



Combining personal, caregiving and everyday needs can be challenging and overwhelming if you or your family member — whether a child or an adult — becomes disabled. It's important you gather information about the condition and discuss issues with others involved in their case.

Being informed will help you make more knowledgeable health care decisions and improve understanding about any challenges your family might face.

Use this checklist as a solutions-focused tool to help set goals, establish priorities, and develop a family action plan. Space is provided to add notes and reminders about additional topics.

## HANDOUTS

- ✓ Spending Plan Worksheet
- ✓ Understanding Credit
- ✓ Military Consumer Protection
- ✓ Sources of Help for Military Consumers
- ✓ Major Purchases
- ✓ 5 Rules of Buying a House
- ✓ Education Benefits and Savings
- ✓ Paying Off Student Loans
- ✓ Military Retirement
- ✓ Thrift Savings Plan
- ✓ Estate Planning
- ✓ TRICARE Overview
- ✓ Survivor Benefits Overview



## BASIC FINANCE

- Update your personal spending plan using the "Spending Plan Worksheet." A good spending plan helps you manage your money, plan for your financial goals, and prepare for emergencies. Here are four steps financial experts suggest to get started.

### Step 1: Understand your current situation.

In this step, it's important to understand what's REALLY going on with your money today. Start tracking all your income and spending for the next 30 days. How you do the tracking is up to you, but what's important is you do it.

### Step 2: Know where your money should go.

Financial experts offer these general guidelines when budgeting your money:

- Try to save and/or invest 10% – 15% of pretax income.
- Strive to keep transportation expenses including car payments, insurance, gas and maintenance to 15% – 20% of pretax income.
- Limit housing expenses, including mortgage or rent payment, taxes, utilities, and maintenance to your Basic Allowance for Housing or 25% of pretax income.

### Step 3: Create a plan.

Build a plan for setting aside money and putting limits on how much you'll spend each month per category.

- Prioritize your financial goals.
- Establish an emergency fund. Financial experts suggest you should keep at least three to six months of living expenses in reserve. Add any additional monthly expenses for caregiving, travel to/from appointments, equipment, therapies, etc.



**Step 4: Make adjustments.**

Update your spending plan as your life changes. Monitor your plan until you have fully adjusted your finances to reflect your new situation.

- Check each of your three major credit reports for free at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). Soldiers can request free credit monitoring services from the nationwide credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Review the "Understanding Credit" handout for more information.
- Review your new tax situation and change federal and state withholding as needed via [mypay.dfas.mil](http://mypay.dfas.mil). members of the reserve components will need to do this with their employers as well.
- Keep receipts and records of your medical and home modification expenses for tax purposes. You might be able to claim these expenses on your tax return. See IRS Publication 502 for more information and speak to a tax specialist.

Additional notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**CONSUMER PROTECTIONS**

- Review the "Military Consumer Protection" handout for additional information on identity theft, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), and Military Lending Act (MLA).
- Protect yourself from misleading consumer practices and know basic procedures for handling a consumer complaint or dispute. Review the "Sources of Help for Military Consumers" handout.

Additional notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**MAJOR PURCHASES**

- Analyze your housing and transportation needs and be sure to prepare your finances for any major purchases. Review the handouts on "Major Purchases" and "5 Rules of Buying a House" for more information.
  - Do you need to modify your residence to accommodate for the disability such as wheelchair accessibility?
  - Will you need to make additional living arrangements such as long-term care facilities?
  - Do you need to modify or replace your vehicle to accommodate for the disability?
- Work with the base housing office for any housing needs related to your situation.
- Review the "Education Benefits and Savings" and "Paying off Student Loans" handouts to learn more about financing education, available benefits, obligations, and repayment options.

Under certain conditions, federal student loans may be discharged. Visit this website link for more information: <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/disability-discharge>.

Additional notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- Review your retirement savings goals. For more information on components of military retirement and the TSP, refer to the handouts entitled "Military Retirement" and "Thrift Savings Plan."
- Update beneficiaries of your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA), as appropriate.
- Evaluate your life insurance needs to ensure you have enough coverage, the right type of coverage, and correct beneficiaries. A simple method to calculate your life insurance needs is to use the acronym LIFE. Start by totaling all four categories listed below.

