Support and Resources

The Department of Defense and each service branch provide a variety of programs to help service members and families with concerns common to military life. The information in this section of your organizer will help you understand the range of services and programs available to military families generally, and for families of wounded, ill, and injured service members particularly. It includes both government programs and non-government programs

Comprehensive government support

Service-branch wounded warrior programs

When you have questions about your service member's non-medical needs, the first program to contact is the program associated with your service member's branch of service.

U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)
Telephone: 1-800-237-1336, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. EST, Monday – Friday
E-mail: *AW2@conus.army.mil*
Web site: *www.aw2.army.mil*
AW2 is the Army's support, advocacy, and information system for severely wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers and their families. See the Web site for links to resources and a detailed description of the six-phase Life Cycle of Support that AW2 has established to help eligible Soldiers. The Web site contains a tool that allows you to locate the AW2 advocate in your area.

U.S. Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR)
Telephone: 1-877-4USMCWW or 1-877-487-6299, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Web site: *www.woundedwarriorregiment.org*
Provides and facilitates assistance to wounded, ill, and injured Marines (and to Sailors attached to or in support of Marine units) and their family members throughout the phases of recovery.

Navy Safe Harbor – Severely Injured Support
Telephone: 1-877-746-8563
Assistance by e-mail: *safeharbor@navy.mil*
Web site: *www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/CasualtyAssistance/* (Click on "Safe Harbor")
Navy Safe Harbor is the focal point for the non-medical care management of severely wounded, ill, or injured Sailors and their families. Non-medical care issues include pay, invitational travel orders, lodging and housing adaptation, and more.

Air Force Warrior and Survivor Assistance Program
This program has two key elements. The first, the Air Force Survivor Assistance Program, provides immediate assistance to seriously wounded, ill, and injured Airmen and their families. The second, the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program (AFW2), phases in later, when Airmen begin their transition back to their Air Force job or to the civilian community.

Air Force Survivor Assistance Program
Telephone: 1-877-USAF-HELP (1-877-872-3435)
E-mail: *USAFHELP@Pentagon.af.mil*
Web site: *https://survivorassistance.afsv.af.mil*
Air Force Family Liaison Officers provide logistical and family support, and Recovery Care Coordinators (RCCs) work closely with the recovering Airman throughout the recovery process.

Air Force Wounded Warrior Program (AFW2)
Telephone: 1-800-581-9437, 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT, Monday – Friday
E-mail: *afwounded.warrior@randolph.af.mil*
Web site: *www.woundedwarrior.af.mil*
AFW2 consultants provide a wide range of services, including financial counseling, job-placement assistance, and counseling about veterans benefits. The program is committed to each Airman for at least five years.

Department of Defense (DoD) programs

These DoD programs supplement the service-branch programs described above.

Wounded Warrior Resource Center (WWRC)
Telephone: 1-800-342-9647, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
E-mail: *wwrc@MilitaryOneSource.com*
Web site: *www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com*
If your service member's issue or problem isn't taken care of by your service branch, you can call the Wounded Warrior Resource Center. It works closely with each service branch program, providing you with personal ongoing assistance to make sure that your concerns are resolved, including concerns related to:

- Facilities
- Health care
- Benefits
- Other everyday issues
- Complaints

The WWRC Web site contains a broad range of information helpful to wounded, ill, and injured service members and their families.

Military OneSource
Telephone: 1-800-342-9647, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Web site: *www.MilitaryOneSource.com*
This free 24-hour service is available to all active duty, Guard, and Reserve members (regardless of activation status) and their families. Master's-level consultants provide information and make referrals on a wide range of issues, including finances, emotional well-being, parenting, relationships, and concerns related to your wounded, ill, or injured service member. Free face-to-face counseling sessions (or their equivalent by phone or online) are also available. The Web site provides a broad range of information for service members and their families.

National Resource Directory (NRD)
Web site: *www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov*
The National Resource Directory is an online tool for wounded, ill, and injured service members, veterans, their families, and those who support them. The NRD links to federal, state, and government agencies; Veterans service and benefit organizations; non-profit and community-based organizations; academic institutions; and professional associations that provide assistance to wounded, ill, and injured service members and their families.

