

NASA's ASTRONAUT FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICE

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During the NASA-Mir program of the 1990s and due to the challenges inherent in the International Space Station training schedule and operations tempo, it was clear that a special focus on supporting families was a key to overall mission success for the ISS crewmembers pre-, in- and post-flight. To that end, in January 2001 the first Family Services Coordinator was hired by the Behavioral Health and Performance group at NASA JSC and matrixed from Medical Operations into the Astronaut Office's organization. The initial roles and responsibilities were driven by critical needs, including facilitating family communication during training deployments, providing mission-specific and other relevant trainings for spouses, serving as liaison for families with NASA organizations such as Medical Operations, NASA management and the Astronaut Office, and providing assistance to ensure success of an Astronaut Spouses Group. The role of the Family Support Office (FSO) has modified as the ISS Program matured and the needs of families changed. The FSO is currently an integral part of the Astronaut Office's ISS Operations Branch. It still serves the critical function of providing information to families, as well as being the primary contact for US and international partner families with resources at JSC. Since crews launch and return on Russian vehicles, the FSO has the added responsibility for coordinating with Flight Crew Operations, the families, and their guests for Soyuz launches, landings, and Direct Return to Houston post-flight.

This presentation will provide a summary of the family support services provided for astronauts, and how they have changed with the Program and families the FSO serves. Considerations for future FSO services will be discussed briefly as NASA proposes one year missions and beyond ISS missions.

Learning Objective:

- 1) Obtain an understanding of the reasons a Family Support Office was important for NASA.
- 2) Become familiar with the services provided for astronauts and their families and how they changed with the Program and family needs.