

ACS social worker: experience, credentials, tirelessness

By Tom Conning

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After 22 years as an Army spouse, **Kelly Villalobos** has been through five long-term separations from her husband including four deployments, lived at nine duty stations, and moved 14 times.

"I've been married to the Army for 22 years," said Villalobos. Of those 22 years, she has spent 21 years working in the Army's Family Advocacy Program. Villalobos began her Family Advocacy Program career in Panama in 1992, after earning a master's degree in clinical social work from the University of Maryland in 1991. Panama was hectic, she said. "I was the only social worker for 10 thousand people," said Villalobos. "Everything that came in, in the middle of the night, I handled from sexual assault to child abuse to domestic violence to basic mental health issues."

Villalobos is uniquely qualified for her position at Carlisle Barracks, according to her former supervisor at Ft. Hood. "I have personally witnessed her interventions and advocacy on behalf of victims of domestic violence and for families with special needs – she is tireless and formidable," said **James Minto**, Supervisory Social Worker. "She has personal experience with exceptional needs, as well as extensive training and knowledge."

"The Carlisle Barracks community is most fortunate to have Kelly serve them."

At Carlisle Barracks, Villalobos serves the community as manager of these programs: Exceptional Family Member Program, Family Advocacy, Sexual Assault Response Coordinating and Victim Advocacy.



Kelly Villalobos is the ACS manager for Family Advocacy, Sexual Assault Response Coordinating, the Exceptional Family Member Program and Victim Advocacy on Carlisle Barracks. She has spent 21 years dealing with military family advocacy issues.

Villalobos brings to the ACS job considerable education and experience in military family advocacy and personal knowledge of Army living. "To understand why it's stressful is one thing, but to understand what the stressors are is another thing," Villalobos

said. "I have a genuine empathy for people who are in the military because I know what it's like to have to pack and get used to just being in one place and having to pick up and move again."

Prior to moves, Villalobos recommends that Exceptional Family Member Program families contact her so she can help ease the transition to the new location.

Villalobos knows what it's like to use the resources that she recommends for military families. Her family uses the Exceptional Family Member Program and she understands how to maneuver the system and find resources, she said.

"Ms. Villalobos relates especially well with spouses of Soldiers ... I enjoyed her sense of humor, appreciated her work ethic, and respected her tremendous desire to serve and grow as a clinical social worker," said Minto.

As the Exceptional Family Member Program manager, she provides resources to help active-duty personnel with children and sponsored relatives who have specialized needs or disabilities, including ADD, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, autism, cerebral palsy and others, find the best public education and housing options available. Support extends to active-duty and active-reserve personnel.

As a victim advocate, Villalobos supports victims of spousal abuse, with crisis intervention, assistance in securing medical treatment for injuries, information on legal rights and proceedings, referral to military and civilian shelters and other resources. The victim advocate will advise about options for restrictive and unrestrictive reporting. Support extends to active and active-reserve personnel, DOD civilians and their spouses.

As a family advocate, she works to prevent and intervene in cases of family distress and to promote healthy family life. Support extends to active-duty and active-reserve personnel.

As the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, Villalobos advises victims of their options for restricted and unrestricted reporting of sexual assault. Additionally, the coordinator advises leaders, and guides Soldiers through mandatory training in their roles and responsibilities when they are informed of a sexual assault.

Anyone interested in these programs should contact Kelly Villalobos at 717-245-3775.

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