has at least one Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center. PTI Centers serve families with children with disabilities and provide parents with information, resources, and the skills to be their child's best advocate. Ask about your state's parent-to-parent program which can help you connect with other parents whose children have disabilities similar to your

child's disability. Contact information and a description of available services can be found with your handouts.

Military families who have children with special needs are required to participate in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). EFMP's main function is to identify family members with special medical or educational needs, document the required services, and consider those needs during the personnel assignment process. This is especially important when considering overseas locations. EFMP has an additional function of offering family support; however, the level of available family support varies from Service to Service.

Seek out other parents whose children have disabilities. Contact your child's physician, your EFMP manager, or STOMP for help finding families like yours. STOMP, which stands for the Specialized Training of Military Parents, is a National Parent Training and Information Center for military families with special needs and is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. STOMP offers two email discussion groups, known as listservs, to military parents of special needs children. One listserv is a general special needs discussion group and the other is specifically for military families who have children with Autism. The parents who participate on STOMP share their experiences and pool their knowledge and resources to help each other find solutions for their children and their families. Contact information for STOMP is included with your handouts.

Take Note:

Be sure to complete the provided form for local contacts including information for State Parent Training Centers and your installation EFMP office.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do is to keep talking to your other family members. For those who are married, keep talking to your spouse. The more you can communicate in difficult times the greater your strength as a couple will be. You may not react to the news that your child has a disability in the same way, but try to explain how you feel and listen carefully to how your spouse feels.

Early Intervention

Say: Early Intervention is a federally mandated program that provides services for children with disabilities from birth to age three. The law that requires all fifty states to have an Early Intervention program is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, known as IDEA.

The goal of Early Intervention is to lessen the effect of any condition that may limit a child's development. Early Intervention focuses on the child, but is most effective when the focus is on the family and child together.



IDEA requires that the evaluation, the development of an educational plan, and the service coordination be provided at no charge to families. Other services may also be provided at no cost, although some fees may be assessed on a sliding scale, depending on a family's income. However, the law also states that no child shall be denied services because the family cannot afford them. If your family has difficulty paying for Early Intervention services, contact your service coordinator or your health benefits advisor. Early Intervention may be paid for under your TRICARE option, private insurance, or Medicaid. The DoD Early Intervention program, known as Educational and Developmental Intervention Services (EDIS), is provided at no charge for children who, but for their age, would be eligible to attend DoD schools.

Remember that each child's family has the final say on what services they will accept, and you may reject services that you are unwilling to pay for.



Say: There are many reasons to begin Early Intervention services as soon as possible. A child's rate of learning and development are at their peak in the preschool years. Skills that could be learned with some ease at a younger age, may take longer to master when the child is older.

Many years of research show that Early Intervention increases both educational and developmental gains for children. The most effective Early Intervention programs share the following qualities: the young age of children at the start of services, parental involvement, and the intensity and amount of structure provided by the program.



Say: Early Intervention does more than help your child overcome or diminish areas of delay; it also shows parents how to best help their children at home. You will be able to watch as your child is taught and encouraged. By modeling this at home, you are reinforcing the lessons learned and increasing the speed at which your child will master these new skills. Sometimes families of exceptional children feel frustrated or isolated. This type of stress can affect the whole family's well-being. Through Early Intervention, parents can become empowered as they learn how to help in their child's development. This often leads to a better attitude about themselves and their child's progress and outlook.

Take Note:

Slide eight shows the seven steps to the Early Interventions System. Each click of the mouse will highlight the next step. The words of text that are **bold** are to alert you to click and highlight the next step in the cycle.

Say: We are going to explore the Early Intervention System in some detail. You can see that Early Intervention is a series of steps that begins with a **referral**. A referral is a request for services for a child. After a referral is made, a **service coordinator** will be assigned to your family. The coordinator's job is to help manage and schedule the **evaluation** of your child. The evaluation is the series of assessments that will help determine whether your child is **eligible** to receive services. If your child is eligible for services, an **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** will be written specifically for your child and family. Your child will then begin to receive **services** based on his or her unique needs. Finally, at the age of three years, your child will **transition** out of Early Intervention and into the public or DoD school system that is appropriate and the choice of your family. Now we will take a closer look at each step.



