



# On the Home Front

Family Program Office  
110 FW Battle Creek MI

Volume 4, Issue 10

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## Important Phone Numbers

**Family Program Office**  
1-800-753-6201  
ext 3493

**Chaplain's Office**  
269-969-3371

**Legal Office**  
269-969-3232

**ID Cards/DEERS**  
269-969-3216

**Finance**  
269-969-3224

**TriCARE**  
1-877-363-6337

**Security Forces**  
269-969-3300

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## Parents and Schools Working Together

By working in partnership with your child and his school, and by supporting your child's education at home, you give your child the best chance of educational success. Studies show that when parents are involved in school, their children get better grades and have more self-esteem, better attendance and fewer behavioral problems. And teachers tend to pay more attention to children whose parents are actively involved with the school and with their children's education. Even if you work full time, there are ways you can build a relationship with the school and your child's teachers and help your child to perform as well as he can.

### Building a relationship with the school

You can build a strong relationship with your child's school by getting to know the staff, by being aware of school policies and activities, and by participating in school events. Your relationship with the school will both benefit the school and demonstrate to your child and the school staff the importance you attach to education.

· *Meet the staff.* Make a special effort to meet your child's teacher. If your child is younger, consider accompanying him to school on the first day to say hello. If your child is starting at a new school, arrange a meeting with the principal to discuss programs, texts, and the curriculum.

· *Be aware of school policies.* Keep on top of events by reading the parent group newsletter, the school bulletin board, and flyers that your child brings home. Understand the school's calendar and policies on what to do in bad weather and when a child is sick or forgets his lunch.

· *Attend events.* Try to attend back-to-school nights, open houses, school fairs, and other programs to stay connected. They are excellent opportunities to chat with your child's teachers and meet other school staff members.

· *Volunteer at school.* As your schedule permits, try to volunteer at your child's school. By participating, you can help improve the quality of school life: You might help other parents organize a weekend fundraiser for new playground equipment or discuss solutions to a high school gang problem. You could offer to coach a sports team on weekends or chaperone the school dance.

· *Join the parent-teacher group.* Try to attend meetings of the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). These groups provide input on educational planning, keep parents informed about testing and changes in district policies, and raise funds for the schools. If your child's school doesn't have a parent-teacher group, contact the national PTA or PTO and other interested parents to start one.

· *Attend school board meetings.* By attending important school board meetings, you can voice concerns — and praise — to the school board, the organization that oversees the school district.

### Working with your child's teacher and school

The most important step you can take to support your child's education is to communicate regularly with her teacher, before a problem develops. This is not always easy, especially if you work full time and your child is in junior or senior high school and has many teachers. But it is important to communicate that you are concerned and that you want to work with them to help your child reach her full potential.

· *Send notes.* Teachers can be hard to reach. But you can have your younger child take notes to her teacher. Provide a place for the teacher to sign, and have your child bring home the signed note. A note might:

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**Next Family Program Meeting**  
Sat. Sept. 11th at  
1:00 pm in the Medical Conference Room,  
Building 6930 (same building as the Dining Facility)

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- Let the teacher know if a new baby, a sick relative, or an impending move is distracting your child.
- Thank the teacher for special efforts or when your child enjoys a particular study unit or a trip to the local museum. Teachers will be more open to concerns when they also hear praise.
- Ask the teacher to call you to discuss an issue. Be sure to give your phone number and a time when the teacher can reach you at that number.
- Request information or a conference.

Do not use notes to raise objections, to complain about problems, or to discuss confidential information. Instead, use the note to request a meeting where you can discuss the issue.

- *Attend parent-teacher conferences.* Most schools offer conferences once or twice a year in elementary and sometimes middle school. At these face-to-face meetings, your child's teacher will give you a detailed report on your child's behavior and achievement. Be prepared to share information about your child, such as her hobbies, interests, and study habits. Be sure to express positive impressions of the teacher and share any nice comments the child has made about him. It's also a good idea to write out a list of questions, which might include:

- How does my child get along with classmates?
- What procedure do you use to tell parents if a child has difficulty?
- How can we work together to improve my child's schoolwork?
- What is the best way to reach you if I want to discuss a specific problem?

If there are problem areas to discuss, avoid blaming the

teacher. Try to make constructive comments. Instead of saying, "You never listen to my child," say, "I'm concerned that my child may not have enough opportunity to speak in class."

