Supporting Kentucky’s Military Children and Families
I serve too, I’m a military child, I stay strong when my dad goes away. If there is a war and my dad is detached, I will help him fight back. With my braveness and courage I can stay strong, my family’s support helps me carry on. Whenever we move, I start over again, I have to go to a new school, and make new friends. Even though people think I’m a military brat, I just don’t quite see it like that. My daddy helps defend our country, so we can live in peace and harmony. So all the military children help their mothers and fathers, because we serve too, we’re their sons and daughters.

By Kiara, 6th Grade, Louisiana
(Military Child Education Coalition)
Outline of Today’s Session

1. Deployment Cycle
2. Military culture
3. Resources
Scope of the Issue
All Military Children Ages 0-18 in Kentucky

1 dot = 1 child
Data from 2010

This map reflects the number of All Military dependents between the ages of 0-18 residing in each county. Counties that appear in white do not have any military children ages 0-18 residing there.
Kentucky Data

- Active Duty: Approximately 42,000
- Reserves: Approximately 13,668; located in nearly every county in the state
- Nearly 13,600 military kids ages 0-5
- Ten of the top 20 counties for highest numbers of military children are in areas of the state where there are few to no support program options.

(DATA SOURCE: Operation Military Homefront, 2010)
Young Married Force with Children

- Largest percentage of children of Active Duty members are between birth and 5 years of age, constituting over 42.8% of minor dependents. There are over 360,000 children ages 0-3 of Active Duty members.
- There are approximately 134,594 children ages 0-3 of Selected Reserve members; 28.8% are between the ages of 0-5.

(Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, 2012)
National Picture:

- Approximately 130,000 troops have been deployed during Operation Enduring Freedom and/or Operation Iraqi Freedom – over 2 million people.
- Many deployed more than 4 times. Deployments typically 12-15 months. Over 40% of deployed are National Guard are Reserve.
- There are 820 installations in 39 countries – 4th largest military in the world.
- 55% are married and 47% are 22-30 years old.

(DATA SOURCE: Veterans’ Resource Center, 2012)
What is Deployment?

Deployment occurs when a service member is assigned a military duty away from home and cannot be accompanied by family.

- An individual may be deployed with a group or sometimes separately.
- The amount of notice can vary greatly depending on assignment.

*“Activated”*-means that an order to deploy has been given but the deployment has not yet begun.
Deployment Brings Challenges

- Deployment is inevitable in today’s military.
- Everyone has a role – even children!
- Legal Matters – Wills, Power of Attorney, etc.
- Financial Matters – Paying the bills
- Everything breaks!
- Filling the role of two parents
- Superman/Superwoman complex
- Self-Care
The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

As one mother explains…

“I’m excited about seeing him and already feeling the grief of watching him leave again.”

Today, many families describe deployment as a “spiral.” This image captures the experience of having no time to get back to where they started before facing the next separation.
Key Stages in Deployment Cycle

• Stage 1: Anticipation and Departure
• Stage 2: Detachment and Withdrawal
• Stage 3: Emotional Disorganization
• Stage 4: Recovery and Stabilization
• Stage 5: Anticipation of Return
• Stage 6: Return Adjustment & Renegotiation
• Stage 7: Reintegration and Stabilization
Elements of Military Culture

Army
Air Force
Navy
Marines
Coast Guard
Common Mistakes

- Treating all vets like they have PTSD
- Forgetting the families
- Asking stupid questions
- Forgetting to welcome them home
- Complaining about the war in the presence of service members
- Assuming vets want recognition
Being Culturally Sensitive

Culture: The knowledge, experience, values, ideas, attitudes, skills, tastes, and techniques that are passed on from more experienced members of a community to new members.

(source: Operation Military Kids)
Preconceived Notions

- We are products of our experiences
- TV and Movies
- Out of date or false information
- Last resort
- All infantry and regimented thinkers
- No place for women
- Mostly underprivileged or uneducated
- Baby killers / war mongers
Elements of Military Culture

Military Values

- Honor
- Loyalty
- Duty
- Integrity
- Courage
- Respect
Elements of Military Culture

Unique Cultural Aspects
Time
Terminology/Acronyms
What does it mean to be “PURPLE?”
Challenges Faced by Military Families on the Homefront

- Shifting work schedules
- Deployments
- Frequent relocations
- Two-thirds of those stationed in the United States do not live on an installation
More Challenges

- Financial burdens
- Child Care
- Anxiety
- Fear of or actual loss of life of deployed loved one
- Special events missed by loved one (birthdays, graduations, driver’s license, etc.)
- Separation/Divorce of parents
Challenges

What other challenges do you think military families face?

- Think also about caregivers, wounded warrior and survivor (fallen soldier) families
Deployment for a young child means...

