FFSC sponsored child protection conference provides unique training, education opportunity to Fleet Activities Yokosuka

Story and photo by MC1(SW/AW) N. Ross Taylor, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Fleet and Family Support Center sponsored a three-day child maltreatment prevention conference presented by the Armed Forces Center for Child Protection (AFCCP) June 22-24.

The AFCCP, located at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., provides a variety of services throughout the Department of Defense (DoD) including medical evaluations, medical-legal review and child abuse education.

The focus of the AFCCP and the Yokosuka symposium is to help families return to healthy functional relationships, to protect children throughout the DoD from maltreatment and to ensure service members are ready to serve.

"The objective of the Armed Forces Center for Child Protection is to provide objective child maltreatment expertise when and where it is needed throughout the DoD," said Dr. Barbara Craig, DoD senior child abuse pediatrician and AFCCP director.

Craig said that the multi-disciplinary training covers all aspects of child maltreatment and by the end of the three-day course; attendees will have been exposed to more than 30 different topics, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and child interviewing techniques.

"The conference is designed to provide training and education so that anyone involved with child abuse issues can learn how to better recognize, report, manage, investigate, prosecute or defend child abuse cases," Craig said. "The training includes the latest and most up to date information, advanced techniques and a lot of research-based information that most of the participants will not have had previously."

The diverse audience of more than 90 participants included both active duty and civilians from 12 different installations. Those in attendance included medical professionals, social workers, psychologists, criminal investigators, base police, chaplains and DoD Dependent Schools employees.

"We all have a responsibility, regardless of our profession to be able to help children who are victims of maltreatment," said participant Lt. Peter J. Arroyo Jr., doctor of occupational therapy and provider for Educational Developmental Intervention Services (EDIS) at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka. "Those of us in health care, law enforcement, education and social work – we are the first line of defense, we are the ones who are seeing these children and we have to be able to identify them."

Craig said the training is fundamental for success and her teams are available and prepared to provide the training to medical personnel, family advocacy representatives, social work and mental health professionals, military commands, law enforcement, lawyers, judges and the general public.

Director of the Armed Forces Center for Child Protection (AFCCP) Dr. Barbara Craig speaks to a group of more than 90 participants about the issues and techniques in the field of child maltreatment prevention during a training conference at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka June 22. Conference attendees included health care professionals, base police, criminal investigators, chaplains, social workers and Department of Defense Dependents School (DoDDS) employees from 12 installations.

"We are the only child abuse consultants for the Department of Defense and we travel throughout the world seeing patients and providing training and education," Craig said. "Ultimately, the goal is to prevent children from getting injured, whether it is physically or emotionally."

Online program helps military families overseas vote absentee

By Lisa Daniel, American Forces Press Service

The Defense Department launched an Internet-based program June 28 to help service members and other Americans living overseas vote more easily in November's elections.

The new, online voting assistant at www.fvap.gov will make the registration and absentee ballot application process "quick, easy, seamless and intuitive," Bob Carey, federal voting assistance program director, said during an interview with the Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service.

Americans living abroad previously had to research a 290-page manual to figure out their state requirements for absentee voting, including where and how to send in their applications, Carey said.

"One of the things we found from the 2008 elections was that voters found the process very complex, very laborious and not very intuitive," he said. "With this, a voter doesn't have to have a master's in election law to figure out the process."

The site asks prospective voters to identify themselves either as a military member or family member, or other citizen living outside the United States, then answer fewer than 10 questions, including voting residence and how a ballot should be sent to them, Carey said. The process takes between two and 10 minutes, he said.

The program automatically determines the voter's election jurisdiction, and the proper questions to ask to meet specific state and local registration and absentee ballot requirements.

