



Module Six | Resources and Support for Families with Special Needs

I. Introduction

PowerPoint Slide:  Handout: 

This workshop is designed for Service members and their families who have children with exceptional education or medical needs. Information covering an array of services offered by federal, state, and local agencies will be presented.

II. Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this workshop, the participants will be familiar with the following:

- Services available at installation family center(s)
- Services at the installation for children and teens
- Service-sponsored relief societies and websites
- The twenty-four-hour counseling available from Military OneSource
- Websites designed to help with relocation, such as *Plan My Move* and Military Teens On the Move (MTOM)
- Federal resources, such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Foundations to support children who are seriously ill

III. Preparation and Procedures

Target Audience: The target audience for this workshop is military personnel and their spouses who have children with special needs and who may be involved in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Marketing should be through the installation family center(s), EFMP coordinators, and military treatment facilities (MTFs).

Module length: Approximately one hour. The time will vary depending on the needs and the size of a particular group and the amount of discussion that takes place.

Registration: Registration is recommended. All participants should receive a reminder phone call or email about three days prior to the workshop. During the reminder phone call, ask if the participant has a particular area of interest. This will help you to customize the content of the workshop to include the special needs represented.

Take Note:

It is very important that research be done on local support groups and resources and that it is included in the workshop.

Training Considerations/Options: This can be a stand alone workshop offered to military parents whose children have special needs, or, because it is rather short, it can be paired with another workshop in this series. You may want to consider offering the entire series of workshops included in the *Facilitator's Guide for the DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit*. A casual, interactive group discussion is favored as one benefit of the workshop should be to make connections with other parents of special needs children.

IV. Training Materials and Tools

Equipment and Materials:

- Separate table for resource materials
- Name tags and markers
- PowerPoint capable projector and screen
- PowerPoint slides

- Microphone
- Sign-in sheet
- Extra pens
- Brochures from resource list
- Tables and chairs for all participants

Handouts:

- A copy of the *Resources and Supports* module from the *Special Needs Parent Tool Kit* (this can be found on MilitaryHOMEFRONT at http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/dav/lsn/LSN/BINARY_RESOURCE/BINARY_CONTENT/2188981.pdf)
- 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.)
- A list of any local resources you mention during the workshop (This handout is one you need to create.)

Handouts should be given to participants as they sign in.

Resource Materials:

- Local area support group fliers
- Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) brochures
- Child Find brochure
- Stomp brochure
- NICHCY brochure (Call 1-800-695-0285)

You may want to include extra copies of handouts on the resource table.

V. Curriculum Outline for Resources and Support Workshop

1. Introduction

- a. Introduce yourself
- b. Icebreaker (If group is very small, introductions may be sufficient. To find a variety of introductory activities, Google “icebreakers” and choose the activity best suited to your group.)
- c. Define purpose of the workshop

2. Installation Family Centers

3. Military Community Resources

- a. New Parent Support Program
- b. Family Advocacy Program
- c. School Liaison Officers

4. Programs for Children, Youth, and Teens

5. Emergency Relief Societies and Service Sponsored Websites

6. Additional Military Resources

- a. MilitaryHOMEFRONT
- b. Military OneSource
- c. Military Teens On the Move (MTOM)
- d. Plan My Move

7. TRICARE

- a. Extended Health Care Option (ECHO)
- b. ECHO Home Health Care (EHHC)
- c. Special Care Organizational Record (SCOR)

8. Federal, State, and Community Resources

9. Support for Families with Seriously Ill Children

10. Summary

VI. Curriculum Detail

Take Note:

You may choose to expand or reduce the content. It is strongly recommended that before the workshop the content be amended to include local support groups and local resources.

Introduction

Welcome participants to the Resources and Support for Families with Special Needs Workshop.

Introduce yourself, sharing any pertinent information, and begin your group introductions or icebreaker.

Say: When you have a child with special needs, life holds extra challenges. When your family is part of the military, you face the additional challenges of living far from extended family, frequently being separated from your spouse, and sometimes facing deployments. However, families in the military have an array of resources available to them from within and beyond the military community. By coming here today, you have chosen to become educated about the resources available to help, and as a result your family will benefit.

All of the contact information for the organizations and websites discussed today is included in your handouts.

Military Community Resources

Say: The military community is full of programs and resources designed to aid families like yours. An excellent starting point as we discuss these resources is your installation family center(s).

Take Note:

Take time to customize this section of the workshop to highlight your local installation family center(s) and to identify base centers by the names they are known by locally. Contact your installation family center(s) (FSC) Lending Locker and have on hand a list of available items to share with participants. Explore what other services are available with special attention to any program that could be especially helpful to families whose children have special needs. As you read through the list on slide two, supplement with local information.



