



Thanksgiving holiday is fast approaching, and I know many of us will be reflecting on the things we are most thankful. Family and health, of course, are on the list, but I also have found like many of you, that community is just as important. It seems the more challenges we face, the less we recognize how much we have, not realizing how important these things are until they are gone. Over the past year or two, I have become aware that my community IS my family. It provides me the support, inspiration, sense of purpose, and fellowship that I need. As November prompts a season of fellowship and Thanksgiving, it is also **Month of the Military Family**, so I want to say thank you to all our military families for your service and for being my community and my family! I am very thankful for you, your support, the support you give each other, and more importantly the support that you give our great airmen and their families. Being able to serve alongside you in your various roles in our Air Force is an honor. The roles you fill every day add such great value to the overall quality and culture of Air Force life.

Unfortunately, though this time of year we often find ourselves near or at capacity in these various roles. With that in mind, I would like to remind each one of you to take care of yourself too! I would also like to take this opportunity of Thanksgiving to highlight some of the many leadership roles that many of you assume in our Air Force and the differences in their duties and descriptions. Each role you fill deserves its own measure of respect and appreciation, especially this time of year, and as the holidays are just around the corner, I have no doubt that some of you will be either filling one of these leadership roles or potentially interacting with someone who is. **Key Spouses** are commander-appointed volunteers that serve as a vital resource to command teams in an effort to take care of our airmen and their families. **Key Spouse Mentors** are volunteers that support our Key Spouses. They share their expertise, provide encouragement and advocate for the program. **Command Spouses** are married to someone in a leadership role (commander) within a unit, squadron, group, wing etc. There are no "official duties" or "defined roles" for a spouse of a commander; however, supporting your military member in their role as a commander to enhance unit family morale can be incredibly rewarding. **Lead Spouses** are volunteer advisors that advocate or serve as an ambassador for the unit's military members, civilians, and their families. A lead spouse is often an experienced military spouse who supports the unit when there is no current command spouse, or the command spouse is unable to volunteer in that role. These are just a few of the many roles' spouses fill and as you can see in the descriptions, they are all volunteer positions and vital to our quality of life.

No matter what role you are in, there are so many ways you are making an impact on our Air Force through your support and encouragement to our families, to include the **Five to Thrive** focus areas which includes **Childcare, Education, Healthcare, Housing and Spouse Employment**. You not only work and/or volunteer in these focus areas, but you are constantly creating, collaborating, and advocating in ways to improve your lives and the lives around you every day. Gen Brown and I want to say how thankful we are for your service and your willingness to serve in these various roles. You are the reason our military families are thriving and will continue to thrive during this wonderful season of Thanksgiving!

Best,

*Mrs. Sharene Brown*

**Sharene Brown**, *Spouse of the 22nd Chief of Staff of the Air Force*

You can Follow me at [www.facebook.com/CSAF22Spouse](http://www.facebook.com/CSAF22Spouse)

# FIVE TO THRIVE

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## CHILDCARE

**[MilitaryChildCare.com](https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mccu/ui/#/)** (MCC) is a Department of Defense (DoD) website for military and DoD-affiliated families seeking childcare. This single online gateway provides access to comprehensive information on military-operated and military subsidized childcare options worldwide. With MCC, families can search for and request care, manage their requests, and update their household profile - online any time and from anywhere - making it easier for families to find the childcare they need. Visit <https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mccu/ui/#/> for more information.

The **[Department of the Air Force Child Care Fee Assistance Program](https://www.childcareaware.org/fee-assistancerespite/military-families/air-force/fee-assistance/)** was created to provide authorized Active Duty personnel assistance in locating, selecting, and offsetting the cost of civilian child care, when installation child care is not available, or a viable option for the Department of the Air Force Sponsor and their family. The programs available through Child Care Aware® of America provide subsidies for eligible Department of the Air Force dependents enrolled in quality commercial child care programs throughout the United States. Child Care Aware® of America authorizes subsidy amounts based on total family income for those eligible Department of the Air Force families and supplies monthly payments directly to the prospective child care provider. For more information, please visit <https://www.childcareaware.org/fee-assistancerespite/military-families/air-force/fee-assistance/>.

