



A new child changes everything familiar in a household... including the household finances. This checklist, supplemented with information and referrals from the Army Community Service Center (ACS) staff, can help Soldiers and families organize their finances efficiently as they work through the many changes that come with a new birth or adoption.

HANDOUTS

- ✓ Estate Planning
- ✓ Spending Plan Worksheet
- ✓ Survivors Benefits Overview
- ✓ Major Purchases
- ✓ 5 Rules of Buying a House
- ✓ TRICARE Overview
- ✓ Paying Off Student Loans
- ✓ Military Consumer Protection
- ✓ Sources of Help for Military Consumers
- ✓ Free Credit Monitoring
- ✓ Military Retirement
- ✓ Education Benefits and Savings
- ✓ Dependent Care FSA for Uniformed Service Members

Use this checklist as a solution focused tool to help your Soldiers(s), in a one-on-one conversation, set goals, establish priorities, and develop a family action plan. Space is provided to add local resources and reminders about additional topics.

Counselor: Ask your Soldiers(s) about their households: Are they married or single parents? Is the Soldier active-duty or a member of the Reserve? Is the child or children a newborn, a stepchild, or an adoptee? If a stepchild or adoptee, what is the child or children's age(s)? Has the Soldier made child care arrangements and if not, what options are they considering? Answers to these questions can help you prioritize discussion topics, provide resources, and make referrals.



DOCUMENTS

- Obtain an official copy of your child's (or children's) birth or adoption certificate(s).

Counselor: Remind Soldier(s) that an official copy is often embossed or certified in some way. Court documents may be notarized. To replace a lost or misplaced birth certificate, parents should check with the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state where the child was born or see www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents for information on how to obtain a replacement.

Remind adoptive parents that they may qualify for partial reimbursement of adoption expenses. (Reference: <https://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/payentitlements/adoptionreimbursement.html>.)

- Add your new dependent(s) to your Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) account. Bring the birth certificate(s) and/or court documents to the nearest Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System/ Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification System (DEERS/RAPIDS) office.

Counselor: Tell Soldier(s) that this is something they must do in person. They may review the list of acceptable identification documents at www.cac.mil/Portals/53/Documents/List_of_Acceptable_Documents.pdf. They can find the nearest DEERS/RAPIDS office at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/appj/site>.

- Apply for a Social Security card for your child or children.

Counselor: Refer Soldier(s) to <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10023.pdf> for more information.



- Check your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) after DEERS.

Counselor: Remind Soldier(s) to verify the requested changes have been made and they are receiving all correct pay and allowances. Suggest they be especially careful about overpayments, as these will be recouped. Remind Soldier(s) to set aside money from an overpayment. Tell them if they do not know why they received it, they should probably save it until they find out.

- See your installation legal office (or other legal counsel) to establish or update estate planning documents. Review the “Estate Planning” handout for more information.

Counselor: If the Soldier(s) does not yet have an estate plan, provide the “Estate Planning” handout and suggest that he or she develop an estate plan with assistance from the base legal office (active duty) or civilian legal services (Reserve; legal services are sometimes available through civilian employers). To help active-duty Soldier(s) learn more about Army legal services, refer them to www.jagcnet.army.mil/legal. Suggest to Soldier(s) that they should seek legal assistance as soon as possible. They should not wait until right before temporary duty (TDY) travel or deployment, when appointments may be difficult to get.

Additional notes: _____



FINANCIAL PLANNING

- Use the “Spending Plan Worksheet” to revise your current spending plan and account for changes in income, expenses and/or debt.

Counselor: Inform Soldier(s) that a more detailed template is available through the ACS with features that can help them understand their financial condition and reduce excessive debt. If the baby has not yet been born, talk with your Soldier(s) about planning for maternity/paternity leave and the potential change to income. Also discuss the upfront and recurring costs that come with a new born or young child: crib, stroller, car seat, diapers, clothing, etc. For information about the Army’s parental leave policy see [https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/The%20Army%20Military%20Parental%20Leave%20Program%20\(MPLP\)](https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/The%20Army%20Military%20Parental%20Leave%20Program%20(MPLP)).

Remind them to be smart shoppers, looking for bargains on used and refurbished items as well as new ones. Suggest they consider the Army Emergency Relief (AER) Thrift Store for baby items and utilize resources from their installation. (Provide information about the schedule and registration procedure.)

- Consider increasing your emergency savings to cover three to six months of living expenses, if not presently funded at that level. This is especially important if you are the sole source of income for yourself and your dependents.

Counselor: An emergency fund can help to cover unexpected costs associated with a new child and help to keep the Soldier(s) from getting into debt. If the Soldier(s) needs to dip into the emergency fund, it’s important they budget to replenish this money as soon as possible.

- Enroll in financial assistance programs for which you may qualify.

Counselor: The federally funded Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, for example, can be especially helpful to new families and provides assistance even before the child is born. Refer Soldier(s) to: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/who-gets-wic-and-how-apply>. Introduce them to the New Parent Support Program on your installation for additional guidance (i.e. SNAP, WIC, BNA, FSSA, etc).

- Get credit reports for yourself, your spouse, and your children.