Take Note:

Please provide participants with a handout containing contact information for Early Intervention in your area. Include information for the public school as well as the DoD schools where available. If these institutions have a specific form for this, provide it. If a phone call will suffice, provide this information as well as the name and phone number of the contact person.

Say: A referral is a request, usually in writing, to have a child evaluated for Early Intervention services. The referral can be made by a parent, a child's physician, or other person who is concerned about a child's development. (Include local referral information here, and alert participants if a referral form has been included with their handouts.)



Say: Once your child has been referred to Early Intervention, a service coordinator will be assigned to your family. It is the job of the service coordinator to oversee and coordinate all assessments, evaluations, and appointments that are necessary for diagnosis and evaluations of your child. Your service coordinator will help with the development of your child's IFSP and then work to see that all of the services identified in the IFSP are delivered in a timely and beneficial way. The service coordinator will participate in the reviewing your IFSP, will help families to find available service providers, and will help coordinate with healthcare professionals. Also, your service coordinator will help with the creation of a transition plan that will help your child move from Early Intervention to the preschool services if appropriate.



Say: Within forty-five days of a referral, an evaluation of the child must be completed and, if the child is found to be eligible for services, a service plan must be in place.



The evaluation is a series of tests and assessments that will be given to your child to determine if the level of delay is great enough to qualify for services. An evaluation will have several components:

1. A parent interview, a chance to voice your concerns about your child's development

Say: During the parent interview you will have the chance to discuss your particular concerns about your child's development. Many parents have mixed feelings about discussing their child's areas of weakness. It may feel unloving or disloyal to call attention to your child's delays. However, your unique perspective as a parent and your job as a parental advocate come together here. It is your responsibility as a loving parent to ensure that your child gets the help he or she may need to succeed. Your child will benefit greatly from your shared observations when needed services are made available to him or her. Being honest about your child is a loving choice.

2. A review of your child's medical history
3. Assessments by specialists in the areas of concern

Say: Depending on the concerns identified by you, teachers, or doctors, the following areas may be assessed:

- Physical development is the ability to hear, see, and move with purpose or coordination
- Language and speech refers to the ability to speak clearly and be understood, to understand language, and to express needs
- Social and emotional development is the ability to build satisfactory relationships and respond appropriately under normal circumstances
- Adaptive development refers to the ability to eat, to dress, to toilet, and to perform other self-help skills
- Cognitive development is the measurement of a child's intellectual functioning

The goal of the evaluation is an accurate assessment of your child's strengths and weaknesses. To help your child perform well, make sure he or she is well rested and fed. Try to schedule a time that is good for your child. To minimize anxiety, stay with your child during the assessment.

Say: During the eligibility meeting, the evaluation will be studied to determine if your child is eligible for Early Intervention. The presence of a delay alone may not qualify your child. The delay must be of a degree that meets the criteria set up by the state.

If possible, ask to see the results of the evaluation before the meeting. It can be a challenge to be a meaningful participant in a meeting while trying to absorb the results of an evaluation.

To prepare for this meeting, gather information about your child's growth and development. This may include health information or any prior evaluations. You may want to become familiar with your state's Early Intervention Program and the laws that govern it. Use MilitaryHOMEFRONT's State Resources page link to each state's Early Intervention Program to find that information.

Bring someone with you. If your spouse is unavailable, bring a close friend or family member. The moral support can be invaluable, and it is nice to have someone who was in the meeting to discuss it with afterward.

When you see the result of the evaluation you may be pleasantly surprised or dismayed. Take time to ask the professionals in the room about your child's ability levels and/or the services you think your child may benefit from. Remember, the formal testing is just one component of the evaluation, and do not give up if the assessment team does not place the same importance on an observation as you do. Talk it over with them so that you are able to understand their point of view, and they understand yours.

