

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
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ON THE EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM

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**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Chairwoman Speier, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your continued support to our Soldiers, Civilians and their Families who serve this nation. The Army is especially grateful for the diligent work of this Committee in support of our exceptional Family members.

The Exceptional Family Member Program, herein after referred to as EFMP or “the program”, is a central pillar in support of Soldier readiness. In order to field a highly lethal Army, Soldiers need to be confident that their Family members with special needs, be it medical or educational, have access to the services they require. Army EFMP has three overarching operating tenets: 1) coordinate every assignment for a Soldier ensuring the special needs of their Family members are fully addressed at their duty location while also considering the Soldier’s need for professional development and training; 2) provide a coordinated, comprehensive multi-agency approach for community support, housing, medical, educational and personnel services to Families with special needs; and 3) provide a mechanism for Department of the Army civilians assigned overseas to inform the local military treatment facility and education activity of their Family member’s needs to determine if medical and educational services are available. Today there are over 54,000 Family members of Soldiers enrolled in EFMP and we are committed to ensuring that each of these Family members receives support and assistance throughout the Soldier’s career.

As early as 1978, the Army created a policy to support Soldiers with exceptional Family members. In 1981, the program was further codified in a comprehensive regulation and renamed the Army Exceptional Family Member program. By 1986, the Army mandated enrollment for active duty Soldiers whose Family members had

qualifying conditions. This step ensured that all Soldiers with an exceptional Family member would only be assigned to an installation that could support their Family member's needs. The Army is especially proud of its history in the area of EFMP as it demonstrates our long-standing commitment to Soldier and Family well-being and readiness.

The Headquarters, Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G9 provides governance and oversight of the program. The execution of EFMP program elements is managed through three commands. U.S. Army Medical Command has the responsibility to identify, enroll, and provide health care for Family members with qualifying conditions. The Army Human Resources Command centrally manages, in close coordination with Army Medical Command, assignments for Soldiers with EFMP Family members in order to ensure that Soldiers are assigned at locations that can fully support their medical and educational needs. Army Materiel Command provides Family support services for Soldiers and Family members with special needs and is also involved with assisting Soldiers and their Family members to establish required care and services at the gaining installation before a permanent change of station move. Relocation is stressful for any Family. The stress and toll of every permanent change of station (PCS) is amplified even more for Soldiers with Family members with special needs. Most recently, the Army instituted changes to the assignment process for Soldiers and Family members enrolled in the EFMP in an effort to provide greater flexibility in assignment choice and additional time for Soldiers to conduct their own research on resources available at various assignment locations. These changes ensure that the voice of the Soldier is heard throughout the re-assignment process, and that the Soldier

and his or her Family member make an informed decision about assignment location. In addition, for some families, stabilization at the current duty station may be the most critical support necessary. Soldiers with exceptional needs Family members can also opt to remain at their installation up to four years and even longer. Alternatively, Soldiers have the opportunity to take advantage of the housing flexibility options that Congress enacted in 2018.

Army Community Services are available at each installation and their staff supports EFMP families. EFMP managers and system navigators provide needs assessments and help families develop individualized service plans as requested by the Soldier or their Family member. Army Community Services also provides employment support, financial counseling, deployment support, and relocation support services.

The Army is committed to constantly evaluating performance and gaining feedback on program delivery. The Army Family Action Plan is one avenue that has resulted in program improvements for EFMP. Last summer, the Army, in concert with the Army Public Health Command, distributed a survey to over 21,000 EFMP families. We are using these findings from this study along with other prior reports to minimize the challenges that Soldiers and their Families face.

Our commitment to every Soldier with an exceptional Family member is to balance the medical and educational needs of their Family member with the Soldier's career requirements thereby enhancing Soldier and Family quality of life. In closing, Soldier and Family readiness is critical to our Army's success -- winning matters. The Secretary and the Chief of Staff of the Army made people their number one priority and this program is one of the most important efforts.