



# Check your practice: Caring for Military Families in the Patient's Medical Home

## Best Advice Guide: Quick Reference

Military families experience a unique combination of circumstances that few other Canadians encounter. The families of the Canadian Armed Forces' Regular Force members usually accompany the active service member when moving, meaning the family leaves their community and social support networks, including health services. Military family members often find it difficult to secure a new family physician because of frequent moves that may cross provincial boundaries.

Without a regular family physician, military families lack continuity in care and often experience lengthy wait times for referrals, prescription refills, and other specialist care. Applying the principles of the Patient's Medical Home, family physicians can enhance their awareness in caring for military families within the context of a patient-centred care delivery model.



### Consider the following tips for your practice:



- **Promote military literacy:** Understanding the challenges military families face and the resources they can access can help foster welcoming environments and effectively deliver programs and services specifically tailored to military families



- **Facilitate intake for military families:**
  - Ensure staff have adequate time for intake history; military families may need more time than most to establish a case history
  - Use a new-patient questionnaire to capture information unique to military families
  - Ask whether they are a part of a military family when a patient calls to inquire about joining the practice
  - Ensure that there is a level of practice capacity to handle the transient nature of military families



- **Assist with record keeping and facilitate transitions between providers:** With military families often on the move, family physicians can support patients with accurate and timely record keeping and transfers. If patients are relocating, help them find a family doctor in their new location through the local **Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC)** if available.



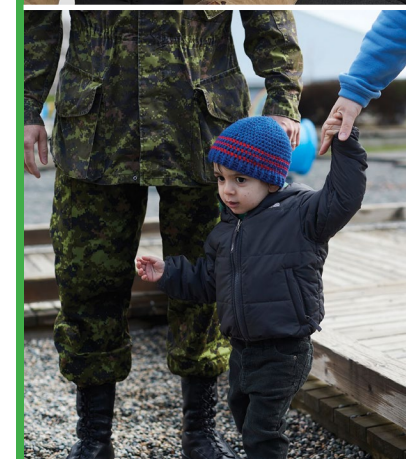
- **Provide appropriate and continuous care for each patient across age groups:** Provide services in a language that the families understand. Promote health literacy and military cultural competence within your care team. Include particular attention to the needs of children and youth in military families.



- **Provide mental health supports:** Stress associated with military service is one of the main contributors to mental illness among members of military families. Understand the stresses associated with the deployment cycle, and familiarize yourself with resources such as the **Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) Program**.



- **Establish community partnerships:** Community partnerships can support military families by enabling the strong formal and informal networks fundamental for promoting and sustaining health, well-being, and resilience.



For more information on clinical, community, and population-level strategies to manage care of military families in the **Patient's Medical Home**, and for details on resources available to you, please refer to the **Best Advice guide: Caring for Military Families in the Patient's Medical Home**.

<http://patientsmedicalhome.ca>

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