Service-branch family support programs

Each service branch has its own programs to improve the quality of life for the military community. Staff at the programs can help you find the phone number or location of experts who can help you with concerns like benefits, housing, transportation, and financial counseling. You have probably already been in contact with your service-branch program. If you haven't, ask your case managers to help connect you.

Although the names of these programs often contain the word "family" them, these programs are for single service members, too.

U.S. Army
Army Community Services
Web site: *www.myarmyonesource.com*

U.S. Marine Corps
Marine Corps Community Services
Web site: *www.usmc-mccs.org*

U.S. Navy
Navy Fleet and Family Support Center
Web site: *www.nffsp.org*

U.S. Air Force
Airman and Family Community Services
Web site: *www.afcommunity.af.mil*

Service-branch and DoD information sites

Department of Defense (DoD)
www.defenselink.mil
News from the Department of Defense and links to related sites.

U.S. Army
www.army.mil
Web site of the U.S. Army, with news and links to programs.

> **Army National Guard Bureau**
> *www.ng.mil*
>
> **Army Reserve**
> *www.arfp.org*

U.S. Marine Corps
www.usmc.mil
Web site of the U.S. Marine Corps, with news and links to programs.

> **Marine Corps Reserve**
> *www.marforres.usmc.mil*

U.S. Navy
www.navy.mil
Web site of the U.S. Navy, with news and links to programs.

> **Navy Reserve**
> *www.navyreserve.navy.mil*

U.S. Air Force
www.af.mil
Web site of the U.S. Air Force, with news and links to programs.

> **Air Force Reserve**
> *www.afrc.af.mil*

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Many wounded, ill, or injured service members will receive treatment at a VA facility, even though they plan to return to active duty. VA specialties include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), spinal cord injury, and rehabilitation involving amputation or prosthetic limbs.

In addition to medical care, the VA provides extensive non-medical programs and resources for veterans, including benefits, vocational rehabilitation, employment services, and disability

support. If your service member will transition to the VA, care managers and others will help connect you with a VA expert to help guide you through the process.

For basic information about VA programs, go to:

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Telephone: 1-800-827-1000
Web site: *www.va.gov*
Also see *www.oefoif.va.gov* for information specifically for OIF and OEF veterans transitioning to the VA for medical and other benefits.

Military relief organizations

Military relief organizations help service members and their dependents with certain emergency financial needs. Help is in the form of interest-free loans, grants, or a combination of loans and grants.

Most loans and grants from military relief organizations are for one-time financial emergencies—for example, for rent, utilities, vehicle repair, certain medical and dental expenses, and emergency travel.

Army Emergency Relief (AER)
Telephone: 1-866-878-6378
Web site: *www.aerhq.org*

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS)
875 North Randolph Street, Suite 225
Arlington, VA 22203-1977
Telephone: 1-703-696-4904
Web site: *www.nmcrs.org*

Air Force Aid Society
Web site: *www.AFAS.org*

Other government and non-government programs

U.S. Department of Defense Community Relations
Web site: *www.ourmilitary.mil*
Follow the links under "Support for Our Troops" to find organizations that assist wounded, ill, and injured service members and their families.

American Legion
Telephone: 1-800-504-4098 or 1-317-630-1323
E-mail: *familysupport@legion.org*
Web site: *www.legion.org*
Provides a wide range of support to families of service members, including financial assistance through its Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program. Send an e-mail for more information or complete the electronic request form on the Web site.

American Veterans
Telephone: 1-877-726-8387
E-mail: *amvets@amvets.org*
Web site: *www.amvets.org*

Armed Forces Foundation
16 North Carolina Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20003
Telephone: 1-910-585-8003
Web site: *www.armedforcesfoundation.org*
Provides assistance to injured service members and their families, including financial assistance in the form of bill payment for families of service members who are in need, and hotel assistance for families of injured service members while they visit a loved one.

Coalition to Salute America's Heroes
2 Church Street, Suite 101
Ossining, NY 10562
Telephone: 1-914-432-5400
Web site: *www.saluteheroes.org*
Helps ease the financial burdens of severely injured service members and their families. Apply for assistance by telephone or by completing an online application.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
Telephone: 1-877-426-2838
Web site: *www.dav.org*
Advocacy and programs for disabled veterans.

Fallen Patriot Fund
Web site: *www.fallenpatriotfund.org*
Provides supplemental financial support to the spouses and children of U.S. military personnel killed or seriously injured during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Apply online.

