

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Staying Strong With Schools: A Civilian School-Based Intervention to Promote Resilience for Military-Connected Children

Ohye, B., Kelly, H., Chen, Y., Zakarian, R. J., Simon, N. M., & Bui, E. (2016). Staying strong with schools: A civilian school-based intervention to promote resilience for military-connected children. *Military Medicine*, 181(8), 872-877. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-15-00234

SUMMARY: Schools can be an effective setting to deliver interventions to promote well-being among children. One such intervention for military-connected children, Staying Strong with Schools, was tested for its effectiveness in a civilian school. Findings suggest the intervention contributed to school officials' reports of increased knowledge and confidence about supporting military-connected youth.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Most participants reported increases in their understanding of family stress associated with parental deployment and knowledge of how children might express deployment-related stress.
- Most school officials reported increased confidence in their ability to guide military-connected youth to appropriate resources, implement interventions about resilience, and initiate conversations with their parents regarding concerns about children's deployment-related stress.
- A majority of the participants reported they would implement the intervention in a school setting.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with civilian school officials to develop on-going learning opportunities for school professionals about military culture
- Develop after-school activities that emphasize resilience and well-being for military-connected children

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer workshops about coping skills for military-connected children during pre-deployment and deployment
- Develop structured activities for military families to strengthen their bonds during reintegration

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support research and service delivery programs that specialize in military family readiness
- Recommend professional trainings for civilian school officials who work with military-connected children

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METHODS

- School officials were recruited from two schools and invited to participate in the study by the principal in each school.
- Participants attended one 60-minute, on-site training to raise awareness about parental deployment resources to help promote the resilience of military-connected youth.
- All participants were asked to complete a pre- and post-training questionnaire. Classroom teachers were asked to complete an additional post-training questionnaire about their intention to use the intervention with military families.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included school officials (N = 115) that were recruited at two different schools.
- Most participants were teachers (62%) or had supportive roles in the classrooms (e.g., subject specialists, classroom aides; 28%). The remaining participants were psychologists, guidance counselors, and nurses.
- No information was provided about participants' demographic data, such as gender, age, or race/ethnicity.

LIMITATIONS

- There were no demographic data about the participants or the schools, which limits the ability to interpret the data and apply the findings to other groups of school officials and schools.
- The authors do not provide enough information about the recruitment and participation (e.g., retention rates) of the sample for a comprehensive understanding of the data collection process.
- There is no information about the quality (e.g., reliability, validity) of the questionnaires used to assess data before and after the training.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Include military-connected youth from all grades, K-12th grade, as well as in post-secondary settings
- Conduct qualitative studies interviewing school officials about their experiences working with military families
- Expand the intervention to more than one training session and test school officials knowledge and confidence at more than one follow-up time point

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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