*Note:* DOD tracks Demand Accommodation Rate as a metric for whether it is meeting the childcare needs of military families through the Child Development Center (CDC) waiting list. These waiting lists can impact potential funding and resourcing depending on need; therefore, it is important for you to add your child's name to the CDC waitlist at your location.

## EDUCATION

Did you know? **[The Federal Impact Aid Program](https://www.nafisdc.org/)**, Title VII of the Every Student Succeeds Act, is the nation's oldest K-12 Federal education program. The Federal government is exempt from paying taxes on its property and Congress created the Impact Aid Program to reimburse school districts for lost local tax revenue. It is an important source of funding for local schools that educate military children. Impact Aid funds do not cover the full cost of educating military students. Impact Aid funds help to ensure military children are provided a quality education. School district leaders decide how Impact Aid funds are spent, including instructional materials, staff, transportation, technology, facility needs, etc. supporting all students, wherever the needs are greatest.

While not directly associated with the Impact Aid form, the filling out of the form has many secondary benefits. School Liaisons and Command teams are able to identify where students attend school, which helps them provide additional resources and opportunities for grants, programs, and support. Additionally, the military can strengthen its recruitment and retention by focusing its efforts to support and partner with local military impacted school districts. To learn more about Federal Impact Aid please visit [www.nafisdc.org](https://www.nafisdc.org/).

### **[DoDEA Expanded Eligibility Pilot Program \(E2P2\) for the DoDEA Virtual High School](https://www.dodea.edu/dvs/e2p2.cfm)**

This Pilot Program provides the initial plan for expanding eligibility for dependents of members of the armed forces on active duty to register into the DoDEA Virtual High School (DVHS). Participants in the pilot program are in grades 9 – 12 for school year 2021-22, with priority given to school districts serving select rural installations in stateside locations. This program is also available to military children who are homeschooled. Registration is currently open for spring enrollment. For more information visit <https://www.dodea.edu/dvs/e2p2.cfm>.

# HEALTHCARE

**TRICARE Open Season** is the annual period when you can enroll in or change your health care coverage for the next year. In 2021, TRICARE Open Season begins Nov. 8 and ends Dec. 13. Any enrollment changes you make will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2022. Open season applies to anyone enrolled in or eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select. Visit <https://tricare.mil/Plans/Enroll/OpenSeason> for more information.

*If you're eligible to participate in TRICARE Open Season, you have three options:*

**Stay in your plan.** If you want to stay in your current TRICARE health plan, you do not have to re-enroll. You'll continue in your current health plan through 2022 or as long as you are eligible.

**Enroll in a plan.** If you are eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select but not enrolled, you can enroll in a plan now.

**Change plans.** If you're already enrolled in a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select, you can switch plans and switch between individual and family enrollment.

# HOUSING

**Housing Early Assistance Tool (HEAT)** creates an easy on-line experience to connect you, the Service Member, with your future destination and offers on-line venue to obtain housing assistance prior to a PCS transfer. HQ Air Force Housing has successfully implemented HEAT across the AF Enterprise so members can reach out to installations when preparing for transition. Installations are accessible through the HEAT tool across CONUS and most OCONUS installations. Members should use HEAT when preparing to transfer to their new assignment. Learn more at the [HOMES.mil](https://www.housing.af.mil/HOMES.mil) site at <https://www.housing.af.mil/>

**Temporary Basic Allowance for Housing Increases.** The COVID-19 pandemic has led to low availability and turnover of rental housing stock, which, in turn, has led to rental cost increases in many locations. As a result, the Department of Defense has temporarily authorized increases in the 2021 Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates for 56 Military Housing Areas (MHAs) across the U.S. Visit [www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/BAH\\_Temporary\\_Increase\\_Rates\\_Changes\\_Only.pdf](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/BAH_Temporary_Increase_Rates_Changes_Only.pdf) to view a list of the 56 MHAs.

