

Deployment *and the Army's* **Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)**

Soldiers can oftentimes be overheard saying “As an EFMP Soldier, I cannot be deployed.” This is a common misconception about the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). The truth is that the program has no impact on the deployment responsibilities of the Soldier. Overseas unaccompanied, unit deployments, and standard deployments must be carried on without interruption.

Careful planning is required to ensure adequate care of Exceptional Family Members (EFMs) while a Soldier is performing required military duties. Ensuring that a Family member who qualifies for enrollment into the EFMP is indeed enrolled in the program is a must, as is ensuring that an existing enrollment is up-to-date with the most current and accurate medical/mental health/educational information.

While the enrollment in and of itself has no bearing on deployment, it certainly can be a very important tool upon the Soldier's return from deployment. Oftentimes, a Soldier will return from deployment to find that that he/she is on assignment instructions to another duty location with a report date that is just weeks away. The EFMP enrollment will ensure that the required services or specialists are available for your Family member at the new duty location before the assignment is made, thus one less stressor to contend with, particularly in the case of these “short-fuse” orders. Without the enrollment, assignment managers have no idea to check a particular duty location for needed services or specialists.

Another step in the careful planning process involves the completion of a Family Care Plan. A Family Care Plan is a written plan that arranges for the care of family members so that a Soldier can report for duty as required without interference of Family responsibilities. While not all EFM situations warrant the completion of a Family Care Plan, it is important to understand that Army Regulation 600-20 requires that one be developed when a Soldier has a spouse that is “incapable of self-care or is otherwise physically, mentally or emotionally disabled so as to require special care or assistance.”

Sometimes extenuating circumstances arise. In that case, ensure the situation is discussed with your chain of command. Provide documentation from health specialists that verify the circumstances if necessary. Not only can your chain of command provide guidance and assistance, informing them of your circumstances will allow them the opportunity to plan the mission accordingly - there have been some instances in which a Soldier has been *temporarily* assigned to the Rear Detachment until the situation is under control.

If you are a Soldier with an EFM, careful and prior planning is absolutely essential. The EFMP staff at Army Community Service, (719-526-4590) is available to provide guidance and assistance, and answer any questions you may have.