

Operation Family

Creating a plan
to make parenting and family decisions
when a military parent is deployed

Developed by the University of Minnesota
Extension Center for Family Development
and Operation Military Kids



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Introduction

When a military parent is deployed, it means being away from the family. The children continue to grow and family members continue to deal with daily life throughout the time the soldier is away. Returning military parents may find that their families have changed and that they also have changed. This is to be expected. However, the family can make these changes less challenging by developing a plan to keep in touch and make mutual decisions while one parent is away. This tool is designed to help parents and/or care providers plan for the care of the family during deployment.

The Family Care Plan

Some military families—such as single parents, single pregnant service members, dual military couples, or a service member responsible for caring for another person—may be required to develop a Family Care Plan. It is a good idea for a civilian spouse married to a service member to have a Family Care Plan. If the spouse becomes incapacitated while the service member is deployed, the plan assures them their children will be cared for properly. Additional information about Family Care Plans can be obtained on the Military One Source web site at <http://www.militaryonesource.com/>

How the Plan Works for You

The Family Care Plan serves as a "blueprint" that shows how your family will be cared for in your absence – whether you are deployed, on temporary duty, or otherwise unavailable because of military obligations. The plan allows for a smooth transfer of responsibilities to a caregiver when a service member must leave for short or long periods of time. It demonstrates to your commander that you will be ready to accomplish the mission of the unit. The plan consists of instructions that you write and certain legal documents, such as a power of attorney.

The written instructions should be in the form of a "letter of instruction" to the guardian of the child(ren). The letter contains needed information for temporary or long term guardianship and may include instructions for childcare, financial responsibilities, and other issues.

This **Operation Family** plan will help you write the instructions for your Family Care Plan. It will help you think about decisions that you may need to make during your deployment and allows you to indicate your preferences for various situations.

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Vital Information About Our Soldier

About the Military Member

Full Name	
Rank	
Social Security Number	
Unit	
Contact information – while in training	
Contact information – while deployed	
Family Readiness Group Contact	

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Information About Other Family Members

Name and Relationship	Date and Place of Birth	Social Security Number

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Preparing Our Family for Deployment

How will we tell our children about the deployment?	
Our plan	Notes
How will we keep track of the time until the deployment happens? How will we keep track of time until the expected return date?	
Our plan	Notes
What will the deployed parent leave behind for the children? (for example, photo album, video tapes, etc.)	
Our plan	Notes
How will we handle our tensions and conflicts as we prepare for the deployment?	
Our plan	Notes

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Will we plan special 'family time' before the deployment? Who will be included?	
Our plan	Notes
Will we plan a special 'send off' & what role will the children play?	
Our plan	Notes
Other preparation issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Housing

Where will the children live? Will they stay in the same home? Will they move in with the other parent or guardian? Will they move to live with relatives or another family?	
Our plan	Notes
Basic home maintenance How will the at-home parent or guardian deal with fuses, main water turn-off, find tools needed, etc.	
Our plan	Notes
Home repair What happens if there are plumbing issues? Heating issues? Appliance issues? When is it appropriate to call a repair person? Are there preferred repair persons? What if a new appliance, furnace or water heater is needed?	
Our plan	Notes
Who will perform routine household cleaning & yard maintenance? Will the children be involved? In what way? Is it okay to hire someone to mow the grass, remove snow or clean the house? What is the cost?	
Our plan	Notes

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How will decisions be made about changes in the home? How will we handle changing use of space, minor home improvements, remodeling or major home improvements?	
Our plan	Notes
How will decisions be made about purchasing or selling a home?	
Our plan	Notes
Other housing issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Education & Child Care

Will the current school or day care meet our needs during deployment? Will we need to choose a new school or child care? How will this be done?	
Our plan	Notes
How will we inform teachers, school counselors, care providers, etc. of the upcoming deployment? How will we maintain on-going communication?	
Our plan	Notes
Transportation from school or child care. How will the child get to and from school or child care? Who is allowed to provide transportation? Who is allowed to pick up and drop off the children?	
Our plan	Notes
Will the deployment affect how many hours the child is in child care? Is the present provider able to accommodate the increase in hours? What will be the additional cost & how can we afford this?	
Our plan	Notes

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What expectations do we have for school performance or grades? What if grades drop due to deployment issues? What if there are school behavior problems due to deployment issues?	
Our plan	Notes
What expectations do we have for time and/or effort spent on homework?	
Our plan	Notes
Other educational or child care issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Child Activities

Will the child(ren) continue with current activities? (for example, after school activities, sports, 4-H, Scouts, etc.) Who can help with transportation to activities?	
Our plan	Notes
What guidelines will we follow to decide how many activities our child(ren) should be involved in?	
Our plan	Notes
How will we support our children's friendships? How will we communicate with the parents of their friends about the deployment? Will our children be able to have friends over or go over to friends' homes? What about boyfriends or girlfriends?	
Our plan	Notes
Do we allow our child(ren) to have a job? What type of job is appropriate? How many hours per week are appropriate during the school year or during the summer?	
Our plan	Notes
What responsibilities will our child(ren) have around the home? What specific chores? Will we expect more during the deployment to compensate for the work typically	