- *Respond to problems promptly.* If a problem does develop, it's easiest to resolve if you address it immediately. Ask your child for her perspective on the problem. Listen carefully and ask questions to get beyond feelings and get to specifics. Then contact the teacher if necessary to discuss a coordinated solution.

If your child is disrupting class, struggling to stay in her seat, or skipping assignments, it may be better to address the problem on a daily basis rather than waiting for a regular conference. You and the teacher may decide to use a daily report card, where the teacher can check off options on a predetermined list to track your child's behavior and reward improvement. This can help you follow up at home.

- *Meet the guidance counselor.* At the beginning of high school, schedule a meeting with your teen and a school guidance counselor to discuss college or work plans. Plan ahead and work together to choose courses that match your child's future plans as well as her interests and goals.

- *Stay involved.* Middle and junior high schools don't always reach out to parents but will respond to your efforts to support the school. You might offer to drive school band members to the football game on Saturday or bring student volunteers to an evening soup kitchen. Staying involved shows your child and her school that you are committed to supporting her education.

### Supporting your child's education at home

Sending your child to school every day is not enough. The school alone cannot bear the full responsibility for your

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## NMFA releases study on military family support

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 13, 2004/PR Newswire - In a briefing before Congressional and military leadership and staff, the National Military Family Association (NMFA) unveiled the findings of its study on military family support. The report, "Serving the Home Front: An Analysis on Military Family Support from September 11, 2001 through March 31, 2004," is the result of a six-month research project conducted by the NMFA. General research conclusions from the 36-page published report point to the need for an all-encompassing system of communication, training, partnerships and community support working together for the greatest benefit of military families.

Key report recommendations focus on how military leaders, family support providers, communities and military family members can enhance support efforts to ensure that families are better able to meet the demands of long term, frequent deployments and high operational tempo (OPTEMPO). Specific recommendations provide guidance to military leaders and family support providers to improve program delivery and family access to support services. To download a copy of the report go to [www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org).

\*\*A copy of this report is also available by contacting the Family Program Office at (269) 969-3493\*\*

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child's education. As parents, you must create a positive learning environment in your home and help cultivate a positive attitude toward education. Let your child know how important you think education is, and encourage him with realistic expectations. You can support and reinforce your school's efforts by doing the following:

- *Reward good efforts.* Praise and encourage your child. Be sure to display a child's papers and artwork to celebrate his efforts at school. Set realistic expectations, and use small, appropriate rewards like stickers, pencils, extra phone time, or a later bedtime.

- *Encourage learning at home.* Build on a child's interests at home. If a second-grader loves insects, buy him an ant farm, look under rocks for beetles, or visit the bug exhibit at the local natural history museum. Stimulate his thinking skills by talking about current events at dinner, reading the newspaper or books together, or asking his opinion on a recent movie or television show.

- *Make sure your child has a place to study.* Be sure your child has a desk, a space for books, and a schedule that includes quiet time for homework. For younger children, this might be the kitchen or dining room table. A middle or high school student will probably prefer his own room.

- *Monitor homework.* Keep track of your child's progress by reviewing homework each night. Here are some other ways you can help:

- *Let a young child sit near you* as he works so you can monitor his progress and help when necessary.

- *Know what's due.* If your child says he doesn't have any homework for a week, you might want to investigate a little further.

- *Help him manage his time* and focus on getting the assignment done. Help him use an assignment planning book or calendar to stay organized.

- *Help him plan* for larger projects.
- *Check the quality of his work*, and encourage him to spend more time on areas that need improvement.

As your child enters junior and senior high school, you will need to decrease your involvement with his homework. Your child should take on more responsibility to make decisions about classes, homework, and outside activities. Remain aware of assignments, but try to avoid nagging. Remind him that you're available in case he needs help. When you do help, show him how to find the answers in an atlas, the dictionary, or the local library. Allowing your child to find answers and correct his own mistakes will help him build self-confidence and resourcefulness.

- *Talk about school.* Ask specific questions that show you're interested in your child's school life, which may make it easier for him to confide in you. Avoid yes-no questions or general questions like "How was school today?" Consider questions like the following:

- Are you working on any special projects?

- What are you studying in English (or any other subject)?

- What was the best (or the toughest) part of your day today?