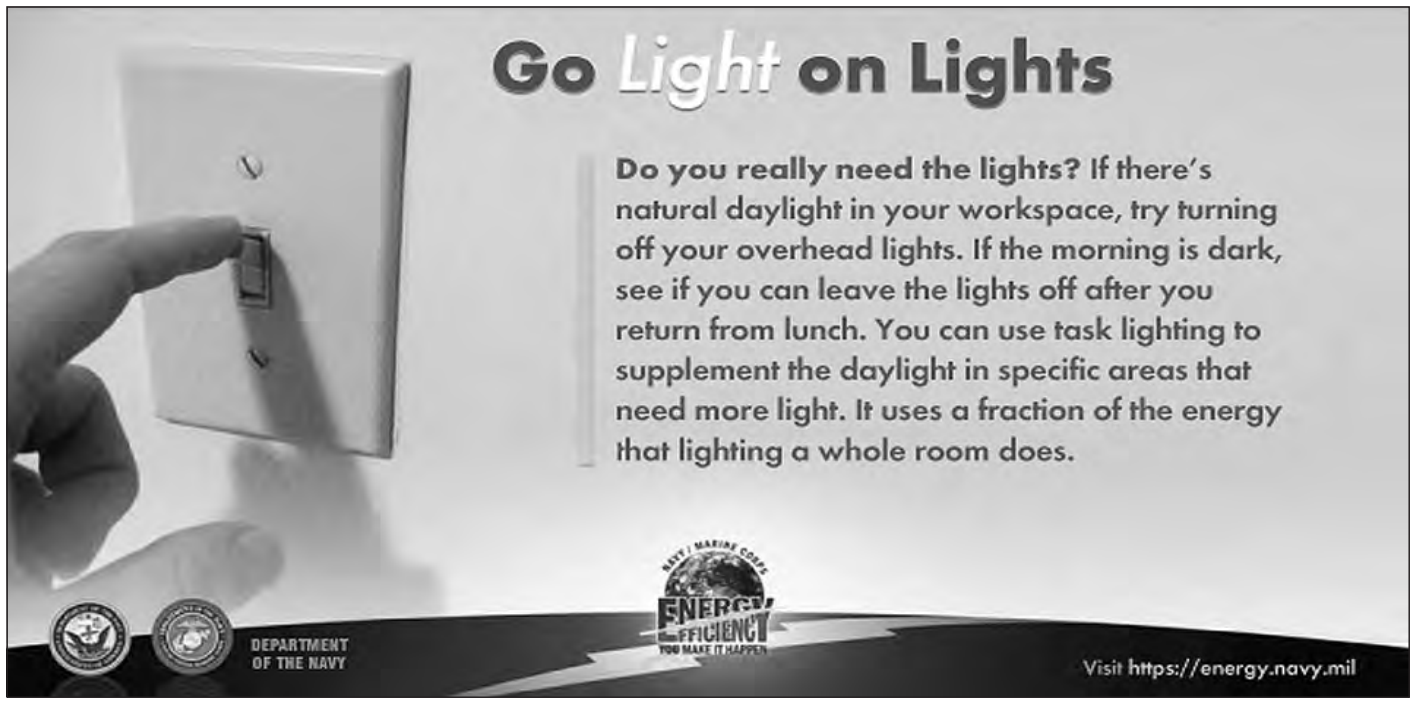
Once the questions are answered, the voter prints off a form in PDF format, signs it and submits it by mail, fax or e-mail, depending on state requirements, Carey said.

The online assistant does not store the information after the form is complete, and the information is purged from the server, he said.

The program is expected to increase the number of ballots counted for service members, who are known to vote at a higher rate than the general public, Carey said.

In 2008, it is believed that roughly 5,000 service members' ballots couldn't be counted because forms were inadequate, incomplete or mailed to the wrong jurisdiction, he said. An even bigger problem was that ballots didn't make it to voting officials in time to be counted, he said.

The online assistant was released as part of Armed Forces Voters Week and Overseas Citizens Voters Week, which ran June 28 through July 7.

Americans living overseas – some 6 million voters - are encouraged to use the site to register for absentee ballots in July.

"If it's August, they're starting to push it," Carey said. "If it's September, they're going to have some problems."