

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Associations between Parental Deployment, Relocation, and Risky Sexual Behaviors Among a Clinic-based Sample of Military-Dependent Youth

Hernandez, B. F., Peskin, M. F., Markham, C. M., Burr, J., Roberts, T., & Tortolero, S. (2015). Associations between parental deployment, relocation, and risky sexual behaviors among a clinic-based sample of military-dependent youth. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 36(5), 351-359. doi:10.1007/s10935-015-0399-y

SUMMARY: Among the relatively understudied military-dependent youth population the prevalence of sexual behaviors and the association between these behaviors and unique military stressors such as parental deployment and multiple relocations were analyzed.

KEY FINDINGS:

- More than half (54 %) of the youth reported being sexually experienced, and many of these youth reported engaging in risky sexual behaviors.
- There were no significant associations between parental deployment and multiple relocations and youth engaging in risky sexual behaviors
- Parent's branch of service was significantly associated with risky sexual behavior: youth whose parents were in the Army and Marine Corps were more likely than those whose parents were in the Air Force or Navy to report ever having had sex.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop a curriculum about effective strategies used to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy targeted towards military-dependent youth
- Provide teen friendly health care services and comprehensive sexual/reproductive health counseling
- Support on-going teen lead groups that promote safe sex and reproductive health

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Support awareness campaigns that promote safe sex and reproductive health among military-dependent youth
- Encourage awareness among military professionals on the importance of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health for military-dependent youth
- Extend and support policies that include military-dependent youth and their reproductive health

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METHODS

- Recruitment was based upon a sample of military-dependent youth who attended an adolescent health clinic located at a military treatment facility in the southern U.S.
- Sexual behaviors were assessed using a five items adapted from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
- Participants took a 5-item survey in a private room before or after an appointment.
- Prevalence estimates and Chi-square analyses, as well as logistic regression analyses were conducted.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 208 military dependent youth aged 15-19 years old.
- Out of 208 youth participants, 31% identified as White, 23% as Black, 19% as Hispanic, and 27% as other.
- Sixty-three percent of the parents of the participants were retired from the military, while 27% were Active Duty/Reserves, with 25% from the Air Force, 67% from the Army/ Marine Corps, and 8% from the Navy.

LIMITATIONS

- A purposeful sample was used from one military training facility, so the prevalence of sexual behaviors may not be representative of those in the general population.
- The convenience sample was majority female and included many youth whose parents were retired from the military, which limits the generalizability of the findings.
- Different aspects of deployment were not assessed (e.g. timing of the deployment, deployments to noncombat areas, or length of deployment), which limits the generalizability of the findings.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the associations between military-dependent youth and other dimensions of deployment, such as the timing of the deployment or deployments to non-combat areas
- Investigate the frequency of relocations and the association with sexual behaviors
- Explore additional military-dependent youth populations not necessarily associated with a military treatment facility

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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