The Fisher House™ Program
Toll free: 1-888-294-8560
E-mail: *Info@FisherHouse.org*
Web site: *www.fisherhouse.org*

Fisher House donates "comfort homes" on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers for families to stay in (at little cost) during a service member's hospitalization. Fisher House also sponsors Operation Hero Miles (*www.heromiles.org*) which provides free round-trip tickets on certain airlines for eligible hospitalized service members and their families.

Homes for Our Troops
37 Main Street
Taunton, MA 02780
Telephone: 1-866-7TROOPS
Web site: *www.homesforourtroops.org*
A nonprofit organization committed to helping service members who have sacrificed for their country and returned home with serious disabilities and injuries. Helps by raising donations of money, building materials, and professional labor and by coordinating the process of building a new home or adapting an existing home for handicapped accessibility.

Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund
Telephone: 1-760-725-3680 or 1-703-640-0181
Web site: *www.semperfifund.org*
Provides supplemental financial assistance to injured Marines and sailors, as well as members of the Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The type of assistance provided is determined on an individual basis.

Military HOMEFRONT
Web site: *www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil*
A Department of Defense quality-of-life Web site for service members, their families, leaders, and service providers.

USA.gov
Web site: *www.usa.gov*
The U.S. government's official Web portal for government information and forms.

Unmet Needs Program
Telephone: 1-866-789-NEED (6333)
Web site: *www.unmetneeds.com*
A joint program of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vermont American Power Tool Accessories, Unmet Needs provides financial support, skills, and labor to families of service members.

Wounded Warrior Project
Telephone: 1-877-832-6997
Web site: *www.woundedwarriorproject.org*
This nonprofit organization offers programs for caregivers, benefits counseling, information for families, and peer mentoring.

Yellow Ribbon Fund
7200 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 310
Bethesda, MD 20814
Telephone: 1-240-223-1180
E-mail: *email@yellowribbonfund.org*
Web site: *www.yellowribbonfund.com*
Provides services for injured service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at Bethesda and to their families, including hotel rooms, rental cars, and job training where appropriate.

Organizations by kind of injury

Amputation

Amputee Coalition of America
Telephone: 1-888-267-5669
Web site: *www.amputee-coalition.org*
Resources for amputees, including education, support groups, information for friends and family members, and referrals to other amputee organizations.

Blindness/visual impairment

Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Telephone: 1-800-669-7079
Web site: *www.bva.org*
Resources and support for blinded veterans and their families, including field representatives (who are themselves blinded veterans) who provide counseling and encouragement, volunteers who work in VA medical centers and outpatient clinics, and scholarships for spouses and dependents of blinded veterans.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
(Department of Veterans Affairs)
Web site: *www.ptsd.va.gov*
Information for service members and their families about PTSD, including articles about coping and information about helping children of a parent with PTSD.

Spinal cord injury (SCI)/paralysis/traumatic brain injury (TBI)

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
Telephone: 1-800-555-9140
Web site: *www.pva.org*
An advocacy organization for veterans with spinal cord injuries. Offers information and free and low-cost publications on aspects of living with spinal cord injuries.

Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Research Center
Telephone: 1-800-539-7309
Web site: *www.paralysis.org*
Information and resources for people living with paralysis or affected by it, including family members and caregivers. Free paralysis resource guide in Spanish and English, newsletters, and online networking.

Brain Injury Association of America
Telephone: 1-800-444-6443
Web site: *www.biausa.org*
Information and resources for people living with traumatic brain injury or affected by it, including family members and caregivers.

Disabilities generally

DisabilityInfo.gov
Web site: *www.disabilityinfo.gov*
An online portal to the federal government's information and initiatives for people with disabilities, including information about housing, education, accessibility, transportation, and assistive technology.

National Rehabilitation Information Center
Telephone: 1-800-346-2742
Web site: *www.naric.com*
Detailed online resource lists (books, magazines, and organizations) related to many kinds of disabilities, including blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, mental health, spinal cord injury, and traumatic brain injury. Also includes resource information for assistive technology, universal design, and employment.

The Department of Defense cannot endorse any particular nonprofit organization. The resources listed above are just some of those that provide assistance to wounded, ill, or injured service members and their families.

Traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (TSGLI)

TSGLI provides traumatic-injury coverage to all service members covered under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program. Starting December 1, 2005, every service member who has SGLI also has TSGLI. It is also provided retroactively for service members who incur severe losses resulting from a traumatic injury between October 7, 2001 and December 1, 2005 if the loss was the result of injuries incurred in Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

For more information about TSGLI, visit the VA TSGLI site (*www.insurance.va.gov/sglisite/TSGLI/TSGLI.htm*). You may also contact your branch of service using the contact information below:

U.S. Army
Army Human Resources Command
Telephone: 1-800-237-1336
Web site: *www.tsgli.army.mil*

U.S. Navy
Navy Personnel Command
Telephone: 1-800-368-3202
Web site: *www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/CasualtyAssistance/* (Click on "TSGLI")

U.S. Marine Corps
HQ, Marine Corps
Telephone: 877-216-0825
Web site: *www.manpower.usmc.mil* (Enter TSGLI in the search box)

U.S. Air Force
AFPC/DPWC
Telephone: 1-800-433-0048

Understanding the Medical Evaluation Process

The military's medical evaluation process is complex, and understanding it is sometimes overwhelming for service members and their families. The process begins when the service member is recommended for a medical board, usually by his or her treating physician. The medical board makes recommendations and the case is sent to a Physical Evaluation Board (PEB). A final determination can be made in as little as 45 days—or much longer—depending on the complexity of the case. The Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO) is the service member's main liaison during the process, providing valuable guidance and serving as a patient advocate.

Medical board

A physician recommends a medical board when it becomes apparent that the service member's condition may permanently interfere with his or her ability to serve on active duty. The medical treatment facility where the service member is receiving care assembles the medical board documents, which include:

- *Medical documentation.* A current medical examination, a copy of the patient's medical record, an assessment by a senior physician, and approvals by two additional physicians are included as medical documentation.
- *Non-medical documentation.* An assessment by the service member's commanding officer describes how the member's condition affects his or her ability to perform the assigned job duties. This assessment is important to the medical board because, although a service member may have permanent disabilities, he or she still may be qualified for the job.
- *Optional rebuttal by the service member.* If the service member disagrees with any of the information included in the medical board documents, he or she may submit a rebuttal, which is included in the documentation sent to the PEB.

The medical board may recommend Temporary Limited Duty (normally for a period of not more than 12 months) and re-evaluate the case later. Otherwise, the medical board documents are forwarded to the PEB.

Physical Evaluation Board (PEB)

The PEB reviews all medical board documentation to determine if the service member is fit for continued military service. The board looks at many factors, including the medical information, the service member's rate or Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), and whether or not the member is deployable. The PEB must consider the medical condition and how it affects the service member's ability to do his or her job. The determination and subsequent disability rating assigned by the PEB are based on the member's ability to perform his or her duties. The following steps take place during a PEB:

- *Informal Board.* After reviewing the documentation, the board determines whether or not the service member is fit for duty. If found unfit (and the medical condition is service related) the board will assign a disability rating. If the service member is rated 20 percent or less, the service member will be discharged, with or without the benefit of severance pay. If the rating is more than 30 percent, the board may place the service member on one of the following:
  - *Temporary Disability Retired List (TDRL).* The service member may stay on the TDRL for up to five years, but must be re-evaluated every 12 to 18 months. While on TDRL, he or she receives retired pay and is entitled to retiree benefits.
  - *Permanent Disability Retired List (PDRL).* On PDRL, the service member receives retirement pay and benefits for life.
- *Service member's review.* The PEBLO counselor advises the service member on the Informal Board's findings. If the service member disagrees with the findings, he or she may request a Formal Board. Members found not fit for duty have the right to demand a Formal Board.
- *Formal Board.* An attorney is appointed to represent the service member (or the member may hire an attorney) at the Formal Board. The Formal Board re-examines the evidence, hears testimony, and considers any new evidence before making its recommendation. The Formal Board may uphold the Informal Board's recommendations or make a new determination.
- *Continuing military service.* Service members found unfit for duty may submit a request to continue military service in their component, whether it is Active or Reserve. These requests are included with the PEB documentation when it is forwarded to the service headquarters for a final decision. The procedures vary depending on your service branch.
  - *Army.* Soldiers may submit a Continuation of Active Duty (COAD) request. Requests are most often granted for soldiers with 15 to 20 years of active service or soldiers with critical job skills.
  - *Marine Corps and Navy.* Sailors and Marines may submit a request for Permanent Limited Duty (PLD). These requests are most often granted to members with 18 to 20 years of service or those who can fill a critical billet.

