



# Daddy's Boots/Mommy's Boots- Challenges for Young Children who Face the Deployment of a Parent



Alliance Webinar  
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## Information to be covered

- Data on current Deployment of Service Members
- Research on impact to families and children
- Strategies for helping children
- Resources available to assist families and providers

## Who is in the Military?

- DOD Demographics show:
  - 1.4 million active duty military
  - 1.1 million reserve and national guard personnel
  - 800,000 Department of Defense civilians



## Who is the Military?

- 54.6% of Active Duty personnel are married
  - 53.8% of Reserve and National Guard are married
- 51.2% of spouses of active duty are less than 30 years old
  - 26.8% of reserve/national Guard spouses are less than 30
- 5.4% of active duty members are single parents
  - 8.2% are reserve/national guard
- ½ of military were between the 20-25 when their first child was born
- Total family members of active duty and reserve/National Guard – 3,006,793

## What about the Families?

- 43% of Military Forces have children
- 39.8% of Dependent Children of active duty personnel are under the age of 5
- 32% are between the ages 6 and 11
- Only 4% are 19 years or older



## Special needs families



- 14.6% of the military Population has an Exceptional Family Member (EFM)
  - 15.6%, Army
  - 12.4% Marines,
  - 10.5% Navy and
  - 9.8% Air Force
    - › (U.S Armed Forces Demographic information – EFMP 2006)
- Students receiving special education/early intervention services 9-11% of school population (DODEA)
- DODEA serves students in 18 countries & 17 school systems within the USA

## The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)



- EFMP has mandatory enrollment of family members with disabilities
- Assistance may come through EFMP, Family Service Center, Family Advocacy Programs
- Level of service and support varies among branches of service
  - only consistent is the program codes used when service member receives orders
  - there is recognition of potential service needs.
- Having a family member enrolled in the EFM program DOES NOT eliminate:
  - Service member going on deployments or overseas assignments
  - Service member being transferred to locations that do not have services for the EFM (un-accompanied tours)

## Deployments of Parents

- 51% of personnel who have been deployed two or more times have at least 1 dependent child
- 14.6% of personnel deployed are women
- In 2005, number of Parents lost to the War 674 leaving 1,491 children to mourn



## Military Research Studies on impact to children



- Studies have been occurring for past six years
- Most recent study done through joint agreement encompassing three age groups and locations

## Where has the research come from?

- Department of Veterans Affairs
- U.S. Army War College
- DoD Medical Services
- Contractual studies through Purdue and University of North Carolina
- Current study jointly tasked encompassing
  - Walter Reed Army Medical Center,
  - Beaumont Army Medical Center,
  - Camp LeJeune, and
  - Madigan Army Medical Center



## Babies in the 1st year of age

- Reactions vary based on comfort of the caregiver
- Respond to changes in schedule, environment, and availability of care giver
- Disruptions can cause difficulties, but no finding that these are higher in infants of deployed service members



## Toddlers 1-3 years of Age

- Clingy
- Cries easily
- Develops temper tantrums
- Disturbances in sleep patterns
- Regression in skills (i.e. potty training)
- Findings show that behaviors are higher in toddlers of deployed service members when spouse is also under stress



## Pre-schoolers ages 3-6



- Greater awareness of absence of parent
- Regressive behaviors are prevalent
- Irritability
- Depression – personalize reason for parent leaving
- Separation anxiety
- Studies show almost twice as likely to demonstrate these issues when parent is deployed

## School Age children (6-12)

- Sleep issues
- Irritability
- Whininess
- Unfounded worries
- Internalizing fears
- Some disruptive behaviors, but not usually aggressive
- Psychosocial morbidity of children of deployed service members is twice the national average



## Interesting Finding for school age children

- When non-deployed parent is working outside the home the morbidity rate drops to only slightly higher than the national norms.
- Reasons are not clear but could be associated with involvement with other care givers in child's life (more study is being done on this)



## Teenagers (13-18)



- Irritability
- Rebelliousness
- Sullen
- Shuts down communication
- Anxiety demonstrated in behaviorally destructive ways
- Markedly higher psychosocial morbidity over national norms (between 1.5 and 2x higher)

## Realities

- Children face a loss of stability
  - Deployments interrupt the normal order of routine life (especially difficult for children of guard and reserve)
- Loss of Control
  - Deployments represent events over which the child has no control
- Concerns/Fears –
  - Immediate reactions can include fear for their own safety and well-being (What happens if Dad/Mom doesn't come home?)

## Strategies

- Encourage talking about fears
- Be honest
- School personnel need to be aware of possible changes in academic, eating, or playing patterns and report changes
- Maintain regular schedules as much as possible
- Encourage non-deployed parent to take care of her or himself
- Encourage child to express him/herself through art, music, play



## What about Respite?

- Respite Care is available in varying degrees for Army, Marines, and Navy
- Currently there are no Respite care programs for the Air Force or Reserves.
- Families must meet the qualifying criteria
- Only for Active Duty personnel
- Not for activated National Guard and Reserves

## Resources

- "Sesame Street's " Talk, Listen, Connect Helping Families During Military Deployment Videos
  - <http://archive.sesameworkshop.org/tlc/>
- Military OneSource for Family and spouse counseling
- Family Readiness Groups for support
- Chaplains
- CD's developed to help families
- Deployment kits developed by DOD
  - <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/documents/toolkit/FamilyReadinssToolkit0308.pdf>
- Educator's Guide to the Military Child during Deployment
  - <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/homefront/homefront.pdf>

## Additional Resources

- Exceptional Family Member Programs
  - Each branch has their own
  - USMC EFMP <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/efmp/index.cfm>
  - Army EFMP  
[http://www.myarmylifetoo.com/skins/malt/display.aspx?Action=display\\_page&mode=User&ModuleID=8cde2e88-3052-448c-893d-d0b4b14b31c4&ObjectID=e1217403-aa93-4158-8cf2-bf90de934a56](http://www.myarmylifetoo.com/skins/malt/display.aspx?Action=display_page&mode=User&ModuleID=8cde2e88-3052-448c-893d-d0b4b14b31c4&ObjectID=e1217403-aa93-4158-8cf2-bf90de934a56)
- Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) or hospitals
- National Guard Command
  - <http://www.ngb.army.mil/default.aspx>)
- Family Support Centers
  - Each branch has their own
- School Liaison Officers
  - Army and Marine Corps only

“It does take a village to raise a child to be resilient, especially with a war going on,”



Col. George Patrin, MD  
Chief California Medical Detachment  
Presidio of Monterey Army Health Clinic,  
California

## Resources that may help

### **Military OneSource**

[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

### **Military Homefront**

[www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil)

### **The Special Needs Network**

[www.specialneedsnetwork.net](http://www.specialneedsnetwork.net)

### **Air Force Crossroads:**

Installation, relocation information:

[www.afcrossroads.com](http://www.afcrossroads.com)

### **The National Military Family Association**

[www.nmfa.org/](http://www.nmfa.org/)

### **Department of Defense Education Activity**

[www.odedodea.edu](http://www.odedodea.edu)

### **TRICARE**

[www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil)

### **Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)**

[www.militarychild.org](http://www.militarychild.org)

### **The STOMP Listserv:**

Daily exchange of information &  
support To join send a blank email

to [stomp@topica.com](mailto:stomp@topica.com)



## Questions?