Change
Loss
Uncertainty
Fear
Anger
Lack of security
Deployment Through the Eyes of the Young Child

- Relationships
- Responsive Interactions
- Respect
- Routines
- Repetition

www.zerotothree.org
Relationships

Infant and toddlers depend on relationships with parents and other caregivers to survive. These relationships play a role in normal brain development. Secure attachments and positive attention (touching, holding, comforting, rocking, singing, and talking) provide exactly what newborns need to build a healthy brain.

www.zerotothree.org
Responsive Interactions

Young children learn from the responses they receive from caregiving adults. If parents and caregivers respond in a positive, attentive way, babies begin to learn to care about others and develop a conscience.

www.zerotothree.org
Respect

Treating children respectfully teaches them that they are worthy of respect! Showing consideration for the individual child, his or her parents, and the family’s culture increases the child’s self esteem, makes them feel accepted and confident in their identity.

www.zerotothree.org
Routines

Predictable activities that happen every day of the week. Five types of routines are critical at home and in group care:

- Saying hello and goodbye
- Diapering and toileting
- Mealtimes
- Sleeping
- Getting dressed

www.zerotothree.org
Repetition

When children repeat experiences, the connections between brain cells are strengthened. It gives them the opportunity to practice skills. Offering experiences that teach the same concept in different ways is a good strategy for strengthening brain connections and promotes concept development.

www.zerotothree.org
Recognize and Respond to Signs

☑ Help parents identify signs when a child is having a hard time and needs additional support.
  ❖ Increased clingingness, crying, and whining
  ❖ Greater fear of separation
  ❖ Increase in aggressive behavior
  ❖ Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
  ❖ A return to “baby behaviors”

☑ Share resources without overwhelming family.
☑ Refer families to the next level of care when necessary.
Supporting Young Children

- Calming Activities – Read a book, listen to music, play together
- Hugs! Touch is very important.
- Continue to talk to the child in clear, simple words.
- Reassure the child that he/she is safe and loved.
Supporting Young Children

- Reassure the child that the deployed parent is thinking about them.
- Tell stories of things they did together.
- Show photos of them together.
- Give the child warning when the parent will be leaving.
- Leave the child with someone you know and trust.
- Give the child a reminder of the parent to hold while they are apart.
Supporting Young Children

- Keep connections strong.
- “Bathe” the in the memories and feelings of the active-duty parent. Use pictures, recordings, stories, message box, family journal, and letters.
- Create a daily ritual to celebrate my parent who is away.
Supporting Young Children

- Keep the child informed in simple language.
- Prepare the child for time-sensitive events (parties, going to the airport, etc.).
- Prepare the deployed parent for possible responses that could be perceived negatively.
- Be available to the child for reassurance, comfort, and security
- Don’t expect the child to immediately develop a connection with the parent coming home.
- Patience!
Homecoming

An estimated 250,000 service members transition out of service and into civilian life each year.

Varying states of healing

Data is limited, but we know that 30% of all veterans have hearing loss.

Nearly one of out of five new veterans has one or more children under the age of 5 in their household.

(Carrow, Rynell, & Terpstra, 2012)
Issues Facing Today’s Veterans

- Homelessness
- Single Parenting
- Unemployment
- Physical or Traumatic Brain Injuries
- Increased Suicide Rates
- Depression
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Be a Resource to Military Families

- Help families understand how they affect each other so they can make more purposeful, effective choices about what to say and do.
- Encourage families to talk more when dealing with difficulty. (no judgments, listen with respect)
- Guide family members to build upon strengths.
- Be an active listener.
Being a Resource to Families

- Maintain a mindset of openness and respect to be responsive, sensitive, and effective.
- Our own beliefs, assumptions and experiences shape how we view/respond to military families.
- Trusting relationships and support allows military families to tap into their own inner resources and discover what works for them.
You Can:

- Be aware of the impact of deployment on families
- Watch for changes in behavior or performance
- Recognize and respond to signs that additional support is needed
- Share resources without overwhelming family
- Learn more about military culture
- Lead a Welcome Back-pack project or community service project to support military families.
Issues and Insights

- Ask thoughtful questions about their needs and listen to answers
- Don’t be afraid to not know the answer
- Guard your conversations (especially opinions about military life and culture)
  - Children may need help dealing with anti-war sentiment
  - Watch stating your opinions as fact
Response and Resilience

• Realize not all military kids understand the military
• Don’t apologize for things we can’t control…. (Sorry your dad is deployed…etc.)
• Don’t speak in absolutes (Sorry your dad isn’t coming back, etc.)
Resources
OMK

- Ready, Set, Go!
- SOMK
- HERO Packs
- Mobile Technology Lab
- Discovery Toolkit
- Month of the Military Child (MOMC)
- Camps
Other FCS Extension Military Programs

- Camps (Family and Parent/Teen)
- Kentucky Military Family Caregiver Network
- Child Care Provider Training
- Communities Support Military Families Extension Program -
  http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/fcs7/fcs7199fg/fcs7199fg.PDF
Resources

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kentuckiana
National Guard Family Programs
Military OneSource
Military Child Education Coalition
Zero to Three
Child Care Aware
YMCA
Boys and Girls Club of America
Tutor.com
Red Cross
American Legion
Questions or Comments?
Contact Info

Kerri Ashurst: kgoodman@email.uky.edu

Facebook & Website:
Operation: Military Kids Kentucky
www.operationmilitarykids.org