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done by the deployed parent? Will there be an allowance paid to the children?	
Our plan	Notes
What expectations do we have about how the child(ren) spend their time? For example how many hours spent on homework, watching TV, playing a gaming system such as Xbox or Play Station, being on the computer or being on the phone? What are the limits?	
Our plan	Notes
Other child activity issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Family Time

What do we think is the right balance between family time vs. friend/activity time?	
Our plan	Notes
What are our expectations or preferences about meal times? Will meals be eaten as a family at the table or in front of the TV? How often is it appropriate to eat out or bring take-out food home instead of preparing food at home?	
Our plan	Notes
How will grocery shopping get done? What is the budget? Will children participate? What is the budget for eating out?	
Our plan	Notes
If a child has a birthday, religious and cultural celebration, graduation or other special event during the deployment time, will there be a special celebration? Who will be invited? What will it look like? What is our budget? Are gifts involved? What kind?	
Our plan	Notes

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What holidays will occur during the deployment? Are there certain expectations around these holidays? Who will be involved? Costs? Traditions?	
Our plan	Notes
Will the family take a vacation while the parent is deployed? When the parent returns? Where? Cost?	
Our plan	Notes
Other family time/event issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Religion

How will we inform clergy and/or our religious community of the upcoming deployment? How will we continue to keep in touch?	
Our plan	Notes
What expectations do we have about religious activities? Who is expected to attend religious services, religious education, etc? What about religious ceremonies? Will there be a special celebration? How will this be planned & who will be invited? Are there guidelines for gifts?	
Our plan	Notes
Other religious issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Legal Issues

Has a guardian been assigned for your family in a special Power of Attorney? Does the guardian understand his/her responsibilities? Is there a back-up plan in case the first individual or parent is unable to care for the child(ren) because of illness or death?	
Our plan	Notes
Have ID and commissary cards been obtained? When do the cards expire? How can they be renewed if the military parent is still deployed?	
Our plan	Notes
Have the child(ren) been registered in DEERS?	
Our plan	Notes
Does the family have adequate life insurance coverage on both parents? Has the beneficiary information been reviewed & updated?	
Our plan	Notes

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Does the deployed parent have a will? Does it designate a guardian? Where is the will kept?	
Our plan	Notes
Other issues	
Our plan	Notes

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Transportation

Has transportation been arranged if needed for necessary travel and escort to transfer family members to their guardian?	
Our plan	Notes
How will car maintenance & repairs be handled? How often does the oil get changed? When do the tires need to be replaced? What if there are other vehicle maintenance issues? Which garage should the vehicle be taken to?	
Our plan	Notes
How will decisions be made to sell a vehicle or purchase a new or used vehicle?	
Our plan	Notes
When are the fees for license tabs due?	
Our plan	Notes

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Auto insurance Who is the insurance agent? When is the premium due and how much is it? Is there full coverage or only liability insurance & what does that mean?	
Our plan	Notes
Auto loan Is there a loan on the vehicle? With whom? What is the payment amount & when is it due?	
Our plan	Notes
Where is the vehicle title? Whose name is on the title? Where is it located?	
Our plan	Notes
What if the vehicle is in an accident?	
Our plan	Notes
Multiple vehicles If there is more than one vehicle in the family should one be stored during the deployment? Should the vehicle be insured while it is in storage?	
Our plan	Notes

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Are the children of driving age or will they be coming of driving age? What about driver's education? What vehicle can they drive? When & where can they drive? Should a child have his/her own vehicle? Are the children insured drivers? Can we afford the extra insurance? Are there certain behaviors that would lead us as parent to remove driving privileges? Will the child(ren) pay for their own gas, insurance, and repair costs?

<p>Our plan</p>	<p>Notes</p>
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Other transportation issues:

<p>Our plan</p>	<p>Notes</p>
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Finances

Will the family income be more or less or about the same as pre-deployment income? How will we manage the differences?	
Our plan	Notes
Does the non-deployed parent or guardian know how to track military income on the LES (Leave & Earnings Statement) on the MyPay website? https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx What is the log in & pin number? What account is pay being deposited into?	
Our plan	Notes
Will expenses be more or less or about the same as before deployment? Which expenses will be affected & how? How will we manage the differences?	
Our plan	Notes
Has a spending plan or budget been developed to guide spending & saving? You can find a form for developing a spending plan at this website: http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/businessmanagement/components/08503p79-80.pdf	
Our plan	Notes

