

# *Child Care Backup Planning When Your Spouse is Deployed*

## **Overview**

Creating a plan for your children's care in the event that your spouse is deployed and you can't be there for your children.

- Plan ahead
- What to include in your backup plan
- Communicating your backup plan

As the sole parent in charge, there are steps you can take to make everyday life at home go more smoothly during your spouse's deployment. But what if something happens to you while your partner is away? Who will care for your children? Just as single parents and dual military couples must create a Family Care Plan spelling out how their children will be provided for in their absence, you can do the same by creating an emergency backup plan for child care. It isn't pleasant to think about an accident or illness, but if the unexpected does happen, having a plan in place will lessen the stress on your family and give you peace of mind.

## **Plan ahead**

Before your partner's deployment, discuss who you can count on to be there for your children in an emergency, and who you would want to take over their care should you become seriously hurt, ill, or die while your partner is deployed. These may not necessarily be the same person. Before putting anything in writing, ask the people you and your partner agree on if they would be willing to serve as temporary caregivers in the event of an emergency.

- *Short-term care.* This could be a neighbor, friend, or relative who would be willing to take your children for a few days until you are able to resume your role as parent or until longer-term arrangements could be made. Line up two or more willing friends or neighbors in the event your first choice isn't available.
- *Longer-term care.* Ideally, this person is someone who shares your values and child-rearing philosophies, and with whom your children are comfortable. They should be willing to assume temporary custody of your children until your partner returns or until you can take over as parent again. Be sure to name an alternate long-term caregiver should your first choice be unavailable. Here are some things to consider when deciding who will assume temporary guardianship of your children:
  - Will your children have to move away? Will they have to transfer to a new school or child care?
  - Does the potential guardian have other children at home? Do your children get along with them?
  - Does the potential guardian have the strength and the energy to care for your children?

- Does he or she have the time to care for your child? Someone who works full time and is frequently away on travel may not be the best choice.
- Will you need to arrange for financial assistance for your children's food and other expenses?

### **What to include in your backup plan**

- *The names, phone numbers, and schedules of the people who have agreed to care for your children in an emergency.* Note which people will care for your children in the short term, and who has agreed to take over for a longer period.
- *Your spouse's contact information.* Include the name and address of the military unit, commander or commanding officer, first sergeant or command chief, command enlisted advisor, and supervisor's name and telephone number. Include the Key Volunteer, Ombudsman, or Family Readiness Program point of contact and phone number.
- *Limited power of attorney for your backup caregiver.* This would allow your backup caregiver to authorize emergency medical care for your children. Some hospitals may not perform certain procedures without the consent of the caregiver. Your base legal office can help you with this.
- *The names and phone numbers of your children's pediatrician, dentist, schools, child care providers, and other caregivers in their lives.*
- *Your children's schedules.* This would include the time they leave for school or child care and when they return home. Also be sure to list any after-school activities, such as dance lessons or scouts.
- *Your children's routines at home.* Describe bedtime rituals, homework time, and other important routines at home.
- *Your children's likes and dislikes.* Name your children's favorite toys and foods, whether they need a nightlight to sleep, and other particulars that would help the caregiver comfort your children.
- *Names of medications your children take regularly.* Write down where you keep the prescription and include instructions on administering the medication and how to order refills.
- *A list of any food or medication allergies your children have.*
- *Copies of the following or instructions on where to find them:*
  - Military ID cards for your children if they're over 10. This will ensure that their temporary caregiver has access to services.
  - Copies of your children's medical and dental plan cards if other than TRICARE.
  - Copies of your spouse's most recent military orders.

### **Communicating your backup plan**

When you have sorted out the details of your backup plan, let others know you have made arrangements for your children in the event of an emergency.

- *Leave copies of your backup plan with key people in your life.* Give your plan to each of the emergency caregivers, your employer, close friends, and family members. Keep a copy at home as well.
- *Leave an emergency contact list at your children's schools and with child care providers.* Be sure to write down the names and numbers of the people who are authorized to pick up your children and who will care for your children in both the short and long term.
- *Keep your backup plan and family information current.* Should circumstances change -- for instance, if the person you designated temporary caregiver is no longer available -- find a replacement and update your backup plan accordingly. Review your plan every six months. When you make changes, be sure to notify the people with whom you've left your plan.

Hopefully you'll never need to put your emergency backup plan into action, but having one in place should give you and your family one less thing to worry about during your partner's deployment.

This article was written with the help of Air Force TSgt. Nathan Covington I, Family Readiness NCO, 97 Mission Support Squadron, Family Support Center; Air Force Major Teresa Roberts, Director Family Support Center, Keesler AFB; Kim Gates, HQMC, MCFTB Program Section Head; and Kit Decker, Family Support Policy Analyst, Quality of Life Division, Navy Personnel Command.