

COURAGE TO CARE

A Health Campaign of Uniformed Services University, www.usuhs.edu, and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Bethesda, Maryland, www.CSTSonline.org

SUSTAINING HEALTHCARE CONTINUITY FOR OUR MILITARY FAMILIES

Military families move around the nation and around the globe. While relocation is a part of military life and military tradition, the process is stressful, especially during wartime. Importantly, moving can disrupt individual and family healthcare routines.

Military healthcare professionals can reinforce and facilitate continuity of healthcare for families on the move

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to strengthen the resilience of our entire military community.

This *Courage to Care* fact sheet addresses some important and practical issues related to healthcare continuity for families who are

preparing to move, and for families who are encountering medical personnel and resources in their new surroundings.

Helping Families Prepare to Move

The information below, which is included on the accompanying patient fact sheet, *Military Families on the Move*, can be used to advise patients.

- Service members and spouses should participate in briefings related to their medical and dental insurance including portability of TRICARE, medical care en route to their new station, and transportation of medical records.
- Military families, particularly those using civilian primary care managers, should request a summary of their medical records and medications before departing.
- Important documentation such as birth certificates, immunization records, social security cards, passports, naturalization and adoption papers (if necessary), school records, and copies of orders, should be carried and not shipped.
- Recommend that family members obtain extra refills of any important medications that must be taken regularly in case moving or arrival is delayed.
- Information on support services for children with special needs should be obtained and, if possible, set up before departing from the old assignment.
- Spouses who are pregnant or have infants should be advised to be especially attentive to routine healthcare immediately upon arriving at their destination.
- Family safety is a health issue. Encourage families to become familiar with any disaster or emergency issues

of importance in their new location (e.g., moving to an area that is vulnerable to hurricanes or earthquakes).

- Attend to the healthcare of household pets and make sure they have any vaccinations and documents required by their new community or state.

Welcoming New Families

Fostering a safe and caring environment, especially for new patients to your office or clinic, can help families feel comfortable and more relaxed.

- Acknowledge the challenges of a new healthcare setting and encourage patients to address any outstanding healthcare issues or medical history. They will appreciate your attentiveness and concern as their new healthcare provider.
- Recognize the normal stress of moving, but try to discern any signs of a more serious mental health condition in the form of depression, anxiety, substance misuse, or health risks that could undermine individual or family safety.
- Schedule a follow up visit for any questionable health issues including expressed concerns around family conflict.
- Suggest that service members or spouses use the confidential telephone and web-based services offered by Military OneSource by calling 1-800-342-9647 or visiting https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/Military_NDSD to take a free, confidential self-assessment for mental health problems.