



EFMP

Exceptional Family Member Program

Henderson Hall Marine Corps Community Services

September 2025



Hello,

SEPTEMBER

Welcome to the September edition of the EFMP Newsletter – your source for news, resources, and inspiration for military families with exceptional needs across the DMV area.

As the air turns crisp and school buses begin rolling through our neighborhoods, we're here to help you transition smoothly into the fall season. September brings new beginnings, and whether you're navigating IEP meetings, discovering local support groups, or simply finding joy in the changing leaves, we're with you every step of the way.

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Back to School with EFMP—Making Transitions Smoother for Exceptional Families

As families across the DMV area prepare for another school year, those enrolled in EFMP often face unique challenges—from navigating IEP meetings to ensuring classroom accommodations are in place. This edition deep into the back-to-school experience for military families with exceptional needs, offering practical tips, expert insights, and personal stories that remind families they're not alone.

Please reach out to your Family Case Worker for additional support!

Special Needs Forum

Back to School, Special Education

Wednesday, September 10

10:30am - Noon

Guest Speakers

**EFMP Attorney
Lyla Bloom**

Will share valuable insights on legal rights, available resources, and effective strategies for families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Following her presentation, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a live Q&A session, during which Lyla will address questions and offer guidance tailored to participants' concerns.

Share your concerns affecting military families with special needs by Sept. 9, 2025 via email (ombefmp.eventregistration@usmc-mccs.org) or during the open Q&A session.



Please note: The EFMP Virtual Special Needs Forum — including Attorney Lyla Bloom's presentation and the subsequent Q&A session — will be recorded.

Please register for this event at:

ombefmp.eventregistration@usmc-mccs.org

upon registration a Teams link will be provided.

Meet your EFMP Attorney- Lyla Bloom

Lyla Bloom is the Marine Corps' Attorney for the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) National Capital Region (NCR). She earned her B.A. from Connecticut College and received her J.D. from William & Mary Law School. Lyla holds active law licenses in Virginia and New Jersey, and is pursuing licenses in Washington, D.C., and Maryland.

Prior to joining the EFMP team Lyla worked in William & Mary Law School's Parents Engaged in Learning Equality (PELE) Special Education Advocacy Clinic, where she assisted civilian and military families in special education disputes. She also clerked for the judges of the Norfolk Circuit Court in Norfolk, Virginia and for a federal district judge in the Southern District of Texas in Houston, Texas.

As an active-duty spouse herself, she understands the impact of the military lifestyle on the family unit. Lyla is thrilled and honored to be able to support service members and their families as we navigate the challenging special education landscape together.

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a consultation to discuss any special education concerns, please contact Lyla.g.bloom.civ@usmc.mil or call (571) 424-3562.



VIRGINIA GUARDIAN TRAINING

**Beginning July 1, 2025, all guardians
in Virginia must complete the
Virginia Guardian Training.**

**TO ACCESS THE TRAINING:
SCAN HERE
OR VISIT**



WWW.DARS.VIRGINIA.GOV/DCL/GUARDIANTRAINING.HTM

Virginia Guardian Training

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated: August 1, 2025

Q: Why is training required?

A: The Virginia General Assembly passed [legislation](#) in 2024 that requires the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to develop and implement training for guardians.

Q: Who is required to take the Virginia Guardian Training?

A: All guardians of incapacitated adults and any skilled professionals retained by a guardian to perform duties on behalf of the guardian must complete the training.

Q: What is a skilled professional?

A: A skilled professional is someone retained or hired by a guardian to perform guardianship duties on behalf of the guardian. For example, if a guardian hires a professional to conduct visits every 120 days on the guardian's behalf, the professional is considered a skilled professional for the purposes of the Virginia Guardian Training.

Q: I am the guardian for my sister, and she lives in a facility. Are the facility staff required to take the training?

A: No. Unless facility staff are performing guardian duties on behalf of a guardian, then professionals providing a service to the incapacitated adult are not considered skilled professionals for the purposes of the Virginia Guardian Training.

Q: I am the parent and guardian of my adult child. Do I need to complete the training?

A: Yes. Under the new legislation, all guardians must complete the training.

Q: I am a co-guardian. Do both guardians need to complete the training?

A: Yes. All guardians must complete the training.

