

# Exceptional Families of the Military



## Legislative Priorities as of January, 2022

### Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) Program

We support the independent review of the ACD in the 2022 NDAA and recommend the implementation of the policy changes should be put on hold pending the outcome of the independent review. Military families have already had therapy services disrupted, negatively impacting Autistic loved ones. The changes may not survive the scrutiny of the review by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM). EFM is concerned that stakeholders will not be heard during this review. We ask for the restrictions to the community and school settings to be reversed and the Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as toileting to be allowed back into the ACD. Lastly, we are asking for the parent stress assessments to be eliminated entirely. There is an equity barrier for Autistic families as no other disability category is required to fill out these assessments as a requirement to receive care.

### Guard and Reserve Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)

Guard and Reserve families should have permanent or reasonable access to EFMP while on orders. EFMP enrollment would enhance readiness, resiliency, and retention by establishing a much needed chain of support for programs that require enrollment. This would put support where it is needed for the most vulnerable Guard and Reserve families in the military community, while they fulfill mission requirements for the Total Force. The first step we ask for is sponsoring 2023 NDAA language for a GAO study to identify Guard and Reserve families that are eligible for EFMP.

## Top 3 Questions about EFMP as of January, 2022

### 1. Tricare Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) and Branch of Service Respite

EFM is closely following the Office of Special Needs (OSN) branch of service standardization for respite from the 2021 NDAA. The policy has not been updated. We are also monitoring the Defense Health Agency (DHA)'s policy on ECHO respite. The increase from 16 to 32 hours in the 2021 NDAA has yet to be implemented. We are looking for a champion to follow up with OSD and DHA respectively in order for respite care to be accessible to EFMP families. When will the NDAA requirements be implemented? How does DoD and DHA track that EFMP families can access their respite programs?

### 2. EFMP Advisory Council

EFM supports and thanks legislators on the expansion of the EFMP Advisory Council in the 2022 NDAA. We are seeking transparency for EFMP stakeholders to provide feedback to the Council members. Will updates on council activities be accessible to the family member stakeholders?

### 3. EFMP Assignment Transparency

EFM supports and thanks legislators on the assignment verbiage allowing for two location options in the 2022 NDAA. Many branches are automating the EFMP assignment process. We request OSN or branch specific updates to family stakeholders on the assignment process. The Air Force has a transparent method for regular updates on social media with their new processes. This form of transparency could be replicated across all the branches. Where is OSN and the Services at with implementing programmatic change within the EFMP assignment process?

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