Say: Installation family centers throughout the military exist to help military families like yours. Most military installations have installation family centers that offer a variety of free services and support designed to assist Service members and their families with the unique challenges of military life. Available offerings may vary due to the size and mission of the installation. Types of assistance offered may include the following:

- Relocation counseling and lending lockers
- Information and referrals for families with special needs
- Volunteer coordination
- Parenting classes
- Individual and family counseling
- Personal financial management
- Deployment support
- Family life education and workshops
- Spouse education and employment programs
- Family Advocacy Program (FAP)

Installation family centers can connect you with the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). This will ensure that your child's medical and educational needs will be considered as a duty station is selected. Your family center is also a good place to ask for information about local organizations and support groups concerned with specific disabilities. To find the installation family center(s) closest to you wherever you are, go to the MilitaryHOMEFRONT website. There you will find a MilitaryINSTALLATIONS directory that will help you find family support worldwide.

Take Note:

To encourage conversation, ask participants which family support services they have used.



Say: The New Parent Support Program uses home visitation and parenting classes to help expectant and new parents gain hands-on training that will help them make better informed decisions for their children. Services are matched to the needs of individual families and include home visitations, education, counseling, and referrals to other resources to include special needs organizations and services aboard the installation and within the local community. Even experienced parents can benefit from these classes.

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) exists to help military families under stress. The military community is not immune to personal or family problems. Problems may range from the stress due to a deployment to experiencing domestic violence, including spouse or child abuse. Fortunately, vital services and support are available to military families. FAP sponsors activities and services to include public awareness briefings, individual and couples counseling, crisis intervention, support groups, stress management, and other well-being workshops. The Army has FAP intervention personnel in the MTFs and personnel who work with reducing family stress in the family centers. The Air Force FAP, both prevention and intervention, is located in the MTF. Both the Navy and Marine Corps FAPs are located in the installation family centers.

The Army sponsors a program providing a School Liaison Officer at each Army installation whose role is to work with local schools in support of children from military families. The School Liaison Officer is particularly helpful when a student is transitioning from one school system to another and may be able to advocate for children whose special education needs are not being met.

Take Note:

If the workshop is being offered to Army families, be sure to include contact information for the installation's School Liaison Office.

Military families face greater challenges than many other families. Shifting work schedules that are often longer than the typical eight hour day and the obligation to be ready to deploy anywhere in the world on a moment's notice requires a child development system that is flexible, yet maintains high standards. Add to these challenges a child with special needs, and finding quality childcare can be a formidable challenge.

Say: If during enrollment a parent identifies their child as having special needs on Army, Navy, or Marine Corps installations that have Child, Youth and Teen programs, a special meeting is held to determine the best placement of the child. The team is usually comprised of the center director, resource and referral staff, the Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator/Manager, and other professionals that may have valuable information to help determine the best placement and support needs. The Army calls this service the Special Needs



Accommodation Process, known as SNAP. The Navy and Marines call this meeting the Special Needs Resource Team, known as SNERT. The Air Force does not offer this service.

Take Note:

Include with handouts contact information for your installation SNAP or SNERT office where available. This information is available through the Child Development Center.

Department of Defense Child Development Centers, known as CDCs, provide care for children from six weeks to twelve years of age. Resource and referral services, available at CDCs, assist parents in finding childcare when all available spaces on base are full or a parent's preferred childcare arrangement cannot be met on the installation. Ask your CDC about summer camps and activities. You may find an array of activities for your children ranging from sports camps to fishing tournaments. Contact information for all DoD Child Development Centers is available on the MilitaryINSTALLATIONS section of the MilitaryHOMEFRONT website.

Family childcare homes operated on base are certified by the military child development program. These providers receive a stipend if they agree to accept children with special needs. They deliver critical services for Service members on shift work or working extended hours or weekends, as well as for those who prefer a home-based environment for their children. A family childcare home may be the best option for special needs children who need the consistency of a single caregiver or who require complex procedures that must be learned by the caregiver.

Say: Your installation family center(s) offers programs designed to engage your children and teens. You will find an array of programs that will help your child become involved. Frequently available are sports leagues for soccer, basketball, and baseball. There may also be a center where your child can play Ping-Pong or video games.

Take Note:

Please change this section to reflect the services available on your installation with special attention for services that might be designed for special needs families. Several bases have special camps and activities for children with special needs. Camp Lejeune offers *Camp Special Time* several weekends a year, giving parents some well deserved time off. Fort Campbell offers *Camp We Can*. Find out what is available on your base and in your community.

