

Tips for Single Military Parents

Single parents in the military have unique challenges to manage in order to strike a balance between their family responsibilities and their military responsibilities. The following are some strategies and suggestions to help single military parents face those challenges.



- ▶ Familiarize yourself with OPNAVINST 1740.4D, which is the U.S. Navy Family Care Policy. This outlines your responsibilities to both your family and the military.
- ▶ Update the Family Care Plan Certificate annually. Details and instructions for completing this are listed in OPNAVINST 1740.4D.
- ▶ Know your child care resources in the area. Contact the Navy Mid-Atlantic Region Child and Youth Programs Resource and Referral Office at 866-NAVY-CDC (866-628-9232) or Resource_referral@navy.mil. Review the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) brochure “Choosing Child Care.” Always have a backup plan in case your child care plans fall through.
- ▶ Get a handle on your financial situation. Talk with your Command Financial Specialist (CFS) about setting up a spending plan tailored to your needs.
- ▶ Seek out your CFS if you need information on insurance, taxes, housing, car buying, checkbook management, TSP, or other financial concerns. Attendance at FFSC financial programs may be beneficial.
- ▶ To save money on child care you might consider trading some child care duties with another single military parent. You could watch their child on their duty night and they could watch your child on yours.
- ▶ Avoid eating out too often. Although it may seem like it lessens your stress to stop at a fast food restaurant for dinner, it may cause more stress by sabotaging your budget.
- ▶ Know your budget limits when purchasing new toys or games for your child. Don't let guilt drive these purchases.
- ▶ Develop a supportive group of people that you can turn to for conversation, emergency assistance, problem solving, social time, etc. Look to shipmates, friends, neighbors, parents of your kid's friends, and other single military parents.
- ▶ Take care of yourself. Eat right. Exercise. Get adequate sleep. Plan some time for yourself. Not only will you be modeling self-care for your children, but you also will be better equipped to take care of your kids if you are taking care of yourself.
- ▶ Develop a working partnership with your child's other parent. Avoid placing your child in the position of having to choose between the two of you. Make decisions based on what is in the best interest of your children.
- ▶ Decide how you will handle your dating life. Children from single parent homes may need encouragement to learn to share their parent. Go slow in introducing them to new people in your life.
- ▶ Choose the discipline techniques that you will use with your children. Attendance at a FFSC parenting class may help you learn new ideas about parenting and ways to increase cooperation between you and your children.
- ▶ Have regular family meetings with your children to discuss things such as rules, school, chores, and other concerns. Don't forget to talk about fun topics and to show appreciation for one another.
- ▶ Check out some of the books for parents, especially single parents, at the library or parenting section of your local book store.
- ▶ Seek out a support group for single parents at your command, base, military hospital, or in the civilian community.



FLEET & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS
MID ATLANTIC

Little Creek/Fort Story
462-7563

Newport News
688-6289

Norfolk/Portsmouth
444-2102

Northwest
421-8770

Oceana/Dam Neck
433-2912

Yorktown
887-4606

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Deployment Planning for Single Military Parents

Deployments and Temporary Additional Duty (TAD) assignments out of town bring unique challenges to single military parents. The following suggestions can assist in planning for separations from your children due to military obligations.

- ▶ Make arrangements well in advance of a deployment or TAD for child care. For assistance, contact the Navy Mid-Atlantic Region Child and Youth Programs Resource and Referral Office at 866-NAVY-CDC (866-628-9232) or Resource_referral@navy.mil
- ▶ Schedule an appointment with Legal Services to have special and/or medical powers of attorney drawn up and to create or update a will.
- ▶ Ensure that your child has a valid military identification card and that it will not expire while you are away.
- ▶ Develop a written contract with your child's caregiver that includes financial arrangements, school and other activities, medical care, discipline, etc.
- ▶ Arrange to have an allotment set up to provide financial support while you are away. Be sure your child's allowance continues. Talk about money for clothes, entertainment, school, and other activities.
- ▶ Discuss medical care for your child with your child care provider. Will they use military facilities or a civilian doctor? Do they know how to make appointments and file the necessary paperwork? How will payment be handled if there is a cost?
- ▶ Be sure your child's caregiver knows about any special medical conditions such as allergies, routine medications, immunizations due, routine medical appointments, dental care, etc.
- ▶ Discuss discipline with the caregiver. You may want to recommend acceptable rules, consequences, and tips for encouraging your child.
- ▶ Ensure that your caregiver is aware of special needs or fears of your child. Do they need a special blanket or need to sleep with a night light on? Are they afraid of the dark, thunderstorms, monsters under the bed, or big dogs? What do they need to be comfortable?
- ▶ Talk with your child and child care provider about routines and rules, bedtimes, curfews, meals and snacks, schoolwork, TV and movie viewing, video game, computer and cellphone use, special activities, etc.
- ▶ Plan for how your child's birthday or special holidays will be celebrated while you are separated. You may want to leave gifts to be given to your child on special occasions.
- ▶ Talk about religious observances with the caregiver. Arrange for your child to be taken to services or activities. Let the youth minister know about your upcoming absence.
- ▶ Talk with your child's school about having progress reports, report cards, or other school assignments sent to you. Leave your email address and self-addressed stamped self-addressed, stamped envelopes with the school for this purpose.
- ▶ Help your child understand where you are going and why, what you will be doing, and when they can expect to be back together with you.
- ▶ Make a plan with your child about communication during the separation. How often can your child expect to hear from you through mail, telephone, e-mail, or packages? How often will you hear from them?
- ▶ How will you communicate with the caregiver? Do you want weekly updates on how your child is doing? How will they bring concerns to your attention? How can they reach you in an emergency? Do they have the ombudsman's telephone number?
- ▶ Plan to attend FFSC pre-deployment programs before you deploy. Also attend FFSC Return and Reunion Homecoming programming onboard your ship prior to your return.
- ▶ Plan for a smooth transition after your return. Will your child be taken to the pier or airport to meet you for homecoming? Will you travel to get them? Be sure to talk about this with your child and caregiver more frequently as the reunion draws closer.
- ▶ Make a note of lessons learned during this separation. Plan to include these lessons the next time you must be separated from your child.

