

MAKING A RELATIVE A MILITARY DEPENDENT

Who can qualify as a military dependent?

Certain family members, such as a spouse or child, are automatically entitled to dependency status. Other family members such as parents and siblings require special review before they can be considered dependents. They must be registered and enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) as a family member or dependent. Typically, this requires an initial dependency determination by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). DFAS refers to these dependents as Secondary Dependents, and they include a parent (including a parent-in-law), step-parent, parent by adoption or a person who stood in loco parentis to the member at any time for a continuous period of at least five years before the member became age 21; a full time student 21-22 years of age; an incapacitated child over age 21; or a ward of a court.

How can I make my minor sister, nephew, cousin, or foster child a dependent?

To seek dependent status for a minor child for whom you have legal custody or guardianship, you must submit the child's birth certificate, DD Forms 137-7 and 1172, and the original or certified copies of the guardianship or other relevant court documents to DFAS.

How can I make my parent a dependent?

To seek dependent status for an adult family member, such as a father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, stepparent, or someone in loco parentis, DFAS will apply a financial test to determine whether the family member receives over half of his/her income from the Servicemember. You must submit the Servicemember's or spouse's birth certificate and proof of the relationship, DD Forms 137-3 and 1172 to show financial dependency, and proof of the family member's identity to DFAS. Any adult who becomes a dependent will not receive full medical benefits and will only have access to the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) emergency room and MTF pharmacy.

If I have other questions, what should I do?

DFAS has dedicated a section of their website to this topic, including a comprehensive guide on how to apply, at <http://www.dfas.mil/militarypay/secondarydependencyinformation.html>. After you review the DFAS Secondary Dependency Guide, if you have more questions you should make an appointment with a Legal Assistance attorney. Bring a copy of all your supporting documentation to your appointment.

HOW LEGAL ASSISTANCE CAN HELP

If you have any questions concerning these matters, please call the Fort Polk Legal Assistance Office at (337) 531-2580 for an appointment. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 0800 – 1130 and 1230 – 1630. We are located in Building 1454 on Alabama Avenue, next to the Showboat Theater.