

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## FOCUS for Early Childhood: A Virtual Home Visiting Program for Military Families with Young Children

Mogil, C., Hajal, N., Garcia, E., Kiff, C., Paley, B., Milburn, N., & Lester, P. (2015). FOCUS for early childhood: A virtual home visiting program for military families with young children. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 37(3), 199-208.  
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**SUMMARY:** Researchers examined the effectiveness of the Families OverComing Under Stress for Early Childhood (FOCUS-EC) program for military/civilian parents and their children's mental health. Each family completed six virtual home visit sessions, and their mental health status was assessed. The pilot data showed that FOCUS-EC was helpful and feasible for military families with young children.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Preliminary results from the pilot study showed a decrease in child psychopathology symptoms, and an increase in child prosocial behaviors.
- Both military and civilian parents reported enhancement in their families' functioning and improvements in their mental health status, including declines in depression and anxiety symptoms.
- Results suggest virtual home visiting is useful and feasible for military families with young children.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide more family-centered mental health and parenting guidance to military families so that more families could benefit from the services
- Offer outreach services to military families; such outreach could note the availability of potentially useful services and resources
- Provide concrete information on normative versus delayed child development and useful parenting skills

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the virtual home visiting model for mental health interventions so that the services would be more convenient and feasible for military families
- Continue dedicating resources to help military/civilian parents receive necessary education on child development and parenting skills
- Encourage awareness campaigns regarding the importance of family-centered preventive intervention

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## METHODS

- The FOCUS-EC program was adapted from the broader FOCUS program by keeping the core elements.
- Each family completed six virtual home visiting sessions online, and received education on child development, parenting strategies, and military family resilience in the sessions.
- The real-time assessment evaluated parental psychological health, child behavioral symptoms, and general family functioning.

## PARTICIPANTS

- The pilot study included 637 military families with children aged 3-5 years old.
- Participants' age, gender, race, and military information were not specified in the article.

## LIMITATIONS

- The study was only a pilot study, therefore a better controlled study is needed.
- Families were only assessed at the beginning and the end of the intervention; more assessments are needed to examine the effectiveness of the FOCUS-EC program over time.
- Information about parental characteristics (e.g., marital status, deployment history) were not available, so some confounding factors were not controlled that may impact the results.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Future research could use randomized controlled trials to draw more firm conclusions
- Additional research could collect more comprehensive data about the parents, such as their marital and socioeconomic status and history of deployment
- Future research could also compare the effectiveness of telehealth and face-to-face interventions.

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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