Q: When do I need to complete the training?

A: Guardians appointed on or after July 1, 2025, must complete the training within 120 days after qualification. Guardians appointed on or before June 30, 2025, must complete the training no later than January 1, 2027. The same dates apply to skilled professionals.

Q: How long is the training?

A: While users work at their own pace, the training will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. DARS recommends completing the training in one sitting when possible as your progress may not be saved if you exit the training before completing it.

Q: How much does the training cost?

A: It is free for all users.

Virginia Guardian Training

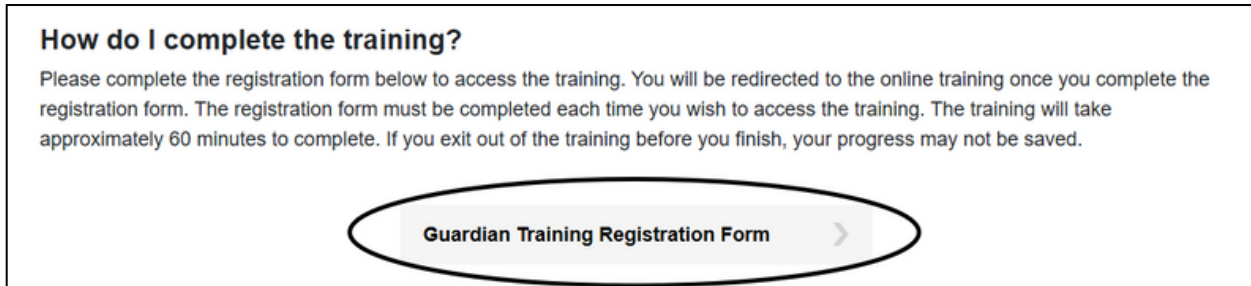
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Q: How do I access the training?

A: The training is available online and can be accessed at your convenience. Visit the Virginia Guardian Training webpage: <https://www.dars.virginia.gov/dcl/guardiantraining.htm> and complete the brief Guardian Training Registration Form. Once you submit the registration form, a link will appear that will take you to the training.

Screenshot from the Virginia Guardian Training webpage:



Q: Do I need to submit a copy of the certificate of completion anywhere?

A: No. DARS recommends you keep a copy for your records. The "Report of Guardian for an Incapacitated Person" form, often referred to as the "Annual Report," was updated and released on July 1, 2025. It can be found [here](#). The guardian will indicate their training status on the form when the next Annual Report is due.

Q: I am not a guardian or skilled professional, but I'd like to learn more about the role of guardians and about serving as a guardian. Can I complete the training?

A: Yes, the training is open and available to anyone.

Q: Are there additional resources available to help guardians in Virginia?

A: Yes! Please visit the Virginia Guardian Training [Resource page](#) for tools, guides, and links to other webpages related to guardianship.

Q: What if I have questions or need assistance with the Virginia Guardian Training?

A: Please contact Ellie Rest, Guardian Training Program Coordinator, by calling 757-634-2918 or emailing ellie.rest@dars.virginia.gov or guardianship@dars.virginia.gov.

UPCOMING EFMP EVENTS in the DMV

Hosted by EFMP Family Support Joint Base Andrews

GO APE! Treetop Adventure

Date & Time: Saturday, September 27, 2025 | 10:00–11:30 AM

Location: Springfield, VA

Details:

1-hour high ropes experience with 20+ obstacles and 2 ziplines
Inspires a love for the outdoors through engaging aerial adventure
Reasonable accommodations available upon request
Registration opening soon—check Facebook and booking site (pending funding)

Art w/Heart

Date & Time: Saturday, September 20, 2025 | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: JB Andrews M&FRC, 1191 Menoher Drive

Details:

Create a seasonal painting while learning about affirmations and emotional health
Adaptive for all abilities
Parent/guardian must be present
Free & open to all DoD families
Registration: jba-mfrc.timetap.com

Sensory Friendly Spooky Silent Disco & Resource Trunk or Treat

Date & Time: Saturday, October 18, 2025 | 4:00–7:00 PM

Location: Community Center, JBA

Details:

Dance with headphones in a sensory-friendly atmosphere
Enjoy quiet crafts and Trunk or Treat with community resource agencies
Open to EFMP families of all service branches
Registration required (EFMP section of booking site)
Updates on Facebook and booking site



Hosted by Family Support EFMP Fort Meade

EFMP Family Bowling Night Recreational Opportunity for Families Enrolled in EFMP

When: Third Friday of the month

Time: 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: The Lanes on Fort Meade, 2788 MacArthur Rd, Fort Meade, MD 20755

Registration required: register online at <https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/UPwbuaMYkX>, email usarmy.meade.usag.mbx.acs-efmp@army.mil, or to sign up for this event. This event is open to EFMP enrolled Families.