Say: When a child is found eligible for Early Intervention Services, a meeting will be scheduled to write an Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP). The guiding principle of the IFSP is that the family is a child's greatest resource; therefore, the child's needs are closely tied to the needs of the family. The best way to support children and meet their needs is to support and strengthen their family.



The IFSP will identify the concerns and priorities of the child's parents and will contain information about the child's current developmental levels. Goals for the child's development will be listed along with a detailed description of the services needed to attain these goals. There will be a statement about the environment where the services will be provided, along with the start date and duration of the services. The service coordinator will be identified, and a transition out of Early Intervention will be addressed.

Say: Your child's IFSP will state what type of intervention will best benefit your child and family. The following services are required to be available to eligible families:



Take Note:

Choose several of these services to highlight, as to read them all may be overwhelming. Ask the parents present if they have any questions about specific services.

- **Assistive Technology**—devices or services that allow or improve independence in daily activities (e.g., a curved handle on a spoon for easier self-feeding or a wheelchair)
- **Audiology**—therapy for individuals with hearing loss
- **Family Training**—may be counseling to help a family understand the special needs of their child and how to best support the child's development
- **Medical Services**—birth to age three for diagnostic or evaluation purposes only
- **Nursing Services**—may assess the health status of your child or administer treatments prescribed by a physician
- **Nutrition Services**—addresses the nutritional needs of your child and may include identifying feeding skills or problems, food habits, or preferences
- **Occupational Therapy**—activities designed to improve fine motor skills (e.g., finger, hand, or arm movements)
- **Physical Therapy**—activities designed to improve gross motor skills (e.g., leg, back, or whole body movements)
- **Psychological Services**—administering psychological tests and interpreting those tests and information about a child's behavior and may include counseling, parent training, and education programs
- **Respite Care**—trained caregivers who will take care of your child, giving you a little time off
- **Service Coordination**—bringing together the people, information, and resources that your child and family may need
- **Specialized Instruction**—programs or services specially designed to meet the needs of children with special needs
- **Speech and Language Services**—activities and materials designed to improve your child's ability to express thoughts and information
- **Transportation**—providing for the travel necessary to enable a child and family to receive Early Intervention Services
- **Vision Services**—identification of and services for children with visual disorders or delays

Say: Remember that every session your child has offers an opportunity for the service provider and the family to share information about the child. Parents can share daily observations about the child's development, and the service providers can offer suggestions about how to help the child in the home environment. A cooperative partnership between parents and service providers will benefit children profoundly. This information can be found in the *Birth to Age Three* module of the *DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit*.

Parents as Advocates

Say: When parents first realize that their child may have a disability or a delay, the reaction can be an emotional one. However, as time goes by and the disability is better understood, families become more accepting of their challenges. When parents realize that their child will require special services to limit the extent of his or her delays, many parents turn into advocates.

Parents are natural advocates as they are their child's first teachers and have their child's best interests at heart. Parents play a vital role in ensuring that children receive the services they are entitled to.

You may want to learn about the law that regulates Early Intervention: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, known as IDEA. In 1986, Congress recognized the importance of getting early help to children with special needs and their families, so an amendment was made to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This ensured that children with special needs would not have to wait until they were school age to receive services. Today, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, requires all fifty states and jurisdictions to have a system of Early Intervention for all children with disabilities from birth until they turn three. More information can be found in your handouts as well as in the *DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit*.

Take Note:

Consider offering the Advocacy Workshop. Alert participants to the schedule if you have already planned to offer the workshop. *Say:* As parental advocates, you may want to learn about the rights you and your child have under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as well as organizational and effective communication strategies. Plan to attend the Advocacy Workshop on...

Organization is important, so you may want to create a file for all of your child's Early Intervention paperwork and assessments. Learn about the technology available to help your child. Other parents are sometimes your best source. TRICARE has created a Special Care Organizational Record, called SCOR, that can help you organize your child's medical records. A link to this feature is included with your handouts.





