



Operation: Military Kids

Supporting Military Families in Minnesota

Participant Handout

When National Guard, Army Reserve and other military parents living in civilian communities are mobilized, their children suddenly become different. Now they are "suddenly military" kids but they still "look the same" to teachers, friends and the rest of the community. Their lives are turned upside down!

Many of their usual support systems may no longer be adequate. Extensive media coverage of on-going military operations creates daily anxiety. These "new" military kids need to connect with other youth in similar situations. They seek friends and adults who can empathize and can help them cope with their new world.

Operation Military Kids reaches out to military youth ... **Before, during and after** their parents are deployed.

Unique Issues for Suddenly Military Youth & Families

- Youth may fear the unknown and have separation/anxiety issues regarding the safety of the deployed parent
- Deployed parent is absent for day to day and significant events, resulting in less parental involvement
- Youth may assume more household responsibilities, including caring for younger siblings
- Educators' and community members' may lack awareness of and sensitivity regarding deployment and needs of children and families of deployed service members
- Children may be placed in day care so the remaining parent can work outside the home
- There may be a constant "shuffle" between relatives and child care providers
- Families are geographically dispersed and lack connection with other youth and families in similar situations, resulting in feelings of isolation
- Due to availability and affordability of after-school programs and youth activities; children may spend time home alone
- Youth may have limited opportunities to attend extracurricular activities
- Youth may experience behavioral changes, peer pressure, lower self-esteem
- Communication with deployed parent may be limited
- The family may experience a change in financial resources
- Possible transition from one school to another or having to live with extended family
- Social/emotional/behavioral reactions may impact youths' future
- Difficulty understanding and dealing with media
- Frequently unaware of resources to help cope
- Deployment cycle – disrupts family before, during, and after ... and is repeated



Operation: Military Kids:

- Creates community support networks for military youth “in our own backyard”
- Delivers recreational, social & educational programs for military youth
- Supports military kids coping with stress of knowing deployed parent may be in harm’s way
- Collaborates with schools to educate staff on the unique needs of military students
- Educates the public on impact of deployment on soldiers, families, kids and the community
- Becomes a part of the ongoing deployment support services for military children and youth

Minnesota Partners:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4-H | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> American Legion |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U of M Extension Service | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MN Department of Education |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National Guard | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Boys & Girls Clubs |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Army Reserve | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Child Care Resource & Referral |

Components of Operation Military Kids:

- Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK)**, a youth speakers’ bureau where trained military & non-military children make presentations about the impact of becoming “suddenly military.” It includes recreational, social and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities and providing support to military kids coping with the stress.
- Ready, Set, Go Trainings**, are trainings designed to educate a variety of audiences, including educators, community groups, clergy, and others, on the impact of the deployment cycle on Soldiers, families, kids and the community as a whole.
- Hero Packs**, are back packs containing items such as cameras, writing material, diaries, stuffed toys for younger aged children, and baseball caps that are distributed to children of deployed soldiers to provide comfort as well as recognition for their sacrifices of having a parent serve the country.
- Mobile Tech Labs** which contain computers, digital cams, CD & DVD burners, DVD writers, video cameras and digital cameras so the children can communicate with deployed parents using today’s technology.

For More Information or to Volunteer:

- **Operation Military Kids** –www.operationmilitarykids.org
- **Jim Deidrick, State Military Liaison**, Center for 4-H Youth Development; 612-624-7171 or deidr001@umn.edu
- **Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network** – Provides resources for parents, teachers, and family support professionals in times of war. <http://www.cyfernet.org/hottopic/warres.html>
- **Family Policy Council** – “Welcome Home! How to Make a Difference in the Lives of Returning War Zone Veterans.” <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/FPCVet%20Return.html>
- **Military Home Front** –the official Department of Defense web site for reliable Quality of Life information designed to help troops and their families, leaders and service providers. <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>
- **Military One Source** –provides information and resources that can help improve many areas of your life, from personal to professional. www.militaryonesource.com
- **National Council on Family Relations** – “Building Strong Communities for Military Families.” http://www.ncfr.org/pdf/NCFR_New_PMS2.pdf
- **National Guard Bureau Family Program Online Community** - find contacts, programs and benefits. Get tips, tools, and training on family issues. <http://www.guardfamily.org>
- **National Military Family Association** - educates military families concerning their rights, benefits and services available to them and to inform them regarding the issues that affect their lives <http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=homepage>