



Awareness to Action

KANSAS



POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Military kids face significant emotional threats when a parent is deployed, and upon being reunited. The resulting feelings can cause extreme or out-of-character behavior.

Primary caregivers, daycare providers, teachers, neighbors, and other community members should anticipate these changes, and respond in a positive way — or seek assistance. The actions below will provide kids with reassurance and stability during an otherwise tumultuous time.

Infants may become apathetic, refuse to eat, and lose weight if their primary caregiver is depressed.

- Hold and nurture the child
- Intervene early if an infant displays these symptoms
- Encourage parents to schedule regular pediatrician check-ups
- Tell military parents about support services through Army Community Services
- If a parent is really struggling, suggest counseling

Toddlers typically respond to the primary caregiver's moods and reactions. May throw tantrums, become sullen, or have difficulty sleeping.

- Offer extra attention
- Give more hugs and hand-holding
- Encourage parents to share struggles with other military parents
- Volunteer to babysit

Preschoolers may regress in skills such as potty training, talking, and sleeping alone. May become clingy, irritable, aggressive, and concerned about people leaving.

- Offer extra attention
- Give more hugs and hand-holding
- Maintain routines at school and day care
- Give simple, brief answers about deployment
- Volunteer to babysit

School-Age Children may complain, act aggressively, or misbehave. Problems may include disturbed sleep and disinterest in eating, school or friends.

- Let them talk about their feelings
- Give more physical attention
- Maintain routines at school and activities

Teenagers may be irritable, rebellious or prone to fighting. Problems include disinterest in school, friends and activities, plus an increased risk for promiscuity, and alcohol and drug use.

- Be patient
- Be available to talk
- Encourage normal social activities
- Commend them for maintaining their school performance

Ways to Help All Military Kids

- Educate yourself about how deployment affects military families
- Allow class time for communication with deployed loved ones
- Maintain routines and rules
- Be clear about what you expect
- Give honest answers that are age-appropriate
- Allow them to express their feelings
- Show constructive ways to deal with emotions

If children struggle to partially regain their normal routine, or if they have serious problems over several weeks, an appointment with a doctor or mental health professional is recommended.

Adapted from "The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective," by LTC Simon H. Pincus, USA, MC, COL Robert House, USAR, MC, LTC Joseph Christenson, USA, MC, and CAPT Lawrence E. Adler, MC, USNR-R. www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/emotionalcycle.htm



AWARENESS TO ACTION

What You Can Do

Community groups can create scholarships for military kids to join teams or activities, invite them to join a youth club, or sponsor a mother's and father's day out.

Families and individuals can offer to tutor military kids, invite them to join in recreational activities, or volunteer to babysit.

Getting Others Involved

Once you've become active, take it one step further by spreading the word. Inspire teachers, businesspeople and other civic leaders to take action.

For example, a teacher can allow class time for military kids to communicate with deployed loved ones. And a business can supply OMK with materials for Hero Packs – backpacks that provide kids with fun activities and ways to stay connected with deployed parents.



Partners

- Operation: Military Kids – www.OperationMilitaryKids.org
- Army Child & Youth Services – www.ArmyMWR.com
- Army Reserve Family Programs – www.ARFP.org
- National Guard Child and Youth Program – www.GuardFamily.org/Youth
- Military OneSource – www.MilitaryOneSource.com
- Military Child Education Coalition – www.MilitaryChild.org
- National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies – www.NACCRRA.org
- Zero to Three – www.ZEROTOTHREE.org

Contact

Ann Domsch
 Coordinator
 Kansas Operation: Military Kids
 785.532.2276
adomsch@k-state.edu
www.KansasOMK.org

Elaine Johannes, Ph.D.
 Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist
 Kansas Operation: Military Kids
 785.532.7720
ejohanne@k-state.edu
www.KansasOMK.org



Operation: Military Kids is a program of the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project, a collaboration of the U.S. Army Child and Youth Services and National 4-H Headquarters, U.S. Department of Agriculture through Kansas State University under special project number 2003-48558-01716.

