Supporting Youth of Veterans and Military Families

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Indiana Operation: Military Kids
GOOD
STUFF
I'm finally happy.
I'm finally happy.
Today

1. Describe the current military youth population in Indiana.
2. Discuss the unique issues facing today’s military youth and families.
3. Identify the deployment cycle and skills youth need to successfully navigate each stage.
4. Identify local and statewide support resources for military children and families impacted by the deployment cycle.
5. Discuss how to support Indiana’s military youth throughout the deployment cycle.
The Indiana Operation: Military Kids (OMK) partnership is a shared initiative of the US Army Child, Youth & School (CYS) Services and funded by the Army National Guard and Army Reserve in collaboration with Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.
“Military Kids”
- youth
- school age (K-12)

“Service Member”
- Any branch/component
- Primarily National Guard and Reserve

“Loved one”
- Mom, Dad, brother, sister, uncle, aunt...

Positive Youth Development
- Focus on desired positive outcomes
Ready, Set, Go!
What has been your interaction with military youth?

A. Service member with children
B. Community volunteer
C. Organization that supports military youth
D. Other
Current Demographics

Describe the current military youth population in Indiana.
20,000 military youth in Indiana.
Direct Dependents

Ages 0-5: 7,565
Ages 6-12: 8,233
Ages 13-18: 5,607

Data acquired from Military OneSource and Operation: Military Kids, 2012
Indiana counties where military youth live.

92
5 branches of the military represented in Indiana.
active installations where these youth can meet to support each other.
Unique Issues Facing Military Youth Today

Discuss the unique issues facing today’s military youth and families.

Some live on base
Possible frequent moves
New friends, schools, communities

Live in communities
Uncertain deployments

Civilian → Military
Community Awareness

You can’t support what you can’t find!
Educator Preparedness/Transition

Dependent Care

Frequently Unaware of Resources

Understanding and Dealing with Media

Understanding and Dealing with Media

Kids ask tough questions particularly when it comes to understanding acts of violence, terrorism, and war. Given this, educators may find themselves in the unique position of engaging with kids about these very important issues.

In their day-to-day interactions, educators have the unique opportunity to help kids understand current world events factually, to facilitate open and healthy discussions about how these events impact kids’ lives, and to help kids take action to identify their own emotional and behavioral reactions to these events.

Listen to Kids
- Find out what kids are worried about, what information they have or don’t have, and how they are interpreting what is being said.
- Encourage them to take the first step in sharing.
- Offer information, clarification, and reassurance as needed.
- Don’t overwhelm kids by explaining what you know.
- Listen, listen and listen some more.

Ask questions
- Ask thoughtful open-ended questions, ones which can’t be answered with “yes” or “no,” as a good way to get a conversation started, particularly with an older child.
- Specific questions such as, “What are you afraid of?” “What bothers you most about what you are hearing?” and “How does this make you feel?” are appropriate for discussion.
- Ask clarifying questions to find out what kids mean. Remember their ideas of violence and war may be very different from yours.
- And remember to answer kids’ question(s) after they have answered yours.

Acknowledge kids’ feelings
- Knowing what to say is sometimes difficult. When no words come to mind, saying “This is really hard,” will work.
- Try to recognize feelings underlying kids’ reactions and help them identify these feelings in healthy ways through play, drawing, or words.
- When kids are upset, don’t deny the seriousness of the situation. Saying “Don’t cry, everything will be okay,” does not reflect how they feel or make them feel any better.

Help kids to feel physically safe
- Help them differentiate between acts of violence, terrorism, and war and understand that precautions are being taken to keep their environment safe.
- Maintain normal routines and schedules to provide a sense of stability and security.
- Stop kids from stereotyping people from specific backgrounds, cultures, or countries.
- Add tolerance lessons to school curriculum to prevent fear and improve a sense of safety.
- Let those who are worried about a parent/loved one’s deployment talk and share their feelings as needed (See Tough Topics Issue #1: Supporting Military Kids During Deployment for more information).