Relief Societies and Service Sponsored Websites

Say: Military communities pride themselves on taking care of their own. Relief societies exist to help families with unexpected problems or financial emergencies. Help may be available for the following needs:



- Childcare expenses
- Unforeseen family emergencies
- Food, rent, and utilities
- Medical/dental bills
- Emergency transportation or essential vehicle repairs
- Funeral expenses
- Disaster relief assistance

Say: Each of the Services sponsors a website that provides an overview of programs available to military personnel and family members. These websites also provide news articles and information relating to life in the military and on-line tutorials. This contact information is included with your handouts.



Additional Military Resources

Say: Military families have many resources available to them, and many are available on-line or by phone twenty-four hours a day. MilitaryHOMEFRONT is a website packed with information useful to military families, especially military families with special needs. Military OneSource has counselors available to speak with you any time of the day or night. Military Teens On the Move (MTOM) and *Plan My Move* are both websites designed to ease the stress of relocating.



Now we will explore these sites in greater detail.

Say: MilitaryHOMEFRONT's Special Needs/EFMP module is the Official Department of Defense website that was designed to help troops and their family members who have special needs. This site is packed with information including a section under "resources" that has links to a wide variety of support websites dealing with disease, disorders, and syndromes. MilitaryHOMEFRONT maintains a MilitaryINSTALLATIONS military community directory that has a searchable list of military quality of life programs complete with addresses, websites, and phone numbers for these worldwide services. Look to MilitaryHOMEFRONT's special needs site for information on the following subjects:



- Exceptional Family Member Program
- Parenting
- Education
- Medical Care
- Family Support
- Financial and Legal Issues

Look under MilitaryHOMEFRONT's QOL (Quality of Life) Resources for Family Connections Forums where families with special needs can connect with each other as well as Service and installation specific EFMP forums. This is an excellent tool for relocating families to use as they consider new duty stations and prepare to relocate.



Say: Military OneSource provides information, referrals, and assistance to the military community. Accessed by telephone or the Internet, Military OneSource provides special needs consultation, research, resources, and materials intended to enhance current military services available to families with special needs.

Military OneSource has specialists who can assist families with their special education questions and may help families save valuable time by researching the availability of special needs programs at a new location. Services are provided on a scheduled appointment basis via telephone. Specialty services can be accessed through the main telephone number for Military OneSource.

Many tip sheets are available covering a wide range of topics of interest to military families whose children have special needs. All services are free of charge.

If you find you just need to talk, Military OneSource is available to you twenty-four hours a day. The phone number and website are included with your handouts.



Say: Military Teens On the Move is a website created specifically for military teens and kids who are facing yet another move. It contains age appropriate information about how to deal with the feelings children have about moving, information about the new installation, advice on handling the move, and how to begin to fit in at a new home.



Say: Military life involves moving - there is no way around it. That's why MilitaryHOMEFRONT has introduced *Plan My Move*, a powerful new set of tools to help you and your family make your next move a smooth one.

Through *Plan My Move*, you'll have access to these features and more:

- Customizable calendar
- To do lists
- Departure and arrival checklists
- Overseas specific information
- Reliable resources focused on the community outside the gate
- Installation overviews including local weather, maps, photos, and informative topics such as household goods, check-in procedures, employment, and childcare
- Assistance moving with a family member who has special needs

TRICARE

Say: TRICARE offers several programs to assist families with special needs. These programs are an effort to improve the quality of life for military families whose needs exceed what is available under the basic TRICARE plans. The Extended Health Care Option, which is known as ECHO, offers financial assistance and additional benefits for services, equipment, or supplies beyond those available through TRICARE Prime, Extra, or Standard. Some of the available benefits include medical and rehabilitative services, prostheses, orthopedic braces, durable equipment, technology training for family members, assistive communication, and sixteen hours of respite service per month if the beneficiary is receiving another ECHO benefit.

Also available is ECHO Home Health Care, known as EHHC. EHHC provides homebound family members with intensive home healthcare services. EHHC also provides families with respite care. This is sometimes known as the sleep benefit as it is designed to allow parents whose children need frequent medical interventions during the night a chance to sleep while their child is cared for by a Medicare certified home health agency. Those eligible for EHHC Respite Care may receive eight hours of respite care five days per calendar week. This benefit is different from the sixteen hours of respite care available through ECHO, and the two cannot be used consecutively. If you would like to learn more about these programs or to find details about how to qualify, look on the TRICARE website or in the *Health Benefits* module of the *DoD Special Needs Parent Tool Kit*.

