

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Evaluation of a Multimedia Intervention for Children and Families Facing Multiple Military Deployments

O'Grady, A. F., Burton, E. T., Chawla, N., Topp, D., & Wadsworth, S. M. (2016). Evaluation of a multimedia intervention for children and families facing multiple military deployments. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 37(1), 53-70.
doi:10.1007/s10935-015-0410-7

SUMMARY: Intervention for military families that experience multiple deployment and with young children (two to five years old) is relatively understudied. This research examined whether military families with young children would benefit from a multimedia kit especially designed for military children. Results supported the usefulness of a self-administered multimedia intervention to help military families cope with deployment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Both test and control groups reported decreases in parental depressive symptoms and children's aggressive behaviors over time.
- Compared to the control group, caregivers in the test group felt more prepared to assist their children during deployment.
- Only a small number of caregivers in the test group (30%) reported that they used the knowledge in the video to help their child cope.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Use high-quality multimedia as a method of intervention to teach military children about deployment and healthy life habits in general
- Offer support groups for military spouses that promote healthy coping and family well-being
- Develop classes and workshops for parents and teachers on how to use multimedia to teach children coping skills and reduce their negative behaviors

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to offer support to military families to help them develop effective coping strategies for deployment
- Raise awareness of the vulnerability of military children when their parents experience multiple deployment
- Support collaboration among military communities regarding the specific challenges caused by multiple deployments and how military families could cope with them

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

- Participants were recruited from nine shopping malls near military facilities, and were randomly divided into two groups: the test group (families that used Talk, Listen, Connect: Multiple Deployment) and the control group (families that used Health Habit for Life).
- Caregivers were interviewed over phone at the beginning of the study and four weeks later; of the 300 families recruited, 282 of them (94%) completed the second interview.
- Caregivers answered questions regarding the caregiver-child relationship, the caregiver's mood, the children's mood and behavior, and the impact of the multimedia (only at the second interview).

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 282 caregivers of children two to five years old; all the caregivers were spouses or family members of enlisted Service members with pay grades between E2 and E6.
- Most caregivers were female (75%), under 35 years old (69%), and White (67%).
- The military branches that the Service members served in were Army (57%), Air Force (15%), Marine Corps (15%), Navy (11%), and Coast Guard (2%).

LIMITATIONS

- The interval between the two interviews was short, therefore the long term effect of the program is unknown.
- Both the experimental and control groups received intervention by watching videos; without a "no intervention" group, it is hard to determine what would happen without the videos.
- The two phone interviews were relatively short, therefore the information collected was limited.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Have multiple post-tests over time to examine the long term effect of the intervention
- Add a "no-intervention" group as base line to study what would happen without any intervention
- Control the length and frequency that families watch the videos to determine the level of exposure needed to achieve a significant outcome

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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