



Air Force Financial Readiness New Child Checklist Talking Points



A new child changes everything familiar in a household—including the household finances. This checklist, supplemented with information and referrals from Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) staff, can help Airmen and families organize their finances efficiently as they work through the many changes that come with a new birth or adoption.

Use this checklist as a solution-focused tool to help your counselee(s), in a one-on-one conversation, set goals, establish priorities, and develop a family action plan. Space is provided to add local resources and reminders about additional topics.

Ask your counselees about their households: Are they married or single parents? Is the Airman active-duty or a member of the Guard/Reserve? Is the child or children a newborn, a stepchild, or an adoptee? If a stepchild or adoptee, what is the child or children's age(s)? Have the counselees made child care arrangements and if not, what options are they considering? Answers to these questions can help you prioritize discussion topics, provide resources, and make referrals.



Documents

- ☐ Obtain an official copy of your child's (or children's) birth or adoption certificate(s).

Remind counselees that an official copy is often embossed or certified in some way. Court documents may be notarized. To replace a lost or misplaced birth certificate, parents should check with the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state where the child was born or see <https://www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents> for information on how to obtain a replacement.

Remind adoptive parents that they may qualify for partial reimbursement of adoption expenses. (Reference: <https://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/payentitlements/adoptionreimbursement.html>.)

- ☐ Add your new dependent(s) to your Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) account. Bring the birth certificate(s) and/or court documents to the nearest Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System/Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification System (DEERS/RAPIDS) office.

Tell counselees that this is something they must do in person. They may review the list of acceptable identification documents at http://www.cac.mil/Portals/53/Documents/List_of_Acceptable_Documents.pdf. They can find the nearest DEERS/RAPIDS office at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/appj/site>.

- ☐ Apply for a Social Security card for your child or children.

Refer counselees to <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10023.pdf> for more information.

- ☐ Check your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) after DEERS updates.

Remind counselees to verify that the requested changes have been made and that they are receiving the correct pay and allowances. Suggest that they be especially careful about overpayments, as these will be recouped. Remind counselees to set aside money from an overpayment. Tell them that if they do not know where money comes from, they should probably save it until they find out.

- ☐ See your base legal office (or other legal counsel) to establish or update estate planning documents.

If the counselee does not yet have an estate plan, provide the *Estate Planning* handout and suggest that he or she develop an estate plan with assistance from the base legal office (active duty) or civilian legal services (Guard/Reserve; legal services are sometimes available through civilian employers). To help active-duty counselees learn more about Air Force legal services, refer them to https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil/apps/aflass_public/bin/main.php. Suggest to counselees that they should seek legal assistance as soon as possible. They should not wait until right before temporary duty (TDY) travel or deployment, when appointments may be difficult to get.

Additional Notes: _____



Financial Planning

- ☐ Make a spending plan (budget) for your new household, or revise your current spending plan to account for revised or lost income and new expenses and/or debt.

Inform counselees that a simple *Spending Plan Worksheet* and *Spending Plan Checklist* are available from the A&FRC, as well as more detailed templates with features that can help them understand their financial condition and reduce excessive debt. If the baby has not yet been born, talk with your counselees about planning for maternity/paternity leave and the potential change to income. Also discuss the upfront and recurring costs that come with a new born or young child: crib, stroller, car seat, diapers, clothing, etc. For information about the Air Force's parental leave policy see <http://www.ang.af.mil/Media/Article-Display/Article/1546516/air-force-implements-new-parental-leave-policy/>.

Remind them to be smart shoppers, looking for bargains on used and refurbished items as well as new ones. Suggest they consider the Airman's Attic for baby items and utilize resources from the Bundles for Baby class on your base. (Provide information about the schedule and registration procedure.)

As time permits, review the *New Child Financial Planning Tips* handout. This resource includes suggestions for planning and managing expenses associated with a new child, from prenatal care through college tuition.

- ☐ Review or create your emergency reserve fund.

Strongly suggest that your counselee increase emergency savings to cover three to six months of income, if not presently funded to that level. This is especially important if he or she is the sole source of income for his or her dependents.

- ☐ Get credit reports for yourself, your spouse, and your children.

Tell counselees that they may be dealing with many new creditors, which increases their exposure to billing errors and identity theft. Also remind them that children are a favorite target of identity thieves, who sometimes commit fraud under a child's assumed identity for many years without being detected. Remind counselees that they can get a free copy of credit reports from the personal financial counselor/educator (PFC/E) at the A&FRC. The PFC/E can also help them interpret their reports and discuss what they need to do to improve their scores.

- ☐ Enroll in financial assistance programs for which you may qualify.

