

Family Care Plans

What Support, Services Are Available to Caretakers?

Recently during a Secretary of Defense visit at Fort Belvoir, Va., a military parent asked about the support available to adults appointed as caretakers for children of deployed service members as part of the family care plan. Do they have access to counseling and services as if they were the parent? Are they given an ID that allows access to military installations, and other services such as the commissary, exchange, child care and youth programs?

Non-medical counseling is available to help with issues developing from a parent's absence, says Arthur J. Myers, principal director, Military Community and Family Policy.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT (www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil

<<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/>>) contains excellent information about preparing for deployment in the "Troops and Families" section of their Web site. The Pre-deployment Guide is full of information and resources, or if an online handbook is more convenient, the Web-based Deployment Connections is also available.

MilitaryOneSource support - available on the Web and via toll-free telephone

(www.militaryonesource.com <<http://www.militaryonesource.com/>> and 1.800.342-9647) - has been and is currently providing support to those serving on active duty, in the National Guard and the Reserves and their immediate family members, says Myers.

'Immediate family member' is defined as the spouse and children of the service member. In addition, anyone, blood relative or not, who has legal responsibility for a service member's child or children during deployment or separation from the family may use these services, including:

- * In-person (face-to-face) counseling
- * Short-term telephonic consultation
- * E-consultation
- * Health coaching sessions
- * Military OneSource Online
- * Call center consultation and services
- * Webinar training participation
- * Document translation
- * Telephonic translation

Military Family Life Consultants positioned around the world are another resource for counseling services. And the Joint Family Support Assistance Program is a support hub for families who live away from an installation.

Installation services for children include:

- . Family/Community Service Centers
- . Child and Youth Programs
- . Legal Assistance
- . MWR activities

The minor child is registered in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment System - DEERS - and issued an ID card. There are special provisions for getting an ID card for a child under age 10. An ID card is not issued to the caretaker.

The service member or caretaker requests an "Agent Letter of Authorization" at the local installation. Typically, the garrison or installation commander is the approving authority and the Pass & ID office issues the letter. The caretaker must have the dependent's military identification plus the Agent Letter to shop at the commissary and exchange. The caretaker can only shop on behalf of the dependent. The dependent need not be present. In the event that assistance is required due to medical reasons, a medical power of attorney and the child's ID is sufficient for care.