Say: The Individuals with Disabilities Act, known as IDEA, gives children with special needs and their parents certain rights. You have a handout listing your rights as well as contact information should you wish to learn more:

- Your family can go through the Early Intervention process in your own language
- You will receive full copies of all evaluation results and notice regarding each aspect of the program
- You may refuse any specific service without losing the right to other services
- All information regarding your family will remain confidential
- You will be able to examine and correct all records regarding your child and family
- You may withhold or withdraw consent at any stage of the process
- You will be told of any possible changes in your child's evaluation or services before any are made
- You may choose not to receive Early Intervention Services

Challenges



Say: Finding appropriate services for your child can be confusing, and military families must also deal with the complication of relocating and starting the process again. It is very important to hand carry the documentation of your child's Early Intervention Program with you to your new home. As soon as possible, contact the local Early Intervention Services in your new location, as there may be waiting lists, or other delays in service. You can call the national Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) to find whom to contact in your new location, or ask the local public or DoD school system for information. You have contact information for NICHCY with your handouts.

Although all states have Early Intervention programs, all programs are not equal. Your child may not be eligible for the same services at the new location, and sometimes residency must be demonstrated.

Take Note:

Advertise about Families in Transition Workshop.

Additional Resources

Say: Raising a child with special needs while in the military may be confusing or frustrating at times. It can also be rewarding and fulfilling when you see your child growing and learning. Carry your child's IFSP, evaluation and assessment results, and copies of your child's medical records with you. The knowledge that you are looking after your child's interests can be deeply satisfying. You are not in this alone. There are many agencies with a strong desire to aid you as you help your child get the services he or she is entitled to. To find whom to contact in your new location, you may call the local school system, look on MilitaryHOMEFRONT's State Resources page, or contact Military OneSource for help. EDIS can be contacted through your MTF. Again, all of the contact information for the following resources can be found in your handouts.



Military families have many groups and agencies available to help them with their exceptional children. Look in the *Resources and Support* module of the *DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit* for more information about available resources.

Visit the STOMP website and consider joining their listserv.

Every state has at least one Parent Training Center designed to serve families with children. Centers may provide information, referrals, and advocacy services to help parents get the services they need for their children.

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) offers a wealth of information for parents and children in both English and Spanish.

The Military Health Care System, TRICARE, offers additional programs, such as the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO), to eligible families. The purpose of the ECHO program is to provide financial assistance and additional benefits for services, equipment, or supplies beyond those available through TRICARE Prime, Extra, or Standard. There is a Health Benefits module in the *DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit* that describes the ECHO. You can find additional information about the ECHO in the *Health Benefits* module of the *DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit*.

Caring for children with additional needs can be emotionally and physically draining. Remember that caretakers need care too. You may be entitled to Respite Care services via your Early Intervention Services. Respite Care provides your family with trained caregivers who can care for your child, giving you time to rest. If you think you might benefit from counseling, you can contact your family service center, or Military OneSource. Military OneSource provides information, referrals, and a variety of assistance to the military community and has counseling professionals available to talk to you twenty-four hours a day.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT is the Department of Defense's official website for quality of life information. This website has a Special Needs/EFMP section specifically designed to help troops and their families who have special needs. This site also maintains a Military Community Directory that can help you find Installation family centers worldwide.

Summary

We have discussed many aspects of parenting a young child who has a disability or a delay. What is your next step? Explore the resources provided to you, and talk to others who have similar challenges. Please stop by the resource table for more information, and thank you for coming. On MilitaryHOMEFRONT, you can also find a link to State Resources that will aid you with locating educational services in every state. Also available is a forum for families with children who have special needs. This is an excellent place to ask questions and find answers. All contact information is included with your handouts.

