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CFAY

Weekly
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Volume 7, Issue 5

令和6年2月9日

Feb. 9, 2024

CFAY Wraps Up Keen Edge 2024



Photos by Taylor Ardito, CFAY Public Affairs



IN THIS
ISSUE:

Navigating the Overseas
Suitability Screening

MWR Events

Beyond the Gate

AROUND CFAY



Healthcare Abroad: Navigating the Overseas Suitability Screening

Story by Garrett Cole, CFAY Public Affairs

Service members' and their families' health and well-being are paramount during forward military deployments. At the forefront of this mission is the comprehensive Overseas Suitability Screening (OSS) process, a meticulous review that is pivotal in ensuring the readiness and safety of military personnel and their dependents for overseas assignments.

Lt. Geoffrey Horning of U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka explains the intricacies and necessity of overseas medical screening. "The overseas medical screening is a comprehensive review of your medical status and the care you receive, you and your dependents," he says. This thorough assessment ensures that military families' unique healthcare and educational needs are met, especially in locations with limited medical facilities.

The OSS process is more than just a procedural formality; it is a crucial step in safeguarding the health of those serving abroad. As Horning elaborates, "We do it primarily because it's per instruction and to ensure that we have adequate resources to care for you and your dependents when you arrive here on the ground. As we're well aware, we have a much more limited range of facilities, a limited number of providers, and a limited number of options if we can't care for you at the MTF (military treatment facility) here on base. So we want to ensure that when you get here, we can take care of your medical and educational needs to the standard your family expects."

The screening's stakes are significant. Dependent entry approval, a crucial aspect of the OSS, hinges on medical professionals' recommendations. After completing this screening, members and their families can only obtain command sponsorship OCONUS, impacting essential services like Tricare and SOFA status. "To avoid hyperbole, you should start the screening the day you get your orders," advises Horning, highlighting the process's urgency.

Addressing unique situations, Horning mentions provisions for service members in remote areas who rely on civilian

medical facilities. They can coordinate through their sponsor to receive the necessary paperwork and complete the screening process remotely, ensuring no one is left behind due to geographical constraints.

Additionally, the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), a mandatory program governed by DOD Instruction 1315.19, runs adjacent to the OSS process. "Being on EFMP does not preclude you from an overseas assignment. In fact, now, every person is screened individually, regardless of their category of EFMP," Horning adds, emphasizing inclusivity in the process.

The OSS, mandated to be completed within 30 days of receipt of orders, is critical in preventing hardships and ensuring a productive tour for service members and their families. Inadequate screenings can lead to overwhelming challenges, including decreased quality of life, early return of dependents, or tour curtailment. The process involves detailed medical, dental, and educational assessments, with particular attention given to family members with special needs.

For those embarking on this journey, it's crucial to begin the screening process immediately upon receipt of orders. In line with CDC recommendations, immunizations are required for enrollment in DODD schools. In cases of improper screening, an Overseas Screening Deficiency Report (OSDR) is submitted to relevant authorities, highlighting the importance of a meticulous and accurate screening process.

In conclusion, the Overseas Suitability Screening is a procedural necessity and a cornerstone of military preparedness and family well-being. It ensures that those serving abroad, along with their loved ones, are cared for and supported, reflecting the military's commitment to the holistic health of its personnel. As service members and their families navigate the complexities of overseas deployments, the OSS stands as a beacon, guiding them toward a secure and well-prepared tenure abroad.

For more information, please visit the following website.

- Naval Hospital Yokosuka – Overseas Suitability Screening Resources
- <https://yokosuka.tricare.mil/Patient-Resources/Readiness>