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Bill payment Who will pay the bills? Who will keep track of bills and due dates? Can some bills be paid automatically?	
Our plan	Notes
Who will balance the checkbook?	
Our plan	Notes
Who will manage any debts? Are there any laws regarding special interest rates for deployed military members? Have creditors been contacted?	
Our plan	Notes
Family spending How much should each family member be allowed for personal spending? When or at what dollar amount do we need to check with one another regarding an expense?	
Our plan	Notes:

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Taxes Who will file taxes? Will an extension need to be filed?	
Our plan	Notes
Important documents Where are important papers kept? Who will organize / file important papers?	
Our plan	Notes
Managing insurance issues Who will update & pay for auto, home, and health insurance?	
Our plan	Notes
Investments Who will manage investments? What are our saving & investment goals? How will decisions be made? Who are the professionals we work with regarding investments?	
Our plan	Notes

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Is there an 'emergency fund' to cover car repairs, home repairs & other unexpected expenses? If so, where and how much is accessible?	
Our plan	Notes
Will the child(ren) receive an allowance? Will this increase if responsibilities are added during the deployment?	
Our plan	Notes
What is appropriate for the child(ren) to spend their money on? Do we have expectations about spending, saving, investing and donations?	
Our plan	Notes
Do the necessary people have access to funds and documents?	
Our plan	Notes
Other financial issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Health Care

What routine checkups do the children need? How often do they get physicals, medical condition checkups, dental and eye exams, etc.	
Our plan	Notes
Will the deployment impact the family's health insurance coverage (medical, dental, eye care)?	
Our plan	Notes
Are the children enrolled in the military insurance program "Tricare"? Does everyone have insurance cards? Does the family still have the previous insurance?	
Our plan	Notes
Which providers in our community are accepted by the insurance?	
Our plan	Notes

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How should medical emergencies be handled?	
Our plan	Notes
What if the child(ren) need glasses? Does insurance cover any/all costs? Are contacts acceptable?	
Our plan	Notes
What if the child(ren) need braces? What do they cost? Can we afford it? Does the insurance cover orthodontics?	
Our plan	Notes
Mental health How do we decide if the child(ren) need some special counseling to deal with deployment issues? Are services available at school, through employers, places of worship, in our community, or through the military? Does insurance or the Employee Assistance Program cover any or all costs?	
Our plan	Notes

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Do any of the children have special medical needs that need to be addressed?	
Our plan	Notes
If we have a child born while one parent is deployed Who will be the primary pediatrician? What about circumcision if the child is a boy? Do we agree on how to handle immunizations?	
Our plan	Notes
Other health care issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Communication During Deployment

How will the child(ren) and the deployed parent communicate with one another? How often?	
Our plan	Notes
Do we as parents want to schedule a time one-on-one each month to discuss family issues? If so, when?	
Our plan	Notes
What family issues will we discuss? Should we only focus on the big issues or on decisions that both parents can influence? How about the everyday events – how should these be handled to keep the soldier up-to-date with the family?	
Our plan	Notes
Other communication issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Parenting Decisions

Have we discussed this plan with the child(ren), as appropriate, to be sure we have their understanding and support?	
Our plan	Notes
Back-up care What is the plan if the non-deployed parent or guardian needs to be away from home for work or other reasons for a period of time or becomes sick or ill? Who will step in to assist with the child(ren)?	
Our plan	Notes
What is our plan or philosophy about discipline? How will the child(ren) be disciplined when the family changes?	
Our plan	Notes
Curfew Do the child(ren) have a curfew? Are there exceptions to the curfew? What are the consequences to breaking the curfew?	
Our plan	Notes

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Risky behaviors

What expectations or limits do we have about our childrens' behaviors such as using make-up, body piercing, tattoos, drinking, etc?

If our child(ren) violate the rules, how will we work together to decide on a consequence?

Our plan**Notes****Other Issues****Our plan****Notes****Operation Family:**

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Special Considerations for Each of Our Children

Name	
Our plan	Notes
Name	
Our plan	Notes
Name	
Our plan	Notes
Name	
Our plan	Notes

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Planning for the Homecoming

How and when will we tell our children about the homecoming date?	
Our plan	Notes
How will we keep track of time until the expected return date? How will we handle a possible extension?	
Our plan	Notes
How will we handle our tensions and conflicts as we prepare for the homecoming?	
Our plan	Notes
Will we plan a special homecoming party & what role will the children play?	
Our plan	Notes

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Will we plan special 'family time' after the homecoming? What? Who will be included?	
Our plan	Notes
Other homecoming issues:	
Our plan	Notes

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Conclusion

This process of planning for parenting and family life when a soldier is deployed has probably given you many ideas about the issues you need to discuss and prepare for. Keep in mind that every plan needs to be reviewed and updated as circumstances change, the children grow, and other changes occur in your family at home and with the soldier on deployment. We suggest you review this plan at least every 6 months and update it based on your current situation.

We would like to know if this planning tool has been helpful. Are there items we should add or improvements we can make?

We would appreciate your completing a very brief survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/operation_family

Thanks for your feedback and thanks for your service to our country.

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