Counselor: Tell Soldier(s) that they may be dealing with many new creditors, which increases their exposure to billing errors and identity theft. Also remind them children are a favorite target of identity thieves, who sometimes commit fraud under a child's assumed identity for many years without being detected. Remind Soldier(s) that they can get a free copy of credit reports from the personal financial manager/counselor (PFM/C) at the ACS. The PFM/C can also help them interpret their reports and discuss what they need to do to improve their scores.

- Seek out and take advantage of financial workshops for parents.

Counselor: Promote workshops that are available through your ACS (share your Center's schedule with the Soldier(s), or similar providers in other services (e.g., Air Force Aid Society (AFAS), Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) on a joint base).

- Review the "Survivor Benefits Overview" handout for more information on financial resources available to eligible dependents.

- Plan ahead for any major purchases. Review the handouts on "Major Purchases" and "5 Rules for Buying a Home" for more information.

Counselor: Remind Soldier(s) to speak with financial counselors on their installation to build and review their spending plan before taking on any major purchases.



HOUSING

- If you need to change your residence, work with your ACS for tips on house hunting, renting, home-buying strategies, and relocation resources.

Counselor: Tell Soldier(s) that they should review leases/rental agreements to determine if they need to notify management of a new occupant. They should also review renter's insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage.

Remind Soldier(s) if they are renting a new residence, to be sure their lease contains a military clause.

Suggest to your Soldier(s) that the installation housing office can also be an important resource.



AUTOMOBILES

- If you need to replace your current vehicle, work with your ACS for tips on car buying and child safety restraints.

Counselor: Suggest to your Soldier(s) they review their spending plan before making a major purchase.



Health Insurance:

- Enroll new family member(s) in TRICARE (active duty), TRICARE Reserve Select (Reserve members) or other health insurance plan. Review the handout “TRICARE Overview” for more information. Visit www.tricare.mil to find out more about your options.

Counselor: Note that TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select require annual enrollment. Soldier(s) may also want to reassess their own TRICARE plan. Refer active-duty Soldier(s) to www.tricare.mil/Plans/Health-Plans. Refer Reserve Component Soldier(s) to www.tricare.mil/Plans/HealthPlans/TRS.

Remind Members of the Reserve Component that they must ensure continuous, regular payments to stay enrolled in TRICARE Reserve Select. Irregular drill pay can cause Soldier(s) and family members to be dropped until the next open enrollment period.

Remind Soldier(s) with civilian insurance plans to review available policies for features like deductibles, copays, prescription coverage, costs for in-network and out-of-network coverage, and other options that can affect the true cost of health care.

- If your spouse is not covered by other health insurance (OHI), contact TRICARE to discontinue coordination of benefits, so that TRICARE is the spouse’s primary insurance.
- Enroll new family member(s) in the TRICARE Dental Program. Monthly premiums and copays will apply. Visit www.tricare.mil/Dental for more information.

Counselor: Refer Soldier(s) to 1(844) 653-4061 or to www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/Dental/TDP to learn more. Members of the Reserve Component should examine available programs to determine the best insurance available for their situation.

Property Insurance:

- Review and update your homeowner’s or renter’s property and liability insurance policies to ensure they are adequate for your new circumstances.

Counselor: Soldier(s) exposure to property or liability losses might be higher with a child in the household than it was before. For example, new friends may bring their children to the Soldier’s home. Soldier(s) should be sure they have enough liability insurance to cover injuries to playmates occurring on the Soldier’s property. Suggest they consider purchasing an “umbrella” or excess liability policy in addition to homeowners or renters insurance.

Life Insurance:

- Review the beneficiaries of your Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI). Children are covered by Family SGLI at no cost.

Counselor: Inform Soldier(s) that children are automatically covered at \$10,000 as soon as they are registered in DEERS. Also inform Soldier(s) that the SGLI Online Enrollment System (SOES) allows service members with full-time SGLI coverage to make fast and easy changes to their life insurance coverage and beneficiary information at any time without completing a paper form or making a trip to their personnel office. To access SOES, they must sign into www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect and go to the “Benefits” tab, Life Insurance SOES-SGLI Online Enrollment System.

- 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.

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

If you determine your need for life insurance coverage exceeds what SGLI provides, there are many types of private life insurance policies, such as: term life, whole life, universal life, etc. Be sure to research and understand the costs, benefits, terms and conditions of any policy you consider purchasing.

Counselor: Tell Soldier(s) that the PFM/C at their ACS can help them determine the types and amount of life insurance they need to fill any coverage gaps.



CHILD CARE

- The Defense Department offers a dependent care flexible spending account to help families pay for dependent care expenses. This benefit is available to active component members and members of the Active Guard Reserve (AGR) on Title 10 orders, as well as DoD civilians. By using a DCFSA, you can allocate pretax dollars towards these expenses, effectively reducing out-of-pocket costs. Visit www.fsafeds.com/explore/usmdcfsa for more information.
- The Army's Child & Youth Services (CYS) offers quality and affordable programs to reduce the conflict between mission readiness and parental responsibility. Visit www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/cys for more information.



TAXES

- Review your new tax situation and change federal and state withholding as needed. Visit <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

Counselor: Remind Soldier(s) that for additional help, they may wish to access FREE software and support through the Military OneSource MilTax program. Visit <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/taxes/miltax-military-tax-services/>.



PLANNING FOR EDUCATION

- Now is the time to start planning and saving for your child's education. Ask your PFM/C at your ACS for more information on education savings plans.
- Review the "Paying Off Student Loans" handout.