



## **Army Family Readiness**

Taking care of our Soldiers, Families, and Civilians is an enduring priority for the Army. As a result of feedback received from the field, the Army has recently begun implementing changes to policies and implementing initiatives to improve quality of life and to better support our communities. The Secretary of the Army has launched a new webpage to help communicate these changes, which is located at: [www.army.mil/leaders/sa/questions](http://www.army.mil/leaders/sa/questions). The implemented changes and pending initiatives include:

- **Spouse Employment**: The Army developed a Child & Youth Service (CYS) Employee Assignment Tool (CEAT) to support transitioning military spouses working in CYS programs and puts them back to work more quickly. CEAT eliminates unnecessary background checks and better streamlines the notification and hiring processes for transferring spouses. The tool launched 1 August 18.
- **Child Care**: The Secretary of the Army signed two new Army Directives providing priority access to active duty Soldiers and eligible Reservists with the greatest child care needs. Additionally, the Army is actively working to reduce civilian hiring times, which will help fill vacancies in areas like child care where shortages have a substantial impact.
- **Home-Based Businesses**: The Secretary of the Army signed an Army Directive on Home-Based Businesses (HBB) on 17 December 18 that will streamline the HBB approval process. It also allows people residing in Army installation housing to work remotely out of their residence and/or operate online businesses.
- **Parental Leave Program**: The Secretary of the Army signed an Army Directive on Parental Leave Program on 22 January 19. The Program allows for six of the 12 weeks of maternity leave to be used at any time within the first year of a child's birth. Previously, leave was 12 consecutive weeks. It also provides the secondary caregiver 21 days of leave during the first year, replacing the 10 days that had to be used within 45 days of a child's birth.
- **Spouse Credentialing**: The Army is working on a policy that would allow most military spouses to get reimbursed for expenses tied to transferring occupational licenses or certifications.
- **Family Readiness Groups**: The Army leadership is finalizing an Army Directive on Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) that will expand the activities and events that FRGs can support, allows for on-post fundraising and eliminates unnecessary paperwork. It refocuses FRGs to serve as a community network for unit camaraderie and spousal awareness.
- **Army Housing**: The Army is analyzing data from the housing survey that was sent out to families on January 15th and will recommend further improvements to Army housing to address their feedback. We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment on our installations. Additionally, the Army is planning a significant investment across 2020-2024 to improve 100 percent of the Army-owned Family Housing inventory to the highest quality standards by the end of FY26.
- **Exceptional Family Member Program**: The Army is developing a policy that will give Soldiers and families a greater voice in the EFMP assignment process. They will be given pre-screened PCS location choices to research and choose from. Additionally, by the end of 2019, all families will complete the same standard DOD screening forms, rather than branch-specific forms, and families will be allowed to be screened at any Military Treatment Facility.
- **Total Army Sponsorship Program**: A new Army Directive will mandate that Senior Commanders ensure first term and junior enlisted Soldiers (our vulnerable population) have sponsors before PCS'ing to a new duty station.
- **Household Goods**: The Army will increase quality assurance inspections of Household Goods (HHG) carrier companies to hold them accountable. The Army will also provide online access to customer satisfaction scores of HHG carrier companies and establish a 24/7 hotline to address moving concerns.

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