Help kids maintain a sense of hope by taking action
- Help kids find their own unique ways to offer support to their schools and communities in response to incidents of violence, terrorism, and war.
- Send letters, cookies, magazines, or care packages to those in the military or local public safety positions/jobs.
- Encourage kids to write or dictate letters to legislators about their concerns and feelings.
My dad is in Iraq. It is hard because I have more responsibilities. At home because my mom sometimes watch my brother and sister and I would want to go play with my friends.
Navigating the Deployment Cycle

Identify the deployment cycle and skills youth need to successfully navigate each stage.
The Deployment Cycle

Pre-deployment
Deployment
Sustainment
Re-deployment
Post-deployment

Pre-deployment

Anticipation of Departure
• Increased stress in home
• Denial and anticipation of loss
• More emotional
• Completing the checklist

Detachment & Withdrawal
• Anger, arguments among members
• Difficulty communicating
• Service member distances self

Mobilization

Emotional Disorganization
• Numb and uninterested
• More irritable
• Routines have changed
• Responsibilities added

Recovery & Stabilization
• Changes settle in
• Positive coping happens
• Negative coping also happens

In-between

**Anticipation of Return**

- Family is happy, excited, feeling boost of energy.
- Worry if Service Member will be the same.
- If Service Member came home on leave at some point during deployment, that experience may be what family members expect.

Reintegration

Return Adjustment and Renegotiation

• Everyone has changed – pleasant surprises or new conflict.
• Everyone needs space to adjust!
• Negotiate new household – “new normal”
• Members feel more secure, relaxed and comfortable.
• Readjustment challenges could resurface, support is important!

Reintegration & Stabilization

• “New normal” established
• Readjustment challenges can resurface, ok to ask for help!

Positive Results of Deployment

What skills do youth acquire as a result of a loved one’s deployment?

• Fosters maturity
• Growth inducing
• Encourages independence
• Encourages flexibility, adaptability

• Builds skills for adjusting to separation and losses faced later in life
• Strengthens family bonds
• Civics—relationship with community

Children of Veterans

- Main concerns
  - PTSD in parent
  - Loss of connection to other military youth
- Mental health care *possibly* available for child.

Skills to successfully navigate the deployment cycle.

Identify the skills that youth need to successfully navigate each stage of deployment.
Skills to Successfully Navigate Military Life

Communication
Conflict resolution
Leadership
Self-responsibility
Social skills
Resiliency
Problem solving
Self-discipline
Managing feeling
Coping

Teamwork
Responsible citizenship
Sharing
Cooperation
Caring
Flexibility
Perseverance
Resourcefulness
Goal setting
Belonging

“It is important for me to meet other military kids because no one else understands.”
-Indiana military teen

When youth feel like they belong:
- Relationships
- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Concern for others
- Empathy
- Conflict resolution
Independence

“When children realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions and actions, they’re more likely to know that they have the ability to do what it takes to bounce back.”

-Dr. Ken Ginsburg

When youth experience independence:

Resilience
Responsibility
Self-sufficient
Problem solving skills
Resourcefulness
Self-discipline
Mastery

“The more youth master life experiences, the more they realize they can **tackle new challenges** and, thereby, **develop genuine confidence** in themselves.”

-Dr. Ken Ginsburg
Generosity

“Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose.”

-Essential Elements of 4-H

When youth experience generosity:

Sense of purpose
Sharing
Service learning
Character
Compassion
Coping

Stress... isn't the end of the world!

Family
Future
Sports
Social interaction
Managing Time
School
Food

Indiana Military Teen Summit 2014

Coping with stress is not the end of the world.
Resilience

my Dad
 Came home
 safely from
 Iraq

Good stuff
Life Skills, Citizenship & Leadership

Sports, Fitness & Health

Arts, Recreation & Leisure

Academic Support, Mentoring & STEM
Healthy Living

Up for the Challenge
Lifetime Fitness, Healthy Decisions

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens: The Ultimate Teenage Success Guide
by Sean Covey

Operation Military Kids Victory Garden
Shelby County Junior Leaders
Life Skills, Citizenship & Leadership
Academic Support, Mentoring & Intervention

M.K.I.S.S.
MILITARY KIDS IN SCHOOL SUPPORT

4-H NATIONAL YOUTH SCIENCE DAY
ROCKETS TO THE RESCUE
Arts, Recreation, & Leisure Activities

MILITARY KIDS DUNES DISCOVERY CAMP
DUNES LEARNING CENTER | CHESTERTON, IN | JULY 20-25, 2014

PURPLE UP!
for military kids
I would like school to know that some of us like being military kids.

