

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Educators Supporting Families in Times of Crisis: Military Reserve Deployments

Harrison, J., & Vannest, K. J. (2008). Educators supporting families in times of crisis: Military reserve deployments. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 52(4), 17-24. doi:10.3200/PSFL.52.4.17-24

SUMMARY: Deployment of a parent can have negative emotional, academic, and behavioral consequences for children in military families. Recommendations for schools to support military families during deployment were provided. School support for military families should include separate trainings for teachers, parents, and students, as well as integrating deployment-related information into classes.

KEY FINDINGS:

- School support for military families should integrate deployment-related learning material into curriculums (e.g., how to structure letters when writing the deployed Service member).
- Schools should provide coping skills and social skills training, counseling, and social support activities during deployment for military youth and families.
- Teachers should learn about the deployment cycle, common child reactions to deployment, and maintaining classroom consistency to best support their students with deployed parents.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups for partners or spouses of deployed Service members to receive social support surrounding issues of parenting, responsibilities, and emotions during deployment
- Educate partners and children of deployed Service members about coping skills and how to effectively communicate and reach out for social support
- Provide courses to teach new tasks and responsibilities (e.g., finances, house maintenance) to children and partners of deployed Service members

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend the development and dissemination of school curricula plans that incorporate deployment-related learning activities into existing academic courses
- Encourage collaboration with community schools to provide school-based programs and support for military youth and families during deployment
- Continue to promote the use of programs for military families that support adjustment and academic success for children of deployed Service members

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



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METHODS

- Families of National Guard and Reserves Soldiers were recruited via newsletters and phone calls to participate in a monthly Family Readiness Group during deployment of their Soldiers.
- Partners and children of Soldiers, as well as participating children's teachers, completed focus groups and interviews regarding coping and programs or support needed during deployment.
- No specific information regarding how data was collected or analyzed was provided.

PARTICIPANTS

- Families of 165 deployed Soldiers were recruited, and between 5-24 family members participated in the Family Readiness Group each week.
- Sample size and characteristics were not provided.
- No description of the Family Readiness Group was included.

LIMITATIONS

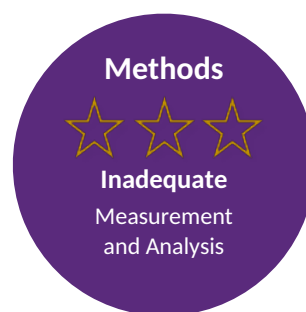
- No specific information about the group or data collection or analysis was provided, and it is unclear how the authors arrived at their conclusions.
- No data regarding sample size or characteristics were included, and results may not generalize.
- No analysis plan was mentioned and researchers may have relied on their own judgement to summarize results and provide recommendations, potentially resulting in researcher bias.
- It is unclear whether or not recommendations were based on participant interview and focus group statements or any other collected data.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct trials that compare outcomes of youth and families who receive support programs (e.g., skills training, deployment-related curricula) and families in a control group
- Explore responses of partners and children of deployed Service members and their coping and support needs and systematically analyze themes of responses
- Investigate community teacher practices (e.g., maintenance of consistency, inclusion of deployment-related curricula) before and after training about deployment and military youth

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>