

# What You Need to Know, Before Traveling to Walter Reed Army Medical Center to Visit Your Loved One

## NOTIFICATION

The process begins with notification. Families are notified of the injury to their Soldier in several ways. Some receive phone calls directly from hospitalized Soldiers, who then describe their injuries. Sometimes the medical staff that is present may speak and provide additional information for the Family. **“Official”** notification occurs when the **Department of the Army’s Casualty Affairs Office** calls to notify the Family. When this is the case, the Family is told the status of the Soldier’s condition, with the most recent assessment of the injuries. The phone number for DA Casualty is given, so that the family may call back with requests for updates or other information. **Service Members who do “official” notifications are not health care professionals and only relay medical information that has been sent to them. Hence, they cannot offer explanations of injuries or medical terms.**

The phone number to DA Casualty Affairs is **1-888-331-9369**.

DA Casualty will initiate phone calls to families, for updates on the movement of the Soldier or changes in their medical condition. Casualty personnel prepare a “Needs Assessment” checklist within hours of official notification, in order that they best coordinate travel for the Family. It takes an average of 4 to 5 days to move the Soldier from the battlefield to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, although it can take longer depending on the Soldier’s medical condition. In any case, there will be time between the Family’s notification, and their traveling to Walter Reed.

## Travel Preparation Considerations

### Documents to bring with you:

- Copies of the travel orders (TTOs) that the Army sends to you. (Keep one with you at all times)
- Military ID or government issued ID such as Driver’s License
- Power of Attorney (If your Soldier left you one)
- Living Will (If your Soldier has one, many do not)
- Immunization records for children in need of day care (**This is a prerequisite.**)
- Name and phone number of Point of Contact for the Soldier’s unit (The Department of Army Casualty Affairs office will be able to tell you what the unit is if you do not know)
- Valid Passport if overseas travel is involved
- Original prescription for any medications that you may need
- Health insurance information for traveling Family Members\*
- **This Handbook**

## **Travel Money:**

- Major Credit Card (maintain photocopy of front and back of card in case of loss)
- Cash or Traveler's Checks
- Checkbook and/or account number and bank routing number\*\*

\* For military Family Members: If staying out of the TRICARE region for longer than 30 days, consider changing your TRICARE area, which can be accomplished by either going to the TRICARE office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the hospital, Rm 3D (next to the hospital Chapel) or call then at phone number (202) 782-4393.

\*\*If staying at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for an extended period of time, consider opening an account at a local bank to avoid ATM charges

## **HOUSEHOLD CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Put a stop on your mail, or arrange for someone to pick it up and forward it to you
- Arrange for pet care
- Schedule bill payment
- Consider changing cell phone plan to include extra minutes or unlimited long distance
- Inform trusted friend or Family of travel plans and leave spare key to access and check on your house
- Stop newspaper delivery
- Empty all trash cans and refrigerator of perishable foods
- Set thermostat to cost saving level
- Arrange lawn care if necessary
- Coordinate time off from work\*
- Inform Rear Detachment Command of travel
- Ensure car is locked and windows rolled up

\* See section titled "Family Leave Act"

## **THINGS TO PACK:**

- Glasses/contacts/associated supplies
- Prescription medication for up to 30 days plus refill information
- Toiletries (if you forget something, check with either the American Red Cross located in the main hospital on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in Rm 3E01, or the Soldier Family Assistance Center (SFAC) in Rm 3G04.
- Comfortable clothing/sleepwear/shoes/socks/belt
- Light sweater or jacket for use in cooler parts of the hospital
- Cell phone/charger
- Seasonally appropriate outerwear/umbrella
- Book/journal
- Phone numbers of key people (Family, friends, creditors, employer, school, etc.)
- Comfort item (pillow, blanket, whatever provides you with special comfort)
- Hand sanitizer/disinfecting wipes

## **THINGS TO PACK FOR YOUR SOLDIER:**

Bring clothes for patient from home if possible. It is a good idea to pack a pair of sweat pants and shirt (can be cut for casts or appliances, if needed), underwear, shoes/sneakers, and jacket/hat if weather is cold. If you do not have clothes for your Soldier, ask the Red Cross at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for assistance. **Soldiers are allowed a \$200 one-time Army Emergency Relief (AER) health and comfort payment while on inpatient status.** See the Army Emergency Relief representative located in the SFAC. For additional clothing needs, ask an SFAC liaison about obtaining an AAFES voucher for use at the Post Exchange (PX).

## **PACKING FOR YOUR CHILD:**

- Clothing/shoes/outerwear
- Diapers/Wipes/Diaper Ointment
- Bottles/Sippy Cups/Formula
- Toys/Activities
- Comfort Item (favorite stuffed animal or blanket)
- ***Immunization Records (military dependents intending to use the Child care)***
- Medications (prescriptions as well), thermometer
- Toothbrush/paste/special bath items
- Car seat/Stroller

## **CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN NOT TRAVELING WITH PARENT:**

- Arrange transportation for children to/from school/activities
- Give Medical Power of Attorney to children's caregiver
- If moving child out of normal TRICARE Region, call TRICARE to change Region
- Give TRICARE Card (or medical insurance information) to caregiver with instructions on how to procure medical appointments for child
- Inform school and other activities about who will be acting as caregiver
- If living on post, procure gate pass for caregiver
- Coordinate financial support for children's necessities
- Make list of scheduled activities for caregiver
- Make list of allergies, medications, likes and dislikes, bedtimes, routines etc. for caregiver
- Leave caregiver with contact information for you and another support person in the area
- Consider who needs to know about this injury to better support your child during this stressful time (teacher, minister, scout leader, counselor, etc.)

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Q: Does anyone meet the OIF/OEF Soldiers when they arrive at Walter Reed Army Medical Center?**

A: All OIF/OEF Soldiers arriving via airevac will be met by a team of hospital staff, who take them to the Cast Clinic for Triage. When necessary, Soldiers will be admitted as hospital In-patients and brought to one of the wards to continue treatment. Soldiers with less severe injuries may be discharged to Out-patient status, with on-post quarters and instructions for follow-up care at Warrior Clinic Rm 1B17 (on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the main hospital) the next morning.

### **Q: Will someone meet the Family Members at the airport?**

A: Yes, all arriving Families will be met by an escort service consisting of a Department of Army Civilian and an Active Duty Soldier. Families are then transported to their place of lodging where they can leave their luggage. The escort will then bring them to Walter Reed's, Soldier Family Assistance Center, which is in the hospital. An SFAC liaison will then take the Family up to the Soldier's room.

### **Special Considerations for Children of Wounded Soldiers**

- Depending on your Soldier's medical status, children may not be allowed in certain rooms, such as in the case of Intensive Care patients.
- Child care is provided at no cost to Families, but is limited.
- Minor children are only covered by Travel Orders for a period of five days and then the cost is on the Family. Children will be exposed to a wide variety of traumatic injuries many of which are visible, though it may not be their Soldier who is affected. Professional assistance in this area is available.

The purpose of bringing the Family to the bedside is to provide familial comfort and support to the Soldier during the healing process. How this is done, rests ultimately with the Family.

This handbook includes information that should be helpful with whatever decisions are made with regard to children. You may wish to share some of the information with extended Family and friends whose children will interact with your Soldier and with your Family.