

# **Supporting Military Families with Children who have Special Needs Living in North Carolina Communities**

## **Program Description**

Military families living in communities across North Carolina with children who have special needs may not be able to access the broad array of formal and informal supports needed to ensure that their child's full potential is realized and the social and emotion needs of the family are addressed. This potential may be further challenged by the realities of military life that include relocation, separation of family members, and deployment. Whether living on post or in the community, many military families still find themselves feeling isolated and alone, both by the realities of their military status and by their child's special needs. Although military families may be eligible for services and resources from the military and civilian service systems, these systems are not well integrated and services may be fragmented. Service providers are often unaware of the broad range of resources available to military families through both civilian and military service systems and how to access them. A comprehensive network of both informal and formal resources helps ensure that military families living in communities across North Carolina with children who have developmental disabilities are able to access the supports they need support and strengthen child and family well-being.

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this the workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain the unique needs of military families with children who have developmental disabilities;
2. Identify and access formal and informal supports from both military and civilian service systems;
3. List family support that address the social and emotional needs of these families.

## **Target Audience**

Military and civilian service providers, clinicians, teachers, military families, community members.

## **Contact Hours**

1.5 to 3.0 hours

## **Agenda**

*Introductions*

*The Unique Needs of Military Families*

*Identifying and Accessing military-civilian supports and services*

*BREAK*

*Strategies to Support Military Families in North Carolina*

## **Faculty**

**Tamara Norris, MSSW, MPA** is Clinical Associate Professor and Director of the Family Support Program and the Family Support Network™ University Office at the UNC School of Social Work. Ms. Norris has over 25 years of experience developing innovative approaches to improving outcomes for families and children and promoting family support services for families with children who have special healthcare needs. Her passion is building the capacity of communities, organizations, and families to enable children who have disabilities to grow to live the lives they envision. She has administered family support initiatives with state and federal funding in the areas of family navigation; child maltreatment prevention; family support for military families; and emergency preparedness for individuals who have disabilities and their families. Ms. Norris has Master of Science in Social Work and Master of Public Administration degrees from Columbia University.

**Barbara Leach** is a Family Support Specialist and Special Projects Coordinator. She joined the Family Support Program at UNC, School of Social Work in 2005. She has over 30 years of experience as a child and family advocate for families with children who have mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and other special needs. In addition to providing information and referral for families and providers, Ms. Leach serves as a family advisor on multiple state and national committees that work collaboratively to transform systems so that they better meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families. She presents extensively on topics relating to supporting families, family advocacy, family engagement, family/provider partnership, cultural competence, and systems change. Ms. Leach is passionate about lifting the voices of diverse families and to promoting families as partners to co-create and develop services and systems that improve outcomes so that individuals with disabilities can live their best lives – healthy, independent, and self-determined.