- *Final decision.* The Informal or Formal PEB recommendations and any request for COAD/COAR or PLD are sent to the member's service headquarters. The headquarters makes the final determination on both the medical board's recommendations and the COAD/COAR or PLD request. Whatever the outcome, PEBLO counselors are on hand at most Military Treatment Facilities to assist the service member and family through the process.

  Access the Department of the Navy PEB at *www.donhq.navy.mil/corb/peb/pebmainpage1.htm.* The PEB acts on behalf of the Secretary of the Navy to make determinations of fitness for duty, entitlements to disability benefits, disability ratings, and disposition of cases referred to active and Reserve members of the Navy and Marine Corps.

How to Search the Web

There is much information on the Internet (the "Web") that can be helpful to families of injured, ill, or wounded service members. People involved in your service member's care are likely to refer you often to Internet information.

Don't be embarrassed if you haven't used the Internet often. It can be easy to learn, and many people at the hospital can help you find a computer and get started. These basics can also help:

Finding a Web site when you know the Web address

You may want to look up a "Web address" (also called a "URL") that someone has given you or that you have read about. For example, someone may suggest that you look at a Web site called *www.fisherhouse.org* for information about the Fisher House program, which provides housing for military families near medical centers.

One you're at a computer, here is how to find a Web site using the Web address:

1. "Click" on the picture (also called an "icon") that lets you enter the Internet. It will probably have the word "Internet" on it. It might say "Explorer," "Firefox," "Navigator," or "Safari." This will open a software program called a "browser," which lets you look for things on the Internet.
2. Now you should see a narrow empty box, probably near the top of the screen. This is the "search box." In the search box, type the Web address that you have.
3. Click on the word "go" or on the arrow next to the address box.
4. The Web site's "home page" should appear on the screen. Click on different parts of the home page to get even more information.

Finding information when you don't have a Web address

You may not have a "Web address" to help you look up information on the Web. That's OK. You can do an Internet "search" that will find Web sites for you with information about a subject you want to know about.

For example, you may want to find out about organizations that can give you information about living with a spinal cord injury. Here is how to do a basic search:

1. Click on the picture (or icon) that lets you enter the Internet. It will probably have the word "Internet" on it. It might say "Explorer," "Firefox," "Navigator," or "Safari." This will open a software program called a "browser," which lets you look for things on the Internet.

2. Go to the Web site of a "search engine." A search engine is a software program that searches the Web to find Web sites that contain the "search terms" that you type into the search box. Some of the better known search engines are Google at *www.google.com* and Yahoo at *www.yahoo.com*. A long, narrow box will appear. This is the "search box."

3. Type your "search terms" into the search box. For this search, you might want to enter "spinal cord injury."

4. Hit the "Return" or "Enter" key on the keyboard, or click on the word "search," which will be next to or under the search box. A list of Web sites will appear on the screen.

5. Click on a Web site that looks useful. For example, the search term "spinal cord injury" produces a list that includes "National Spinal Cord Injury Association" and "Spinal Cord Resource Center."

6. Read the Web site by clicking on information that looks useful. If a site contains a box that says "resources," be sure to click on it. If a site contains a box that says "links," be sure to click on it, too. "Links" are connections to other Web sites that can be useful.

More tips

- *If a search is producing too many Web sites that aren't really related to what you're looking for,* "narrow" your search. For example, if you typed in the search term "child care," you would get thousands of Web sites from all over the world. If you "narrow" the search by adding more specific terms—for example, "child care San Diego" (if you're looking for information about child care available in San Diego), you will get better results.
- *You can leave words like "and" and "the" out of your search.*
- *When you find helpful sites, "bookmark" them* so you can find them again easily.
- *Know if a Web site is commercial or noncommercial.* The owners of a commercial site may be trying to sell products or services to people who visit the site.
- *Remember that you can tell something about a site by the last letters in the Web address:*

  - *.com* usually means the site is commercial
  - *.org* means a nonprofit organization
  - *.edu* means an educational institution
  - *.mil* means a military site
  - *.gov* means a government site