The federally funded Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, for example, can be especially helpful to new families. Refer counselees to: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/who-gets-wic-and-how-apply>. Introduce them to the New Parent Support Program on your base for additional guidance.

- ☐ Seek out and take advantage of financial workshops for parents.

Promote workshops that are available through your A&FRC (share your Center's schedule with the counselees), the Air Force Aid Society (AFAS), or similar providers in other services (e.g., Fleet and Family Support Center, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society) on a joint base.

Additional Notes: _____



Housing

- ☐ If you need to change your residence, work with your A&FRC for tips on house hunting, renting, home-buying strategies, and relocation resources.

Tell counselees that they should review leases/rental agreements to determine if they need to notify management of a new occupant. They should also review renter's insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage.

Remind counselees that if they are renting a new residence to be sure their lease contains a military clause.

Suggest to your counselees that your base housing office can also be an important resource.

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Automobiles

- ☐ If you need to replace your current vehicle, work with your A&FRC for tips on car buying and child safety restraints.

If your A&FRC has such contacts, tell counselees that the A&FRC may also be able to refer them to sources that can help them obtain a good infant car seat or safe booster seat for an older child.

Additional Notes: _____



Insurance

Health insurance

- ☐ Enroll your new family member(s) in TRICARE (active duty and certain Guard/Reserve members), TRICARE Reserve Select (certain Guard/Reserve members) or other health insurance plan. Visit www.tricare.mil to find out more about your options.

Note that TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select require annual enrollment. A military counselee may also want to reassess his or her own TRICARE plan.

Refer active-duty counselees to <https://www.tricare.mil/Plans/HealthPlans>. Refer Reserve Component counselees to <https://www.tricare.mil/Plans/HealthPlans/TRS>.

Remind Reserve counselees that they must ensure continuous, regular payments to stay enrolled in TRICARE Reserve Select. Irregular drill pay can cause service members and family members to be dropped until the next open enrollment period.

Remind counselees with civilian insurance plans to review available policies for features like deductibles, co-pays, prescription coverage, costs for in-network and out-of-network coverage, and other options that can affect the true cost of health care.

- ☐ If your spouse was employed and also has health insurance (OHI or "other health insurance"), but is no longer working, discontinue coordination of benefits with TRICARE so that TRICARE is the spouse's primary insurance.
- ☐ Enroll new family members in the TRICARE Dental Program. Monthly premiums and co-pays will apply. Visit www.tricare.mil/Dental for more information.

Refer counselees to 1-844-653-4061 or to <https://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/Dental/TDP>. Guard/Reserve members should examine available programs to determine the best insurance available for their situation.

Property insurance

- ☐ Review and update your homeowners or renters property and liability insurance policies to ensure they are adequate for your new circumstances.

Counselees' exposure to property or liability losses might be higher with a child in the household than it was before. For example, new friends may bring their children to the counselee's home. Counselees should be sure they have enough liability insurance to cover injuries to playmates occurring on the counselees' property. Suggest they consider purchasing an "umbrella" or excess liability policy in addition to homeowners or renters insurance.

Life insurance

- ☐ Review the beneficiaries of your Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI). (Children are covered by Family SGLI at no cost.)

Inform counselees that children are automatically covered at \$10,000 as soon as they are registered in DEERS. Also inform counselees that the SGLI Online Enrollment System (SOES) allows service members with full-time SGLI coverage to make fast and easy changes to their life insurance coverage and beneficiary information at any time without completing a paper form or making a trip to their personnel office. To access SOES, they must sign into <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/> and go to the "Benefits" tab, Life Insurance SOES-SGLI Online Enrollment System.

- ☐ Check the total amount of life insurance you have against your insurance needs.

The worksheet below is one way to determine your life insurance need.

$$\begin{array}{rcl} & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \text{All your short- and long-term debts (cars, house, etc.)} \\ + & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \text{An estimate of funeral expenses} \\ + & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \text{Current household spending for at least three years (or more, as desired)} \\ + & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \text{Estimated college expenses for all children} \\ - & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \text{Existing savings and investments} \\ - & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \text{Additional estimated income sources (Social Security, spouse income, etc.)} \\ & & \text{multiplied by number of years required} \\ = & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \textbf{Your estimated life insurance need} \end{array}$$

Tell counselees that the PFC/E at their A&FRC can help them determine the types and amounts of insurance they need to fill any coverage gaps.

Additional Notes: _____



Taxes

- ☐ Review your new tax situation and change federal and state withholding as needed via <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>.

Remind counselees that for additional help, they may wish to consult a PFC/E at the A&FRC or the on-base Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) office.

Additional Notes: _____

