DoD Homeowners Assistance Program details announced

By Department of Defense

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently announced details for the temporary expansion of the Homeowners Assistance Program (HAP).

Using $555 million in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), this program is designed to partially reimburse eligible military personnel, surviving spouses and federal civilian employees whose service to the nation has required them to relocate and sell their primary residence at a loss.

Potential eligible personnel include:

• Active and former service members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard;

• Civilian employees of the DoD, Coast Guard and non-appropriated fund activities; and

• Surviving spouses of both fallen service members and civilian employees.

Potential eligible personnel who have sold a primary home for a loss or are considering selling their home are encouraged to visit the DoD HAP Web site http://hap.usace.army.mil to check specific program criteria and if eligible, apply online.

The DoD HAP has been providing financial assistance to military personnel and DoD civilians since 1966, mainly at base realignment and closure (BRAC) sites where government action caused a decrease in market home values. While the HAP expansion is not designed to pay 100 percent of losses or to cover all declines in value, it can help protect eligible applicants from financial catastrophe due to significant losses in their home values.

Supporting military families is one of administration's highest priorities and includes leadership and engagement by Michelle Obama and Jill Biden. In February 2009, Congress provided ARRA funding for a temporary expansion of the HAP to address unique economic pressures faced by military personnel who are forced to relocate during these unusually adverse housing market conditions.

After conducting an extensive analysis to determine how best to prioritize the finite funds available while maximizing assistance to as many people as possible, the DoD developed specific eligibility criteria designed to take care of people in the greatest need. These program details have been published in the Federal Register and are now available for public comment.

ARRA funding allows the DoD to temporarily expand HAP to partially reimburse losses from the sale of a primary residence in the following priority order:

1. Homeowners wounded, injured, or ill in the line of duty while deployed since Sept. 11, 2001, and relocating in furtherance of medical treatment;

2. Surviving spouse homeowners relocating within two years after the death of their spouse;

3. Homeowners affected by the 2005 BRAC round, without the need (which existed under previous law) to prove that a base closure announcement caused a local housing market decline; and

4. Service member homeowners receiving orders dated on or after Feb. 1, 2006, through Dec. 31, 2009, for a permanent change of station (PCS) move. The orders must specify a report-no-later-than date on or before Feb. 28, 2010, to a new duty station or homeport outside a 50-mile radius of the service member's former duty station. These dates may be extended to Sept. 30, 2012, based on availability of funds.

Each of these general categories has more specific eligibility requirements which have been updated at the DoD HAP Web site http://hap.usace.army.mil. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers executes the program for all the military branches and HAP administrators will immediately start processing applications.

U.S., Japan medical professionals attend Perinatal Care Conference

By Richard McManus, USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

Health care workers from Japanese civilian, Japan Self-Defense Forces and U.S. military medical treatment facilities throughout Japan recently gathered at the fourth annual Perinatal Care Conference hosted by U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka.

The group of nearly 100 participates discussed how perinatal providers from both nations can work together to enhance neonatal medical services for mothers and babies receiving care at USNH Yokosuka.

The day-long conference featured presentations by American and Japanese medical professionals from across Japan. Real-time translation services provided a bridge for the language gap among the diverse audience members and allowed for an open, two-way communication between the American attendees and their Japanese counterparts.

Cmdr. Jacky Cheng, an obstetrician at USNH Yokosuka, feels that this conference served to highlight some similarities between USNH Yokosuka and some of the smaller Japanese hospitals that also look to larger area medical facilities for assistance in times of need.

"By building mutual understanding of each other's needs and capabilities now, we are creating relationships that will help us in the future, should the need for higher-level medical facilities arise," said Cheng.

USNH Yokosuka Executive Officer Capt. Kevin Knoop pointed out that the hospital can deliver sometimes up to 60 or 70 babies a month and the odds are good that some of those deliveries will require the care of a neonatal intensive care unit.

"The use of a neonatal intensive care unit is a prime example of how USNH Yokosuka looks to the Japanese medical community for assistance," said Knoop. "We hope to continue to build our relationship with the area Japanese medical facilities to augment our neonatal care services and provide our mothers and newborns with top-notch care."

Dr. Miyuki Ogawa, an obstetrician at Kanagawa Children's Medical Center, appreciated the opportunity to learn how the Japanese and U.S. medical community can work together and wants to see more of this type of dialogue.

"Conferences like this would benefit other specialties," said Ogawa.

Other attendees came to the conference to simply learn more about American health care.

Lt. Col. Takayo Maeda, deputy school commandant for the Japan Self-Defense Force Central Hospital Institute of Nursing, said she attended in order to gain a greater understanding of American military medical practices, something she intends on taking back to her command.

The conference ended with a tour of USNH Yokosuka. For some, it was their first time in an American military hospital and many voiced that they were impressed by the size of the exam rooms and doctor's office spaces and the equipment in the labor and delivery ward.

The hospital plans to continue hosting the annual conference between to the two medical communities.

"It is my sincere hope that this conference will continue to enhance our working relationships and foster a greater understanding of patient care capabilities in the region," said Knoop.

School bus pass policy

Students who do not have a current school year bus pass are not authorized to ride Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) school buses. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure students have a valid school bus pass in their possession in order to ride the school bus.

The Complex Transportation Office (CTO) responsible for school bus transportation will make exceptions for students who lose or misplace their bus passes. In order to ride the school bus, students without a bus pass must adhere to the following instructions:

No school bus pass in the morning on the way to school:

• Student must sign the "Bus Pass Report Log" kept on the bus.
• Student must legibly print and sign their name.
• Student must contact parents to make arrangements for ride home.

No school bus pass in the afternoon on the way home:

• Get a school staff member at the bus loading zone to sign you on the bus.
• Student must sign the "Bus Pass Report Log" kept on the bus.
• Student must legibly print and sign their name.

CTO will be provided an Incident Report after the student has had three consecutive days of signing on the bus. CTO will notify parent that the student does not have a valid bus pass in his possession and will no longer be allowed to sign on the bus until the student presents a valid bus pass.

Continued failure to present a valid bus pass may result in bus riding privileges being suspended for a specified period of time.

Contact Yokosuka CTO Manager Mike Frechette at 243-9566 for more information.