- *Talk about work.* For teenagers, show how school relates to work by sharing day-to-day stories. Express concerns about upcoming reviews (the equivalent of report cards) or excitement about a report (the equivalent of a term paper). By discussing your anxiety about getting along with co-workers or worries about getting a promotion, you may parallel your child's fears and provide new avenues for discussion.

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## Health benefits for military families aren't 'automatic'

By Mary Kate Zabroske, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) — Department of Defense TRICARE officials are working to inform military families that non-active-duty beneficiaries must enroll in the health care system before they see a doctor.

Active-duty service members are automatically registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). However, this isn't the case with family members, who must personally ensure they are properly enrolled in DEERS to be eligible for TRICARE benefits. This is a step many families forget each time they transfer or travel. Not keeping DEERS information current, though, can create extra time in the waiting room or incur costly out-of-pocket expenses.

"It is extremely important to keep DEERS records up-to-date, because that is the key to receiving timely, effective TRICARE benefits. Prior to rendering services to beneficiaries, network providers and pharmacies will verify DEERS eligibility," said Floyd (Skip) Katon, Navy DEERS medical project officer.

There are several instances where a military family must update its DEERS enrollment information. These times include marriage, the birth or adoption of a child, divorce or retirement. Children over 21 years old who have a student status must also be registered in DEERS. Active-duty service members can make these changes by completing a DD Form 1172 (Application for Uniformed Services Identification Card and DEERS Enrollment).

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## Introducing Guard Family Action Plan (GFAP) and Guard Family Team Building (GFTB)

Two initiatives to improve family support for all Guard families were presented at the 2004 National Family Program Workshop in August. The Guard Family Action Plan will help to identify and resolve issues that effect Guardsmen and their families nationwide. Guard Family Team Building will help our families improve readiness and quality of life.

The Guard Family Action Plan (GFAP) is a grass roots process directing actions to improve Family Programs, benefits and entitlements for the National Guard Community. The GFAP identifies issues of concern to service members, family members, retirees and civilian employees, determine actions necessary to resolve issues, and assigns responsibility for actions to the proper staff agency. These issues impact well being, family readiness and retention of a quality force. The GFAP is designed as a management tool which provides a means of monitoring the process of issue gathering, submission, disbursement, and resolution.

Guard Family Team Building (GFTB) is a program designed to:

- Introduce family members to the Guard community
- Provide the Guard community with information relevant to daily living
- Enhance the sense of community between Guard members, retirees, civilian employees and families

GFTB is a specially designed program for the Guard community and about the Guard community. Program modules cover a wide variety of topics most often requested by families and leadership. It is modeled on the successful "Army Family Team Building" program that has been training family members in life and military community skills for over 10 years. GFTB is a train-the-trainer program to provide each state with a core of volunteers able to present information and provide classes at all levels of command. Courses are becoming available as volunteers and staff are completing instructor training. Also, additional courses are still being developed.

Please watch for updates in upcoming newsletters and announcements. If you are interested in finding out more about these programs, please contact Robin Berry in the Family Program Office.

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While completing the DD Form 1172, the service member will be required to have certain important pieces of documentation, such as a marriage, birth or death certificate, divorce decree, and family members' Social Security numbers.

Sponsors and their families should contact the nearest uniformed services identification card facility to learn what documents are needed to register or update DEERS information. To find the closest facility, search by ZIP Code at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/>.

For family members who do not reside with their sponsors, the sponsors must get the DD 1172 notarized.

Beneficiaries may update information on DEERS in one of the following ways: visit a local uniformed services ID card facility; call the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office at 1-800-538-9552; fax changes to DEERS at 1-831-655-8317; mail the address change to the Defense Manpower Data Center Office, ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, Calif. 93955-6771; or update addresses electronically at [www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERS](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERS).



Left to right: Sarah Potter (volunteer), Robin Berry (Family Program Coordinator), Libby Ingles (volunteer), Christina Mann (Red Cross), and Lisa Hitchcock (volunteer).

Family FIRST volunteers, with help from the Red Cross, helped attain donations and provide pizza, pop, donuts, and juice for two groups of local Marines during their recent departure.



Do you have ideas for newsletter articles? How about suggestions for upcoming events? Is there a subject that you would like to see covered in our family newsletter? Do you know a good story? Your thoughts are appreciated! Ideas and suggestions can be submitted for consideration to the Family Program office, or by sending an email to [robin.berry@mibatt.ang.af.mil](mailto:robin.berry@mibatt.ang.af.mil).