TRICARE has developed a record keeping system called the Special Care Organizational Record (SCOR) which is designed to help families with complicated medical issues to keep their records organized and easy to assess. You can find the SCOR on the TRICARE website at <http://www.tricare.mil/OCMO/download/SCOR.doc>.



Federal, State, and Community Resources



Say: Now let us take a look at federal, state, and local community resources. Contact information for all the resources mentioned today is included with your handouts.

It is not unusual for hard working families to struggle to keep healthy food on the table. The Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance, known as FSSA, is designed so that military families will not have to rely on food stamps to make ends meet. Families can receive a cash benefit of up to five hundred dollars.

The Food Stamp Program enables low income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer cards. Food stamp recipients spend their benefits to buy food in authorized retail food stores, including the commissary. If you wonder if your family would qualify, you can find out on-line. Go to the website identified in your handouts and click on “Pre Screening Tool.” Service members can receive both food stamps and FSSA; however, the Food Stamp Program counts FSSA as income when determining eligibility.

Food stamps are not available for military families stationed overseas. However, you can apply for FSSA. Although this allowance does target those families currently using food stamps, all Service members may apply because it is based upon household income and family size, not whether one is currently receiving food stamps.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a federal supplement program that can provide a monthly payment to those with low incomes and few resources who are sixty-five or older, blind, or disabled. Children may qualify. If you think you or your child might qualify you should visit your nearest Social Security Office or call the Social Security Administration Office. If your initial application is denied, it is good practice to appeal the decision, as you may get the answer you are looking for on appeal.

Say: Medicaid is a program that pays for health care for eligible individuals and families with low income and few resources. Medicaid is a national program with broad guidelines, but each state sets its own eligibility rules and decides what services to provide above and beyond the federal requirements. Be aware of this as you move from state to state. In most states, kids who qualify for SSI will also qualify for Medicaid. States can also choose to cover other groups of children under the age of nineteen or those who live in higher-income families.

Many states qualify children through a Medicaid waiver program. This is the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act Of 1982, known as TEFRA. TEFRA gives states the option to provide home and community-based services to children with disabilities who would otherwise not qualify for Medicaid because of their parents' income. TEFRA is also known as the Katie Beckett waiver.

The Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program, or WIC, website has a link to toll free numbers across the country. If you cannot access the Internet, call your state Nutrition Counseling office or nearest installation family center(s). WIC offers nutritional help to women and children who are low-income and nutritionally at risk. This includes women who are pregnant, postpartum, or breast-feeding and infants and children up to their fifth birthday. WIC provides nutrition education, nutritious foods, as well as screening and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services.

Service members living overseas may be eligible to participate in the WIC Overseas program. More information about this program can be found on the TRICARE website.

Disabilityinfo.gov exists to connect people with disabilities to the information and resources they need to pursue their personal and professional ambitions. Caregivers, advocates, and disabled individuals can look here for information about travel, work place support, and fair housing.

Say: There are many organizations created to help military families and families with special needs. Here are just a few more.

Today's American Red Cross is actively working to aid members of the armed forces and their families. The Red Cross sends communications on behalf of family members who are facing emergencies or other important events to members of the U.S. armed forces serving all over the world. Service members and their families can count on the Red Cross to provide access to financial assistance, counseling assistance, and emergency communications.

Take Note:

Slide fourteen is formatted so each click of the mouse will highlight the name of one agency.

The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) provides assistive technology and services to people with disabilities, federal managers, supervisors, IT professionals, and wounded Service members. Dinah Cohen, CAP Director says, "We buy it, we pay for it, we get it to the users, it's just that simple." You can find additional information about CAP's EFMP initiatives on the CAP website.

CADRE, the Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education, encourages the use of mediation and other collaborative strategies to resolve disagreements about special education and Early Intervention programs. CADRE offers a spectrum of services including



advice to prevent conflict, help with early dispute assistance, education about conflict resolution options, mediation, resolution sessions, and due process hearings.

The Department of Education has created a site full of resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations (<http://idea.ed.gov>). The site will provide searchable versions of IDEA and regulations, access to cross-referenced content from other laws, video clips on selected topics, topic briefs on selected regulations, links to technical assistance, and a Q&A Corner where you can submit questions, as well as a variety of other information sources.

Take Note:

Be sure to provide participants with the address for the Department of Education site above. You may want to include this with your handouts.

The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice, known as EDJJ, is concerned by the overrepresentation of youth with disabilities at-risk for contact with the courts or already involved in the juvenile delinquency system. They provide assistance, conduct research, and disseminate resources in three areas: prevention of school failure and delinquency, education and special education for detained and committed youth, and transition services for youth returning to schools and communities.