To receive the temporary increase in BAH, members must certify their housing costs have increased due to COVID-19 impacts. These temporary increases are effective October 1, 2021 and expire December 31, 2021. Additionally, rate protection does not apply for the temporary rates, and some members may see their rates decrease from the temporary rate when the new BAH rates take effect January 1, 2022.

## **Privatized Housing Resident Advocates**

In the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Act, Congress created the Military Housing Bill of Rights. Out of this act a Resident Advocate position was created, serving as a connection between residents, leadership, and various housing agencies. According to [AFI32-6000](#), "the installation Privatized Housing Resident Advocate takes a proactive approach to ensure military members' and their families' concerns with privatized housing are addressed and elevated to the appropriate levels within the chain of command." The Housing Resident Advocate acts as the liaison between privatized housing residents, military housing authorities (including the installation Commander), and the Privatized Housing project owner, for issues pertaining to privatized housing and resident's rights and advocacy.

For more information on our Privatized Housing Resident Advocates please reach out to your local Military Housing Office. To see the AFI publication visit [https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af\\_a4/publication/afi32-6000/afi32-6000.pdf](https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a4/publication/afi32-6000/afi32-6000.pdf)

# SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

## Game Changing OPM Rule Change

The Office of Personnel Management has temporarily removed several geographic restrictions associated with special hiring authorities for military spouses through August 13, 2023.

The new guidance allows for any military spouse, regardless of location or relocation status to apply under the hiring authority for a federal job. Military spouses can also use this authority to be hired multiple times until the August 2023 deadline, rather than the one per relocation rule currently in place. Spouses of 100 percent disabled veterans and non-remarried widows or widowers of service members killed while on duty may still only use the authority once. After August 13, 2023, military spouses may apply for federal jobs under the authority that are not in the vicinity of their relocation if there are no agencies with available positions in their geographic area.

For more information visit <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/10/21/opm-rule-change-military-spouses-predicted-be-game-changer.html>

# SPOUSE STORIES

## **Showing Up**

Jenn Blazier, Air Force Spouse

Being an EFMP family for the past 20 years has presented a mix of challenges for my family on a variety of levels. Without the support of my fellow military spouses, I would have never channeled through it all. What made the hard times in my journey easier was the incredibly supportive friends that always had my back. Military spouses go through a lot of adjustments, and it doesn't necessarily get easier the more you do it.

The value in "showing up" isn't always immediately tangible to you, but it is measurable to someone in that moment. I know this to be true because I have been that someone on numerous occasions. My heart is full and my appreciation is HUGE when I say Thank you to EVERY spouse that decides to be there for someone else...*it matters.*

*Note: For the latest EFMP updates, check out the DAF EFMP Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/AirForceEFMP>*

## DOD ACTIVE-DUTY SPOUSE SURVEY

DoD is now offering all active-duty spouses the opportunity to provide feedback on the most pressing military life issues. The Active-Duty Spouse Survey is conducted every two years and analyzes key issues affecting military spouses, including spouse support, employment and stress. It is important for the DoD to hear from our spouses on those QoL challenges you all face. To complete the 2021 Active-Duty Spouse Survey, visit <https://dodsurveys.mil/>.

## RELATIONSHIP WELLNESS SUMMIT

The DOD will host an inaugural Relationship Wellness Summit Nov. 16-17, 2021. Designed to encourage military community members to strengthen existing relationships and build skills for new ones, this multiday virtual event will feature testimonials from military couples and experts on romantic and parent/child relationships.

The summit will provide participants with resources for strengthening the relationships they have with themselves, while fortifying connections and building interpersonal skills for the relationships they have with others. Participants will also be able to share their own experiences and stories. The event is open to all members of the military community — whether single, dating, married or parenting.

Participants can sign up by visiting [www.eventsquid.com/event.cfm?preview&event\\_id=14730](http://www.eventsquid.com/event.cfm?preview&event_id=14730).

For more information on the Relationship Wellness Summit visit <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2829239/registration-open-for-novembers-inaugural-relationship-wellness-summit/>.

## KEY DATES

<b>November</b>	Month of the Military Family
<b>11 November</b>	Veterans Day
<b>16-17 November</b>	Relationship Wellness Summit
<b>25 November</b>	Thanksgiving