We don't want special treatment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Deployment Stage</th>
<th>Life Skills</th>
<th>Resilience Skills</th>
<th>4-H SET Abilities</th>
<th>National Education Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-engineering Our Family</td>
<td>Reintegration: Youth &amp; Family</td>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td>• Social</td>
<td>• Communicate, demonstration</td>
<td>NT.K-12.4</td>
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<td>• Decision Making</td>
<td>• Family</td>
<td>• Collect data</td>
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<td>• Self-responsibility</td>
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<td>• Collaborate</td>
<td>collaborate, publish, and</td>
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<td>• Organize, order, classify</td>
<td>interact with peers, experts</td>
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<td>• Use tools</td>
<td>and other audiences</td>
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<td>• Summarize</td>
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Families will re-engineer how they communicate with their Service Member to help ease the transitions around reintegration, by providing the Service Member with thoughtful, specific details about their daily lives.
Resources available to support military youth

Identify local and statewide support networks for military children and families impacted by the deployment cycle.
Branch Specific Youth Support

Indiana National Guard
State Youth Coordinators
Ms. Anne Tedore
317-247-3300 x 85441
Ms. Jillian Lain
317-247-3300 x 85481

310th ESC Army Reserve
Ms. Ashley Gregg
School Support Specialist

Mr. Jordan Dinkins
Youth Support Specialist
317-532-4409
4-H + Military = ?
The American Red Cross’ unwavering commitment to members of the U.S. military, its veterans and their families continues to grow and develop more than a century after Clara Barton first recruited nurses to support the U.S. Army. Today, the Red Cross is meeting the needs of a changing military and expanding services to veterans. Red Cross support of military members and their families enhances morale and contributes to increased operational capability in several ways.

www.redcross.org/military
Boys & Girls Clubs of America

The MISSION: Youth Outreach partnership supports military youth, ages 6 to 18, coping with a deployed parent, or parents, by creating a positive, supportive network. Through this partnership, children of National Guard, Reserve and Active Duty families, who do not live near or have access to a military Youth Center, can receive a free membership to their local Boys & Girls Club.

www.bgca.org/military
Military Child Education Coalition

The work of the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition. A 501(c)(3) non-profit, world-wide organization, the MCEC performs research, develops resources, conducts professional institutes and conferences, and develops and publishes resources for all constituencies.

www.militarychild.org
Operation Military Child Care

The Operation Military Child Care program provides fee assistance for families of deployed or mobilized National Guard, Reserve and Active Duty Army soldiers during the duration of the deployment.

Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN)

The Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood program provides fee assistance for families of Active Duty Army Service Members and Army Civilians / Technicians who are unable to access on-post child care.

www.naccrra.org/military-families
Provide hands-on, innovative, specialized programs and support services to military service members and their families with a particular focus on junior-enlisted men and women — the individuals on the front lines of defending our nation. Programs are offered at no or low cost and require no dues or membership fees.

www.asymca.org
Many, Many, Many More

• Family Assistance Centers
• Survivor Outreach Services
• Military OneSource
• NMFA Educator’s Tool Kit
• Tutor.com/military
• Militarykidsconnect.org
• Ourmilitarykids.org

• eXtension.org Military Families Learning Network
• School Superintendents Assoc.
• School Liaison Officers
• American Legion & Auxiliary
• Veterans of Foreign Wars
• ...
• ...
So...
What can you do?
(And not do.)

Share ways to support Indiana’s military youth throughout the deployment cycle.
Do...

- Ask about their service member
- Find out what you can do and **DO IT**
- Listen to concerns and discuss.
- Share information and resources.
- Celebrate the Month of the Military Child

- Acknowledge and validate feelings
- Continue to help during reintegration
- Partner with organizations already supporting military youth
- Just say, “Thank you!”
Don’t…

“Don’t cozy up to me. That’s creepy.”

-Military kid
Don’t...FORGET THAT THEY ARE KIDS!