Take Note:

Alert participants to other workshops that are available, such as the following:

- *Special Education*, which has information about the special education system
- *Health Care for Children with Special Needs*, which has information about TRICARE programs for families with special needs
- *Families in Transition*, which has information about the special challenges of military life with a special needs child (included are tips for moving, dealing with deployment, evacuation, and helping special needs children transition to adulthood)
- *Advocacy*, which has an emphasis on effective advocating for your special needs child while serving in the military
- *Resources and Support*, which is an extensive look at the resources available to military families with special needs children

Sample letter for Early Intervention

Referral for Special Education Early Intervention

(Date)

(Early Intervention Coordinator's Name)

(Street Address)

(City/State/Zip Code)

Dear: _____:
(Early Intervention Coordinator's Name)

I would like to refer my child, _____ to the *Early On* Program. My child is _____
_____ (age of child) and appears to have problems in his/her development

The best time to reach me is on _____
_____ (insert dates and times)

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)

(Your Name)

(Street Address)

(City, State, Zip Code)

(Country)

(Area Code/Telephone Number)

Received by: _____ Date: _____

Take Note:

This handout is designed to be customized with local information for your installation, and the surrounding area. The following listings are suggestions for the presenter to complete with local information:

Local school system contacts, to include Early Intervention

DoD Educational and Developmental Intervention Services (EDIS)

EDIS is located in military treatment facilities (MTFs).

State Parent Training and Information Centers

Each state is home to at least one Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). Parent centers serve families of children and young adults from birth to age twenty-two with all types of disabilities: physical, cognitive, emotional, and learning. They help families obtain appropriate education and services for their children with disabilities; work to improve education results for all children; train and inform parents and professionals on a variety of topics; resolve problems between families and schools or other agencies; and connect children with disabilities to community resources that address their needs. To locate a parent center in your state, go to <http://www.taalliance.org/centers>.

Local Support Groups that may be of interest to participants

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) or Information and Referral (I&R) Specialist

Early Intervention contact for local public school as well as information on how to make a referral. You may include the sample letter (called "Request for Evaluation") or a different form if a specific one is required by the local school system.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT

MilitaryHOMEFRONT is the official Department of Defense website (<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>) designed to help troops and their families. This site is packed with information including a section under "resources" with links to a vast amount of information on a wide variety of support websites dealing with specific diseases, disorders, and syndromes. MilitaryHOMEFRONT maintains a Military Community Directory that has a searchable list of family center addresses, websites, phone numbers, and email addresses world-wide.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT's link to State Resources: http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/portal/page/itc/MHF/MHF_DETAIL_1?section_id=20.40.500.570.0.0.0.0.0¤t_id=20.40.500.570.500.170.0.0.0

MilitaryHOMEFRONT's link to parent forums: http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/jive_mhf/index.jspa

Military OneSource

In partnership with the Department of Defense, Military OneSource (<http://www.militaryonesource.com>) provides special needs consultation, research, resources and materials intended to enhance current military services available to families with special needs. Services are provided at convenient times for Service members and their families and are provided at no cost to these individuals.

Use the appropriate number to call and speak with a Military OneSource Consultant:
From the US: 1-800-342-9647
International Toll Free: 1-800-3429-6477
International Collect: 484-530-5908

STOMP

STOMP (Specialized Training of Military Parents) is a federally funded Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center established to assist military families who have children with special education or health needs. STOMP is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The staff of the STOMP Project is made up of parents of children who have disabilities and have experience raising their children in military communities.

STOMP serves families by providing information and training about laws, regulations, and resources for military families of children with disabilities. STOMP assists parents and professionals in developing their own community support groups and providing a forum where families can connect and discuss issues faced by military families whose children have disabilities. Go to <http://www.stompproject.org> or call 1(800)-5-parent.

TRICARE

ECHO is a program offered by TRICARE (<http://www.tricare.osd.mil>) to assist families with special needs. The purpose of the ECHO program is to provide financial assistance and additional benefits for services, equipment, or supplies beyond those available through TRICARE Prime, Extra, or Standard to eligible families.

SCOR is the Special Care Organizational Record that has been developed by TRICARE with families like yours in mind. In caring for your child with special health needs, you may get information and paperwork from many sources. This system can help you organize important information. Go to <http://www.tricare.mil/OCMO/download/SCOR.doc>.

