



## Help Military Kids in Your Practice

Being a military kid has its share of challenges. The children you see may be struggling with a parent's deployment or a recent move. They may be conflicted between pride in their military family, and anger, sadness, or anxiety about the sacrifices required of them.

Yet, there are benefits to growing up in a military family. Military kids are part of a ready-made community of people with shared values and experiences. And rising to the challenges of military family life can help children become resilient, self-assured, and mature.

Here are some common stressors on military children and ideas for helping the ones you work with.

### **Moving**

Military families can relocate several times. Frequent moves expose children to many different people, new ways of life, and different cultures. But they also can disrupt routines and cause stress for the whole family. Here are a few suggestions to pass along to kids who are facing a move or adjusting to a recent one. Encourage parents to support them as they:

- Go online to learn about the new community.
- Get involved with the move. Help pack and with setting up the new home.
- Decorate their new room.
- Check out their new installation's child and youth programs. Families who don't live on or near an installation can visit the local YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, or community center.

- Stay in touch with old friends but don't be shy about making new ones.

### **Adjusting to a new school**

Military children typically change schools often. Challenges may include:

- Being behind or ahead of peers because of different academic requirements.
- Trouble fitting in to a new school culture.
- Delays in receiving necessary services.
- Missing sports tryouts and deadlines to register for activities.

Encourage children in your practice to:

- Visit the school ahead of time, if possible. Learn their way around the building and meet their teachers. They can also visit the school's website and Facebook page.
- Enroll in extracurricular activities that match their interests.
- Take advantage of the many school resources available as part of the [Morale, Welfare and Recreation Digital Library](#).

Encourage their parents to:

- Connect with the school liaison. The liaison at a military installation serves as a clearinghouse for information about schools on and near bases. A Military OneSource education consultant can also help and is available by calling 800-342-9647.
- Become familiar with the [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#). This agreement addresses enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility and graduation.

### **Deployment**

While often difficult for families, a parent's deployment offers children opportunities to be independent and responsible as they pitch in to keep the household functioning smoothly. Children whose parents are deployed may:

- Be anxious about their parent's safety.
- Feel unloved, believing that the deployed parent values military over family.
- Feel burdened by extra chores and responsibilities due to the parent's absence.
- Be exposed to stress and worry from the parent at home.

The following tips for children and their parents will ease the strain of deployments.

Children can:

- Ask their parents questions about the deployment. Parents should explain in an age-appropriate manner what deployment is and why their job takes them away.
- Be honest with their parents about how they feel.
- Reach out to others who have a deployed family member so they don't feel like they're the only one. The [Military Kids Connect](#) website is a great place to start.



Parents can help by:

- Planning how they'll keep in touch during the deployment. Find out what communication methods will be available, such as text, social media, video chatting, phone calls and old-fashioned snail mail. Be aware that sometimes the deployed parent may not be able to be in touch as much as desired.
- Stick to the usual schedule at home as much as possible. The parent at home should maintain household rules with the support from the deployed parent.
- Let teachers and other school officials know about the deployment so they can offer extra support if needed.

Encourage the military families you see to take advantage of Military OneSource services by calling 800-342-9647.

If you are interested in providing non-medical counseling to military service members and their families through Military OneSource, please email us at [mosproviderrelations@militaryonesource.com](mailto:mosproviderrelations@militaryonesource.com).