



## Exceptional Family Members Program (EFMP) Regarding National Guard and Reserve

**BLUF:** Members of the Reserve Components, the Reserve and National Guard, lack access and resources for their exceptional needs families due to lack of education of Readiness Centers, lack of resources in stand-alone installations, and lack of access to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) at large.

**Our Purpose:** Reserve Component (RC) families face many challenges whether serving as active duty (AGR), being activated locally, or deploying, especially those families with exceptional needs. There is a readiness impact when members of the Total Force are serving on active duty and their families are unable to access the same services as their Regular Active Duty counterparts. We request that a GAO Report be conducted to quantify the number of Reserve Component families that could be enrolled in EFMP both currently (AGR) and in an activated status.

**Current Status:** EFMP authorizes and entitles Reserve Component (RC) members with exceptional families to access its services if they are AGR or on Title-10 orders of 30 days or more. However, gaining EFMP status and access is complicated, unsupported in a majority of locations, and usually results in families giving up. Activated RC members must spend time away from the mission to help their families navigate complicated bureaucracy and advocate for necessary treatments instead of doing their jobs.

1. There are *no* RC-level offices or specialists who assist members or installation staff with enrollment. Service members are unaware of instructions on how to enroll themselves or get services once enrolled.
2. Families are often told *incorrect* information at active military installations, if they happen to be co-located, including but not limited to: a) told they cannot enroll because Guard/Reserve do not qualify, b) only have access to limited services, c) will not be helped by the active installation since they are RC.
3. A majority of RC members are stationed at stand-alone RC installations with no active component, no support or staff, which perpetuates the lack of program knowledge and support.
4. The timelines required for EFMP enrollment/disenrollment is incompatible with activation cycles for RC members, resulting in vulnerable members' exclusion from vital resources.
5. Families simply do not know about EFMP. For reference, 25% of the National Guard is AGR, over 50,000 potential families are excluded from an entitlement due to lack of knowledge, access, and support.

**Our Request:** The RC needs a GAO report directed in the FY23 NDAA to quantify the number of RC families who are currently eligible for EFMP (AGR) and who could become eligible if activated (traditional RC members). We cannot provide resources for a metric we are not tracking.

**Conclusion:** Giving RC members permanent or reasonable access to EFMP while AGR or on Title-10 orders is vital for the military members and their families. It would directly affect readiness, resiliency, and retention by establishing a much needed chain of support for the most vulnerable links in the military community. This advocacy needs a champion on both sides of the aisle to best tackle this immediate crisis. We ask that you take this first step with us by sponsoring FY23 NDAA language for the GAO study.