
Deployment Readiness for Single Military Parents

Deployment brings unique challenges to single military parents. As a single parent, the following information can help you be deployment ready.

Family Care Plan

OPNAVINST 1740.4B U.S. Navy Family Care Policy states that service members have a responsibility to ensure family members are cared for during deployment as well as at all other times. All single service members and dual military couples with children (or pregnant) or other dependent family members must have a Family Care Plan OPNAV Form 1740/6 on file. Both the active duty service member(s) and the caregiver(s) must sign it.



The Family Care Plan designates the person(s) who shall provide care while the service member is absent due to military duty for the service member's children or other dependents who rely solely upon the service member for financial, medical, and logistical support.

It is also the responsibility of the service member to provide the caregiver(s) with all information and documentation needed to execute the Family Care Plan and provide for the service member's family members.

The plan must include legal, medical, logistical (housing, food, transportation), and financial provisions. All necessary documentation including, but not limited to, birth certificates, military ID card, powers of attorney for medical care, guardianship and the authorization to start or stop financial support, medical and dental records, must also be provided. Information on obtaining services from military resources and command points of contact should be included.

The following suggestions can assist in planning for separations from your children due to military obligations.

- Make arrangements for childcare well in advance of a deployment.
- Schedule an appointment with Navy Legal Services Office (NLSO) to have a special and/or medical powers of attorney and a will drawn up.
- Ensure that your child has a valid military ID card and that it will not expire while you are away.
- Develop a written contract with your child's caregiver that includes financial arrangements. Have NLSO review.
- Arrange to have an allotment set up to provide financial support while you are away. Talk about money for clothes, entertainment, school and other activities. If your child gets an allowance, be sure it continues.

Choosing a Guardian

It is never easy to leave your family whether for a short-term or long-term absence. Selecting a responsible guardian is vital to a successful Family Care Plan. This is the person that will accept full responsibility for your family members. You should designate one or more caregivers and alternate caregiver(s) in the event the primary caregiver becomes unable to care for your family members.



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Often service members choose a relative as the guardian. Close family friends are also an option. Whomever you choose you must have complete trust that she/he can and will adequately care for your children. The more your caregiver knows about your family dynamics, the smoother the transition will be during your absence. The items listed below are important to discuss in detail. Include your children in the discussion. Their viewpoint is critical to the open communication and efficient transfer of responsibility from the parent to the guardian.

- **Goals** — Discuss with the caregiver family goals desired during a long-term separation. This will assist the caregiver in how best to support and sustain your children during a separation.
- **Personal Routines** — Discuss meal time, night time, and basic family schedule.
- **Comfort and Personal Items** — Discuss special toys, pictures, and personal items that will comfort your children.
- **House Rules** — Negotiate acceptable bedtimes, TV viewing, chores, and snacks. Include your children in the discussion.
- **Medical Needs** — Guardian should have all medical records and know how to obtain medical and dental care. Any ongoing medical needs, medications, etc. should be in writing and discussed with the caretaker.
- **Discipline** — Discuss your philosophy. Ask your caregiver how he or she handles discipline. Determine and agree on acceptable rewards and consequences for misbehavior.
- **Special Activities** — Share holiday traditions and discuss special activities and events. If you will be away for a birthday or holiday, discuss the celebration and plan for gift giving.
- **Allowances and Finances** — Discuss purchases, allowances, spending money, and unexpected expenses.
- **School** — Discuss how you will both communicate with teachers, any difficulties with school work or special needs, and any activities your child is involved in.
- **Communication** — Give your caregiver suggestions for talking with your children about your absence and



return. Make a plan for how often you will keep in touch by writing, calling, and email. Establish how the caregiver will facilitate communication from your children to you.

- **Changes** — Discuss ways that your children handle changes and how to talk to them about their frustration, anger, and disappointments.



Helping Your Children Adjust

Your children will have many questions and concerns. Unless you have a guardian or caretaker move into your home, deployment for your children means a change in living situation as well. They may not only be temporarily “losing” you but may also experience changing houses, schools, and friends.

They will have questions. These questions may include:

- Who will care for me?
- Where will I live, eat, sleep, etc?
- Will I have to change schools?
- Can I still participate in activities (sports, scouting, etc.)?
- If I am not living with my other (non-custodial) parent, will I see him/her?

If your children are facing many of these changes, the following can help:

- Recognize that they will be facing change and loss. Discuss the situation and answer their questions honestly.
- Express your complete trust in their caregiver. To feel safe and secure, they must know that you trust the caregiver.
- Allow your children to express their feelings. They may deny their feelings or get angry. They may attempt to make you feel guilty for leaving.

