

MILITARY AND FAMILY LIFE COUNSELOR SCHOOL SUPPORT INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Military and Family Life Counselor program support for the Department of Defense Education Activity schools and local education agencies.

BACKGROUND: To augment existing military support services, DoD established the MFLC program to provide non-medical, short term, situational, problem-solving counseling services to address issues that occur across the military lifestyle and help service members and their families cope with the normal reactions to the stressful/adverse situations created by deployments and reintegration. The MFLC Program utilizes Child and Youth Behavioral MFLCs to support eligible faculty, staff, parents and children in a variety of settings including DoDEA and LEA schools.

ELIGIBILITY: Support is available to service members and the families of the active duty, National Guard and reserve regardless of activation status, Coast Guard and their families when activated for the Navy, and members of the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce and their families. Eligibility for CEW members and their families are detailed in DoDD 1404.10.

DISCUSSION:

- The MFLC contract is centrally managed in the Military Community Outreach Directorate, Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.
- MFLC(s) are master's or doctorate level, licensed and credentialed counselors who have undergone a criminal history background and fingerprint check.
- CYB-MFLCs must complete military culture training, branch/component training and duty-to-warn training, in addition to program-specific training, prior to working with participants.
- Counselors are mandated reporters of situations that include harm to self or others, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, violence against any person and any present or future illegal activity. Except for these situations, counseling will be private to encourage the widest level of participation. No counseling records are maintained. Additional details on CYB-MFLC reporting procedure can be found in the MFLC program information guide.
- Situations meeting the diagnostic criteria for common mental disorders found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fifth Edition will be referred to military medical mental health care providers, TRICARE or other providers of professional mental health care.
- CYB-MFLCs will coordinate all support with the school principal, her/his designee, faculty and parents.
- Utilization of this resource is voluntary. ***Parents who would like their child to have a one-on-one meeting with a CYB-MFLC must complete a consent form prior to the child receiving support.***
- CYB-MFLCs are authorized to provide consultation, training and educational presentations/workshops to program faculty, staff, parents and children.

- CYB-MFLCs may, with parental consent, provide support to children and adolescents up to age 18 on topics including but not limited to: problem solving, bullying, conflict resolution, self-esteem, coping with deployment and reunification, sibling/parental relationships, managing anger, time management, separation from parents and divorce. Additional examples of support and an example of the parental consent letter are provided with this information paper.
- **When meeting with children/youth, CYB-MFLC(s) remain within the line of sight of staff at all times.**
- CYB-MFLCs will coordinate their work schedule with their school POC. Hours will be 40 hours per week, but will remain flexible to include evening and weekend support as needed.
- Most circumstances will be able to be resolved by the CYB-MFLC and their designated school POC. If an issue is unable to be resolved by the CYB-MFLC and their school POC, the appropriate contractor program director and the Military Community Outreach office should be contacted to resolve the issue.

*Military Community Outreach makes ongoing efforts to enhance the MFLC program and to better meet the needs of service members and their families. Please contact Jena Moore at jena.m.moore.civ@mail.mil with questions, concerns and positive feedback you may have related to CYB-MFLC support of DoDEA and LEA schools.

Below are examples of appropriate activities school CYB-MFLCs have engaged in as part of their involvement in this program. This is not an exhaustive list by any means:

- Holding social-emotional consultations and groups in libraries.
- Interacting with children and parents during special events, field days, and award luncheons and sports events.
- Using coloring books and journals with younger children as a guided journey through the deployment cycle. Helping the children prepare for goodbyes, accepting life while the parent is gone, exploring how they will stay in touch and addressing their hopes and fears.
- Consulting with teachers, modeling appropriate responses regarding disruptive classroom behaviors and increasing student social skills.
- Visiting the cafeteria during lunch hours and interacting with the children on the playground.
- Interacting with children, youth and teachers at the front office or in other common areas around the school.
- Meeting and greeting parents at the front door before and after school.
- Doing weekly “acute deployment” groups, one for lower grades and another for upper grades, to supplement groups the counselors were already doing every other week.
- Conducting presentations for teachers and families in small and large groups with topics such as “Challenges of Changing Schools,” “Children and Moving,” “Communication in Teens” and “How Children Grieve.”
- Scheduling classroom introductions to describe the MFLC role in an age-appropriate context.
- Conducting classroom observations at the invitation of the teacher and providing behavior intervention suggestions to teachers.

