Creating a Family Care Plan

Why is a Family Care Plan Important?
If you’re in the military, then you can benefit from having a family care plan. You are required to have one in some situations. Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 1342.19 states when a family care plan is required. Each branch of service has its own guidelines.

What is a Family Care Plan?
It is a way to make sure that your family is taken care of while you are gone. You may be gone because you are deployed, on temporary duty, or due to other military obligations.

The plan is made up of your written instructions and legal documents. This plan will help with a smooth change of responsibilities to your chosen caregiver when you have to leave for a short or long period of time.

Do I Need a Family Care Plan?
Certain members of the Armed Forces are required to have a Family Care Plan:

- A single parent with custody of children who are 19 years of age or younger
- A single service member who is pregnant
- Military couples with custody of children who are 19 years of age or younger
- A service member who is the sole caregiver of another person. Such as a service member who has a spouse who is injured, chronically sick, or otherwise unable to care for dependents.
- Family Care Plans are required if you have a family member who speaks little or no English. This family member may be unable to drive and get access to basic resources.

It’s also a good idea for spouses married to service members to have a plan. This plan can help if you become incapacitated while the service member is deployed or overseas.

What are the Basic Requirements?
The requirements for a Family Care Plan may be different depending on your branch of service. But they will all contain the same basic information. The plan should include a short-term care plan and a long-term care plan. It should also have a care provider designated.

Short-Term Care Plan: This plan outlines how your family should be cared for while you are gone for less than 30 days. The care provider that you choose (designate) must be:
- A civilian (non-military person),
- Must live in the local area, and
- Must sign a copy of the Family Care Plan.

Long-Term Care Plan: This plan details who will care for your family if you are gone for more than 31 days. This is the plan you will use in the case of deployment, extended training, or involuntary recalls.

The care provider that you choose (designate) must be:
- A civilian (non-military person),
- DOES NOT have to live in the local area, and
- Must sign a copy of the Family Care Plan.

Both the short-term and long-term care plans must name the care provider. They should also include the necessary information for the care provider to care for your children (or other family members) and to run your household if needed.

How do I update my Family Care Plan?
You should go over your Family Care Plan at least once a year to make sure you do not need to change it. You should also make sure that the person you chose as a care provider is still able to care for your family if you are gone.

When you update your plan, you should think about any changes including: medical care, addresses, school, contacts or other resources.

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