Virtual EFMP Knowledge Nugget

9 September , 1130-1200: Special Education Overview and Introduction to Early Intervention

Free to attend. Are you new to special education arena or in need of a refresher on the basics of special education? Join our bite-sized workshop on the need-to-know special education information.

23 September , 1130-1200: Managing Deployments

Free to attend. A bite-sized brief about how to prepare for deployment. Learn about the resources and supports available through your EFMP Family Support office.

Contact efmphh@usmc-mccs.org to register.



Virginia

Franconia Park – Chessie’s Big Backyard Inclusive Playground & Sprayground

Location: 6601 Telegraph Rd, Alexandria, VA 22310

Contact: (703) 922-9841

Website: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/chessies-big-backyard>

Ages: 2-12

Dates: Open daily in September 2025 Time: 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Chessie’s Big Backyard features a fully accessible playground with wide ramps, sensory panels, and padded surfaces. The adjacent “Our Special Harbor” sprayground is designed for children with sensory sensitivities, offering gentle water features and shaded areas. Admission is free. Ideal for families seeking outdoor sensory play.

ASCV Sensory-Friendly Festival & Duck Race

Location: Brown’s Island, Richmond, VA (2 hours from DC)

Contact: development@ascv.org

Website: <https://ascv.org/ascv-special-events>

Ages: All ages

Date: Saturday, September 6, 2025 Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Hosted by the Autism Society of Central Virginia, this free sensory-friendly festival features games, craft, quiet zones, and over 50 community partners offering inclusive activities. The highlight is a rubber duck race with prizes for top finishers. Sensory kits and trained volunteers are available throughout the event. Registration recommended.

Maryland

Maryland State Fair

Sensory Friendly Morning

Location: Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Contact: info@marylandstatefair.com

Website: <https://marylandstatefair.com/sensory-friendly-morning>

Ages: All ages

Date: Friday, September 5, 2025 Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

This special morning at the Maryland State Fair is designed for guests with sensory sensitivities. From 10 AM to noon, enjoy a calmer fair experience with no flashing lights or loud music, quiet zones, and hands-on activities like meeting farm animals. Inclusive VIP tours and sensory-friendly spaces are available throughout the fairgrounds. Admission is standard fair pricing; sensory accommodations are included.



Children's Theatre of Annapolis

Relaxed Performance: Tuck Everlasting the Musical

Location: 1661 Bay Head Road, Annapolis, MD 21409

Contact: (410) 757-2281; info@childrenstheatreofannapolis.org

Website: <https://childrenstheatreofannapolis.org>

Ages: Recommended for ages 6+

Date: Saturday, September 14, 2025 Time: 2:00 PM

This relaxed performance is adapted for children and families with sensory sensitivities. Sound levels are reduced, house lights remain dimmed, and there are no strobe effects. A chill-out space is available in the lobby, and ushers in sparkly hats are trained to assist. Guests are welcome to move, vocalize, or take breaks as needed. Tickets range from \$15–\$25.

CRAB Sailing

Adaptive Sailing Experience

Location: Sandy Point State Park, Annapolis, MD

Contact: (410) 266-5722; info@crabsailing.org

Website: <https://crabsailing.org>

Ages: 10+

Date: Saturday, September 28, 2025 Time: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

CRAB (Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating) offers adaptive sailing sessions for individuals with autism and other disabilities. Participants sail on specially equipped boats with trained volunteers and instructors. The experience promotes confidence, independence, and sensory exploration in a safe, supportive environment. All gear is provided. Registration is required and free of charge.