Say: The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, known as NICHCY, serves the nation as a central source of information on the following:

- Disabilities in infants, toddlers, children, and youth
- IDEA, (the law authorizing special education)
- No Child Left Behind Act (as it relates to children with disabilities)
- Research-based information on effective educational practices

NICHCY is a valuable resource for all parents of disabled children and welcomes communication in Spanish or English. NICHCY's website is linked to the BrowseAloud text reader. This means, if you choose, you can now have all the information on this site read to you.

Say: Shriner's Hospitals for Children is a network of twenty-two pediatric hospitals in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico that provides specialized care for orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate. All services are provided at no charge.

If you know of a child Shriner's Hospitals might be able to help, please call the toll-free patient referral line. The number is included with your handouts.

STOMP, which stands for Specialized Training for Military Parents, is the only National Parent Training and Information Center for military families that provides support and advice regardless of the type of medical condition a child has. The STOMP Project hosts a listserv for military families and professionals to use to share ideas. The listserv enables military families all over the world to connect, learn, and help each other as they raise their special needs children in military communities. On STOMP, parents can ask questions and get answers about the resources available to them, as well as receive advice on educating their children and navigating the health care system. STOMP also offers workshops addressing an array of topics.

Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys visit the Wrightslaw website (<http://www.wrightslaw.com>) for reliable information about special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities. Pete and Pam Wright are special education attorneys that also travel around the country conducting workshops. Their website includes thousands of articles, cases, and free resources on dozens of special education topics. This an excellent source for parents who are learning to navigate through the Special Education System.

Take Note:

Slide fifteen is provided for you to customize with local support groups or any additional information you would like to include in the workshop. Local information is a key component to supporting military families with special needs. Should you need more than one slide, there is a bank template included at the end of the slide show that can be copied and pasted.



Say: There are many organizations whose purpose is to help families with seriously ill or hospitalized children. One of these groups is Fisher House. Members of the military and their families with loved ones who are hospitalized because of illness or injury must often travel far from home for specialized medical care. To help ease this difficult time, The Fisher House Foundation donates "comfort homes" which are built on the grounds of major military and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers. There is at least one Fisher House at every major military medical center providing families in need with the comforts of home in a supportive environment. The average cost of staying at a Fisher house is less than ten dollars a day, and many locations offer rooms at no cost.



Many of you have probably heard of the Make-A-Wish Foundation whose goal is to grant the wishes of children between the ages of two and a half and eighteen who struggle with life-threatening medical conditions. Children must be referred to the foundation and determined

to be medically eligible for a wish by their physician. All wish expenses are fully covered, and family income is not a consideration in determining whether a child is eligible to receive a wish.

The Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to making a world of difference for seriously ill children and their families. Starlight Starbright attempts to soften the hard edges of a family's experiences when a child has a serious illness. They work hard to meet family needs by building playrooms and teen lounges in hospitals and providing PC Pals and Fun Centers so kids can play games, email, chat with friends, and even do their homework from their hospital bed. They bring in entertainers and sponsor parties for kids who are stuck in the hospital. When the kids get to go home, Starbright helps keep them connected through on-line chat rooms and special outings for the entire family.

A Special Wish Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to granting the wishes of children who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening disorder. A Special Wish Foundation is the only major wish-granting organization in the United States that grants wishes to qualifying infants, children, and adolescents from birth up to and including the age of twenty years old.

The Dream Factory began with an idea to create a volunteer organization dedicated to granting the dreams of children with critical or chronic illnesses. Currently, there are more than thirty chapters across the United States with over five thousand volunteers who work to produce and deliver dreams, visit children and their families in the hospital and their homes, arrange special celebrations, and conduct fundraising events for individual children.

Give Kids the World Village is a non-profit resort that creates magical memories for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Wish-granting organizations coordinate transportation to Orlando, while Give Kids the World provides accommodations at its whimsical resort, donated attractions tickets, and meals for a week-long fantasy vacation.

Summary



Say: Today we have discussed many of the resources and supports available to you as military parents of children with special needs. This may be a little overwhelming, but remember that contact information for every agency mentioned is included with your handouts, so you can read over them at your leisure as you decide which resources will be of most help to you and your family. Thank you for coming here today. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Those of us working at your family service center will do our best to find you the answers.

Please stop by the resource table for more information before you leave, and thank you for coming.

Take Note:

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

- *Birth to Age Three*, which has an emphasis on Early Intervention
- *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