<b>L</b> liabilities	Debt you would like to pay off, like a mortgage, auto loan or credit cards(s)	\$
<b>I</b> ncome to be replaced	Multiply targeted annual income amount by the number of years to replace	\$
<b>F</b> uneral and final expenses	The amount you would like to set aside for final expenses	\$
<b>E</b> ducation and other goals	The amount you want to set aside to fund education and other goals for family, friends or charitable organizations	\$
	<b>Total life insurance needed</b>	<b>\$\$\$\$</b>

Then compare your life insurance needs with your current amount of coverage plus any assets and benefits available at death. If you find you need additional coverage, then consider supplementing Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) with a commercial life insurance policy. Review the policy for any restrictions, such as a war clause. Common life insurance policies include:

- Term Insurance — provides a stated amount of coverage over specific period of time and is designed to provide a large amount of coverage for the least cost.
- Permanent insurance — provides coverage designed to last for your entire life and can build cash value.

There are several permanent life insurance options offered such as universal life, whole life, variable life and even variable universal life insurance. These policies may have a surrender period and be subject to fees and penalties if canceled during this time.

If you are being separated due to disability, you are eligible to convert your SGLI coverage to VGLI (Veterans' Group Life Insurance). Coverage is not available for family members under VGLI. Consider obtaining private life insurance to meet family members' needs. Visit <https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/> for more information.

- Update the beneficiaries of your Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI), if appropriate.
- Update/enroll your family members in Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI), if there has been a change.
- Review/update your homeowners or renters property and liability insurance policies to ensure that they are adequate for your new circumstances.

- Review/update your auto insurance policies, if applicable.
- Review the "Estate Planning" handout and see your installation legal office (or other legal counsel) to establish or update estate planning documents such as wills, power of attorney, etc.
- Consider a testamentary/non-testamentary trust or ABLE account for your disabled spouse/child(ren)/parent. It may help protect income options for the disabled party should an inheritance disqualify them for state or government benefits they are enrolled in. Your installation legal office can assist you in determining if this is a viable option for your situation.
- Review/update home ownership and vehicle documents to ensure appropriate titling based on your state laws and estate planning needs.

Additional notes: \_\_\_\_\_



## COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND ENTITLEMENTS

- File a Veterans Administration (VA) disability claim if being separated from the military.
- Apply for disability income through the Social Security Administration (SSA). Spouses, children and disabled veterans may qualify for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). Visit [ssa.gov](http://ssa.gov) to locate an office near you.
- Verify/update family member(s) enrollment in TRICARE (Regular Army), TRICARE Reserve Select (members of the reserve components), or other health insurance plan. Review the handout, "TRICARE Overview" for more information. Visit [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) to learn more about your options.
- Arrange coordination of benefits with TRICARE or another insurance carrier if your spouse is employed and also has health insurance.
- Enroll family members into the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), for Regular Army and activated members of the reserve components only. Visit your medical treatment facility for information. Your Army Community Service Center(s) (ACS), EFMP Liaison can also assist you and your family with resources and information.
- Enroll family members in the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) Program if applicable. For eligibility, they must already be enrolled in the EFMP. This provision is available for Regular Army and activated members of the reserve components only.
- Enroll family members in any federal and state health care programs available, such as Medicare and Medicaid, if eligible. Visit your state's public health department office or website for more information.
- Locate your nearest VA medical clinics and hospitals if you are being separated due to disability. You will need to complete the application for health benefits (VA Form 10-10EZ). Visit this website for more information <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction>.
- Verify/update family member(s) enrollment in the TRICARE Dental Program. Monthly premiums and copays will apply. Visit [www.tricare.mil/Dental](http://www.tricare.mil/Dental) for more information.
- Review the "Survivor Benefits Overview" handout for more information on financial resources available to eligible dependents.

Additional notes: \_\_\_\_\_



## SAVING AND INVESTING

- Establish an emergency fund. Financial experts suggest you should keep at least three to six months of living expenses in reserve. Add any additional monthly expenses for caregiving, travel to/from appointments, equipment, therapies, etc.



## CARING FOR AGING PARENTS

- Consider housing and care options: in-home care, assisted living, nursing home or residing with a family member.
- Consider making your disabled parent a dependent if they come to live with you. For more information on that process, visit [www.dfas.mil/MilitaryMembers/SecondaryDependency/SDC/](http://www.dfas.mil/MilitaryMembers/SecondaryDependency/SDC/). Or speak with your legal office for more information on the process.
- Parents who are dependents can enroll in TRICARE Plus, where available, for a monthly fee.

Additional notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Counselor Printed Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Soldier Printed Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*                      *Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*                      *Date*