- Supporting and working on conflict resolution skills with students who were fighting on/off campus.
- Providing support to families around deployment and reintegration.
- Addressing school behavior problems in one-to-one meetings. *CYB-MFLC must remain within line of sight of staff when engaging with children and youth.*
- Working one-on-one with children experiencing test anxiety or other school adjustment issues. *CYB-MFLC must remain within line of sight of staff when engaging in these meetings.*
- Supporting students who are experiencing academic challenges.

Below are examples of activities that are not appropriate for school CYB-MFLCs:

- CYB-MFLC are not authorized to supervise children/youth at any time, to include during lunch and/or playground time.
- CYB-MFLCs should not be counted towards child/adult ratios.
- CYB-MFLCs should not be written into individual education plans or participate in the special needs assessment process. However, CYB-MFLCs can be introduced as an additional resource for parents.
- CYB-MFLCs are not authorized to speak to the media/press without specific government approval.

Sample Template Letter

Subject: Parent Acknowledgement and Consent Letter for Child and Youth Behavioral Military and Family Life Counseling Services

Dear Parents,

We take this opportunity to inform you of a valuable resource provided by the Department of Defense. Due to the unique challenges military members face and the impact they have on families, the Office of Military Community and Family Policy provides Child and Youth Behavioral Military Family Life Counselors (CYB-MFLCs). CYB-MFLCs have advanced degrees (masters or doctoral-level) in the mental health field and specialized training in child and youth development. They support the needs of children and families by partnering with parents, faculty, counselors and staff to foster healthy growth and social skill development. The well-being and safety of your child is our top priority. To ensure a comprehensive continuum of care for your child, CYB-MFLCS may work in collaboration with school or program professionals.

CYB-MFLCs address challenging behaviors and strengthen the capacity of staff, families, programs and systems to meet the needs of military children and youth by:

- Observing, participating and engaging in classroom activities
- Developing strategies for supporting positive behavior, age-appropriate behavioral interventions to enhance coping and behavioral skills in the classrooms and at home
- Meeting one-on-one or in groups, providing evidence-based prevention and intervention services
- Implementing and modeling strategies for teacher and staff responses to children's behavior
- Conducting trainings for staff
- Facilitating groups to increase parents' understanding of social emotional development and positive behavior guidance strategies
- Linking families with community resources or military family programs
- Working with military children in settings such as field trips and other center, camp, or school sponsored activities.
- Conducting individual sessions to address the unique challenges of school-aged military children and youth

At no time will the CYB-MFLC meet individually with a child without being in line of sight of a teacher, staff, or a parent/guardian. CYB-MFLCs are mandated reporters and information provided to the CYB-MFLC will be kept confidential, except to meet legal obligations or to prevent harm to self or others. Legal obligations include requirements of law and DoD or military regulations. Harm to self or others includes suicidal thought or intent, a desire to harm oneself, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, violence against any person, and any present or future illegal activity. The CYB-MFLC is obligated to follow school and military child and youth programs' regulations for reporting safety concerns including problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth.

CYB-MFLCs encourage the participation of parents in decisions that affect their children and strive to empower parents with the knowledge and skills to act in their children's best interest. CYB-MFLCs are flexible and can schedule appointments, meetings and activities after hours and on weekends, if needed, with advance notice. They are available to meet with individuals and families who have interest in seeking consultation about their child or family.

Thank you for allowing us to provide support services to your child/children.

Acknowledgement of Understanding:

I understand the role of the CYB-MFLC and that they may work in collaboration with school or program professionals to ensure a comprehensive continuum of services. I also understand that the CYB-MFLCs are mandated reporters as outlined above.

Please select applicable boxes below:

I understand the above CYB-MFLC program description and authorize my child to participate in CYB-MFLC direct face-to-face non-medical counseling sessions. This authorization is valid for the duration of my child's enrollment and can be revoked at any time in writing.

I understand the above CYB-MFLC program description and authorize my child to participate and be supported *as a part of a formal group focused on different topic areas*. This authorization is valid for the duration of my child's enrollment and can be revoked at any time in writing.

Print Name of Child: _____

Print Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____