DC

National Children's Museum

Gabby's Dollhouse MEOWseum Discovery Day

Location: 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20004

Contact: (202) 844-2486; info@nationalchildrensmuseum.org

Website: <https://www.nationalchildrensmuseum.org>

Ages: 2–10

Date: Saturday, September 7, 2025 Time: 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM

In partnership with DreamWorks Animation, this sensory-considerate celebration features themed activities inspired by Gabby's Dollhouse. Guests can enjoy interactive storytimes, a DJ Catnip Baby Jam, a scavenger hunt, and meet-and-greet sessions with Gabby. While not explicitly labeled sensory-friendly, the museum offers low-stimulation zones and inclusive programming throughout the day. Registration for meet-and-greet is free with admission.



Dopamine Land Washington, D.C.

Multisensory Experience

Location: 5333 Wisconsin Ave NW, Washington, DC 20015

Contact: info@dopaminelandexperience.com

Website: <https://dopaminelandexperience.com/washington>

Ages: All ages (children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult)

Dates: Thursday–Sunday throughout September 2025 Time: Various time slots available

Dopamine Land is a multisensory museum designed to spark joy through interactive rooms that engage sight, sound, scent, and touch. While not exclusively sensory-friendly, the experience includes calming zones, a decompression room, and gentle lighting. Families can explore themed rooms like Infinity Bliss, Pillow Fight, and the Oxygen Bar. ADA accessible and stroller-friendly.



Blue Star Books

With the help of partners like Disney, Blue Star Families has given hundreds of thousands of books away to military kids across the world.



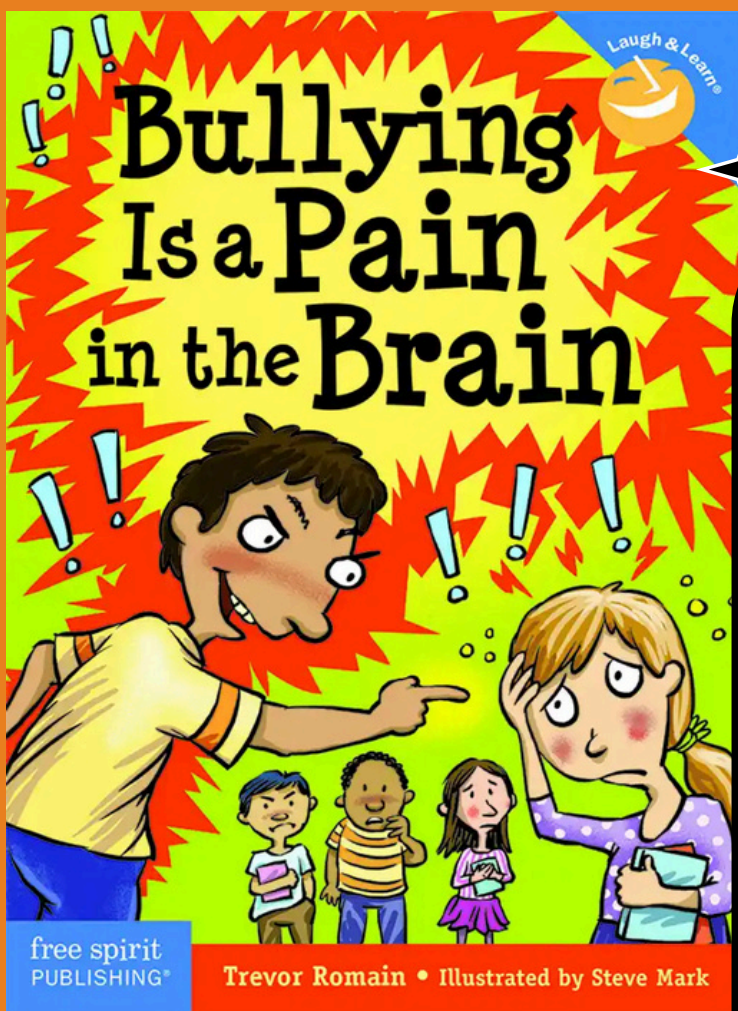
Blue Star Books – By Blue Star Families A powerful initiative that distributes free books to military children through base libraries, schools, and community events.

- Partners with organizations like Disney to host reading friendly events
- Offers book clubs for families and adults
- Celebrates literacy during Month of the Military Child and Read Across America Day

Helps bridge the gap between military life and childhood joy through storytelling

Learn more on Blue Star Families' website

<https://bluestarfam.org/family-life/blue-star-books/>



Bullies are a pain in the brain—and every child needs to know what to do when confronted by one. This book blends humor with serious, practical suggestions for coping with bullies. Trevor Romain reassures kids that they're not alone and it's not their fault if a bully decides to pick on them.

