

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Army

## Deployment Status and Child Neglect Types in the U.S. Army

Cozza, S. J., Whaley, G. L., Fisher, J. E., Zhou, J., Ortiz, C. D., McCarroll, J. E., ... Ursano, R. J. (2017). Deployment status and child neglect types in the U.S. Army. *Child Maltreatment*, 23(1), 25-33. doi:10.1177/1077559517717638

**SUMMARY:** It is important to understand the associations between deployment and child neglect types in military families. This study examined 390 substantiated child neglect cases in four Army installations; the neglect type and the deployment status at the time of each neglect incident was investigated. Results indicated that compared to never deployed families, families with a concurrently deployed or previously deployed parent were more likely to have certain types of child neglect.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- The risk of three types of child neglect (i.e., failure to provide physical needs, lack of supervision, educational neglect) increased for families with a concurrently deployed parent.
- Families with a concurrently deployed parent had an increased risk of multiple child neglect type incidents (as opposed to single child neglect type incidents), but a decreased risk of emotional neglect.
- Compared to never deployed families, families with a previously deployed parent were more likely to have moral-legal neglect (e.g., exposing children to illegal activities).

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide parent education workshops for Service members and military spouses on the prevention of child neglect
- Educate Service members and military spouses on useful parenting practices and parenting skills
- Disseminate information to military spouses regarding available resources during deployment, especially for new parents

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage professional development for professionals working with military families to better understand the associations between deployment status and child neglect
- Raise awareness on military bases regarding the prevalence of child neglect and how to prevent it
- Promote the development of parent education programs to help military families cope with the challenges associated with the military lifestyle

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## METHODS

- The child neglect case samples were randomly selected from four U.S. Army installations with the highest numbers of child neglect incidents.
- Data gathered for the study included neglect types (i.e., failure to provide physical needs, lack of supervision, emotional neglect, moral-legal neglect, and educational neglect), deployment status, and demographic information.
- Data were analyzed to examine the relationship between deployment status and child neglect types.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 390 children who were victims of 390 substantiated child neglect cases.
- Children's average age was 4.6 years (SD = 4.0) and 54% of them were male; the race/ethnicity of the children was not reported.
- One or both parents of the children were Soldiers; the age and rank of the parents were not reported.

## LIMITATIONS

- The study focused exclusively on child neglect cases, so the findings cannot be applied to child abuse cases.
- All child neglect cases happened at Army installations; therefore, caution must be taken to generalize the results to other military branches.
- Dates of previous deployments were not available in some cases, which made it difficult to understand the associations between previous deployments and child neglect.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the associations between deployment status and child abuse incidents
- Investigate child neglect cases in installations of all military branches so that the findings can be better generalized
- Explore strategies that may prevent or reduce the occurrence of child maltreatment in military families

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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