

## Basic Military Terminology

The goal of this sheet is to provide you with some of the most common acronyms and terms you may come across when working with military children and their families. If you hear a term or acronym you do not know, it is okay to ask for clarification - it could turn out to be important! It might be helpful to remember that it is uncommon to know everything “military” - there are eight uniformed services and each is different.

Full Name	Acronym	Description
Active Duty	AD	Denotes a service member working full-time in the military, deployable at any time. Reserve and National Guard are generally not full-time and thus are not considered active duty.
Air Force Specialty Code	AFSC	Refers to the type/class of job for a service member in the Air Force.
Area of Responsibility	AOR	Represents a geographical area or functional mission that is the responsibility for a particular group or command.
Armed Forces	—	Operating under the DoD and DHS, includes the military (or “fighting”) forces of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard.
Basic Training	—	Military service begins with basic training. For enlisted Service members, basic training is referred to as boot camp, and for officers, it is called officer training. This is an important time to acculturate from a civilian to a military lifestyle. Basic training typically lasts for a period of 8 to 12 weeks.
Chain of Command	—	The hierarchy of control and decision-makers within the military, which honors the right of those higher in the chain of command to make orders and the duty of those below to follow the orders.
Commanding Officer	CO	The officer in command of a particular military unit, with ultimate authority of the unit to command as he/she sees fit

		as long as within the constraints of military law.
Dual Military	—	When both partners or spouses in a couple are Service members, it is considered a dual-military couple.
Duty Station (also referred to as Duty Assignment)	—	A military installation or post where a Service member is stationed.
Duty Assignment	DA	The assigned jobs, responsibilities, or duties associated with a particular duty (or job within the military).
Enlisted	E	Approximately 82% of service members are enlisted, meaning they join and sign a contract of enlistment to work in the military for a specified period of time. They are considered the “military workforce.” The more “stripes” (or higher the rank), the more responsibility they have.
Medical Evaluation Board	MEB	A military process to evaluate an individual's medical or behavioral health condition(s) to determine a Service member’s fitness for duty. Sometimes this term is shortened and referred to as a “Medboard.”
Military Occupational Specialty	MOS	Refers to the type/class of job for a service member in the Army or Marine Corps.
National Guard	—	A state entity “part-time military member,” serving one weekend/month and two weeks/year. Can be called to active duty by the federal government, as well as the state. The Army and Air Force have National Guards.
Non-Commissioned Officer	NCO	Enlisted who gain authority by promotion through the ranks. They are in charge of control of enlisted military personnel, but do not “command.”
Naval Enlisted Classification	NEC	Refers to the type/class of job for a service member in the Navy.
Orders	—	Instructions or details about the mandated work for the next duty assignment.
(Commissioned) Officer	O	Approximately 18% of service members are officers. They are commissioned by the President of the United States and function as leaders, organizers, strategists, and managers.

Officer Candidate School	OCS	The military school which trains civilians or enlisted the knowledge necessary to become commissioned officers.
Rank/Rate	—	A form of address denoted by the insignia on a uniform. In the Navy, rank is more commonly referred to as rate. Examples include Private, Captain, or General.
Reserve Component	—	A collection of two organizations, the Reserves and the National Guard, both of which work in a part-time capacity for the armed forces. Historically, they work one weekend/month and two weeks/year unless mobilized to a full-time capacity.
Reserves	—	Federal-level “part-time military member” with a commitment of one weekend/month and two weeks/year. Can be called to active duty by the federal government. All branches of the military have a reserve component with the exception of the Space Force (although, one is anticipated).
Senior Non-Commissioned Officer	SNCO	An NCO who serves as the primary link between enlisted and commissioned officers.
Service Member	SM	Any individual serving in the uniformed services.
Warrant Officer	—	Appointed to the rank of officer by warrant from the secretary of a service. They are higher rank than enlisted, but lower than commissioned officers. These individuals are usually specialty technicians. This rank is found within the Navy, Coast Guard, Army, and Marines.