Age 8-13

To borrow this item or any of the other items in the loan locker, contact efmphh@usmc-mccs.org or call (703) 693-7195. You may schedule pick-up at Henderson Hall or at an upcoming EFMP site visit in your area

Sensory Friendly Activities across the NCR

LEGO Discovery Center Sensory-Friendly Mornings

\$26.99 per person. You may be eligible for one free ADA caregiver ticket. Enjoy the LEGO center from 1000-1100 with reduced lighting and music. This event is held the first Wednesday of every month. For all ages. [Link](#).

Accessible Adult Fans of LEGO Nights

Ages 18+ only. Enjoy the LEGO center from 1800-2000 with reduced lighting and music. This event is held the Wednesday of every month. For adults with special needs or sensory differences.

Sensory Sundays at the B & O Rail Museum

\$20/adult, \$12/child. AD is free. First Sundays in select months. Environmental accommodations (no music, low lighting, quiet areas, increased signage for areas with sound effects), sensory-friendly events (kids craft, train ride, and tour) and resources (sensory kits, social stories, and community table) will be available. [Link](#)

Morning at the Museum

Free. Dates and Smithsonian museum vary. Registration required. Sensory-friendly program for children, teens, and young adults who are neurodivergent and their families. Participants enter the museum early and explore at their own pace. [Link](#)

Alamo Drafthouse Cinema

Alamo for All program is active in both Northern VA and DC. All shows on Tuesday before 2:00 p.m. are sensory-friendly. Additional shows are available on weekends.

AMC Theatres

Second and fourth Saturdays for family-friendly movies and Wednesday evenings of every month offer sensory-friendly showings

Children's Museum of Virginia

Portsmouth, VA. Reduced number of visitors and adapted programs/exhibits.

Note: Second floor currently under construction. Held the second Sunday of every month. [Link](#).

Kennedy Center

Price varies. Lower lighting during entire performance, reduced sounds, and designated quiet area of theater. Guests are welcome to talk and move throughout performances. Website includes scripted stories to talk about an upcoming visit. [Link](#).


Regal Movies

My Way Matinee Program offers sensory-friendly showings as the first show on Saturdays on select Saturdays.

Philadelphia:

Sesame Place

Sesame Place Philadelphia is the first theme park to be designated as a Certified Autism Center. Sesame Place offers a low-sensory room, low-sensory parade viewing, and specially-trained staff.



What happens if an exceptional family member doesn't live with their sponsor?

To be eligible for EFMP, service members must have at least 51% custody of dependent family members in the case of separation or divorce. There are some circumstances a service member may live separately from family members enrolled in EFMP. In those cases, it's helpful to know who manages each case.

Deployed Service Member: EFMP case will remain with the original duty station family support office

Geographically Separation (AKA "Geo-batching"): EFMP case will follow the service member. For example, if the family lives in California but the service member is stationed at the Pentagon, the EFMP case will be managed by Henderson Hall EFMP

Continuation on Location (COL): Continuation on Location (CoL): If a family is approved for CoL to ensure continuity of care for a family member, the service member will PCS to the next duty station but receive BAH for the losing duty station where the family remains. The EFMP case will remain assigned the losing installation EFMP office.

In all cases, family members may attend events offered by any EFMP Family Support offices regardless of branch. Branch-specific case management and paperwork will be managed by assigned office



HH EFMP Services

- Family support/non-clinical case management
- Informal Assignment Screening
- EFMP Attorney Assistance
- Resources and Referrals
- Support at IEP/IFSP meetings
- Respite Care Reimbursement Program
- Eligibility and enrollment for Tricare ECHO
- Transition Assistance (PCS, EAS)
- Workshops and Training
- Lending Library
- Loan Locker
- Family Needs Assessment

DISCLAIMER:

The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Defense, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, gift suggestions, or organizations imply endorsement by the USMC.

Henderson Hall EFMP is committed to providing accessible, inclusive events and services. Please contact us with concerns or suggestions

efmphh@usmc-mccs.org

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