

# Deployment Health: Family and Child Issues

*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.*

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Deployment is a common occurrence that impacts service members and their families across the nation. Military families are facing a unique set of challenges. It's important for healthcare providers to be familiar and respectful of military culture. The best way to honor a service member is to support their legacy, their children.

Almost two million children are living in military families. A large number of these children are at critical ages of development, increasing the potential for the stressors of deployment to have a greater impact.

Children can experience emotional and behavioral difficulties, such as sadness, anxiety, and anger. Physical response to deployment-related stress and separation include increased heart rate, systolic blood pressure change, and weight loss. Deployment can negatively impact school performance, peer-relationships, parent-child interaction, and sleep patterns. School-age children may display irritable behaviors, aggression, and regressive behavior patterns. Teenagers and adolescents may engage in high risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse.

A substantial portion of military families will be accessing healthcare and social services from the civilian healthcare system. Health care providers need to be aware that there are military children and families in every community. As a consequence of deployment, the whole family may be at additional risk for mental and behavioral health issues. There is a culture in the military of not seeking out mental health services. A health visit may be the only opportunity to discuss a service member's deployment-related health issues.

Screen children at check-in to see if they are members of a military family. Screen the non-deployed parent for psycho-social stressors and functional impairment. Ongoing assessment of mental health before, during, and after deployment can build resilience and a family's capacity to deal with stressors.

There are numerous resources available to clinicians treating veterans, active service members, and their families. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Defense Military Health System, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offer training and information for clinicians on deployment related health issues.

For more resources on deployment health, please visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/Services](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/Services).

For additional resources on the impact of deployment on service members and their families, visit the COCA website at [emergency.cdc.gov/coca/callinfo](http://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/callinfo). Thank you.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*