

Exception Family Members not a 'career killer,' Sailors encouraged to enroll

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NORFOLK, Va. -- Capt. Lowell D. Crow, a Navy veteran of 28 years, knows a lot about adversity.

He has served on seven different ships as everything from a gunner to chief engineer, and then as a commanding officer. He has been an instructor, flag secretary, a branch chief and, currently, the Commanding Officer of Naval Weapons Station Yorktown. The one thing he hasn't had to do is stress about meeting his family's medical needs, and he has been in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) for more than 20 years.

EFMP was established in 1987 and requires coordination of early intervention, special education and related services for children with disabilities who are attending, or eligible to attend Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS). In September 1988, the Department of the Navy EFMP evolved to include the identification and enrollment of all family members with special needs at overseas and continental United States (CONUS) locations.

Crow found out his wife needed special care when he was being screened for a change of homeport for the USS Germantown (LSD 42) in 1991.

"It was right after I was married," Crow said, explaining that the process for enrollment was more extravagant back then. "It was difficult. Back in 1991 it took a few weeks. We had to go through the hospital to get our cases worked, and the EFMP desk was in Washington, D.C. and detailers were in Millington, Tenn. It slowed the orders process down. All of that has now been streamlined - now it takes a few days."

Even with the process of enrollment being difficult, he wouldn't have had it any other way.

"It helped the detailers ensure I was detailed to jobs, or adjust my orders, to meet the requirements of my family," said Crow. "Your records are reviewed every three years and before orders are issued."

It is no wonder that he doesn't think that having a family member in EFMP will hold him back.

"I have been a commanding officer three times and I have made captain," said Crow.

In fact, he has some advice for Sailors who think that having an EFM will be a "career killer."

"I have never been denied a promotion or a set of orders because I am on EFM. I would encourage (Sailors) to enroll in the program," Crow explained. "It will not affect their ability to get the fulfilling and career jobs. It will, however, ensure your family is taken care of - both educationally and medically."

For more information on the Navy's EFMP, visit www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/efm/Pages/default.aspx or talk to your local Fleet and Family Support Center.