

REMARKS OF
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BEFORE THE
MARYLAND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
ON THE
FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM
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Distinguished Members of the Maryland House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Navy's mandate for Coordinated Community Response between the Family Advocacy Program and State and Local Child Protective Services Agencies. The mandate for coordination through development of local Memorandums of Understanding is directed through a series of Department of Defense Instructions and Manuals and is most recently codified through the Navy's Office of Chief of Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 1752.2C issued on 20 May 2020. In the OPNAVINST, each installation Family Advocacy Program is required to establish a Family Advocacy Committee, charged with coordination with outside partners to include CPS to ensure the following:

“1. Formal MOUs are established as appropriate with counterparts in the local civilian community to improve coordination on domestic and child abuse investigations, emergency removal of children from homes, fatalities, arrests, prosecutions, and orders of protection involving military personnel.

a. Military criminal investigation organizations and legal officials establish formal MOUs, or include existing MOUs with their counterparts in the local community, to set forth procedures for improving information sharing on domestic abuse investigations, arrests, and prosecutions involving military personnel.

b. MOUs between the installation and local civilian agencies and offices may be used to strengthen and formalize procedures for dealing with domestic abuse incidents that occur on or off the installation.

c. MOUs should be crafted to address issues specific to an installations and the communities surrounding it. There are, however, several issues that MOUs should address. A general statement of purpose of the MOU is essential. An explanation of jurisdictional issues that affect respective responsibilities on and off the installation will reduce conflicts. The MOUs should include procedures for exchanging information regarding domestic abuse incidents involving active duty Service members and their families.”

Additionally, the OPNAVINST 1752.2C mandates:

“2. Installation agencies have established MOUs which set forth the respective roles and functions of the installation and the appropriate Federal, State, local or foreign agencies or organizations (following Status of Forces Agreements). The MOUs provide:

a. Child welfare services, including foster care to ensure ongoing and active collaborative case management between the respective courts, CPS, foster care agencies, and Family Advocacy Program.

b. Medical examination and treatment

c. Mental health examination and treatment.

d. Domestic abuse victim advocacy.

e. Related social services, including State home visitation programs when appropriate.

f. Safety shelter.

In the Naval District Washington (NDW) region, there are five Fleet and Family Support Centers with Family Advocacy Programs that are located within the State of Maryland. Presently, four of the five programs have established MOUs with CPS. As the Regional Counseling Advocacy Program Supervisor who oversees the Family Advocacy Program for these installations, I am not aware of any issues in working with CPS; however, I do foresee the benefit of having formalized requirements that come from both the Department of the Navy and the State of Maryland for MOUs between the NDW installation FAPs and local CPS. Mutual mandates for formalized agreements will assist in bringing Family Advocacy Program and CPS to the table more frequently to ensure each party is clear on their roles, jurisdictions, procedures, and capacities that will ultimately benefit the safety of military children.