

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Physical Fighting Among Male and Female Adolescents of Military Families: Results from a Representative Sample of High School Students

Reinhardt, J., Clements-Nolle, K., & Yang, W. (2016). Physical fighting among male and female adolescents of military families results from a representative sample of high school students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-20.  
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**SUMMARY:** The relationship between family military involvement and physical fighting in a representative sample of 3,928 high school students was conducted. Analysis explored whether adolescents from military families had higher odds of fighting and fighting on school property compared with adolescents of non-military families after controlling for demographics, substance use, depressive symptoms, and bullying victimization. Overall, 24% of high school students reported physical fighting and 7% reported physical fighting at school and there were differences between youth from military families.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Family military involvement was associated with increased odds of involvement in physical fighting and physical fighting on school property.
- Adolescents with multiple risk factors, including military family involvement, were at greatest risk for fighting.
- The prevalence of physical fighting on school property was higher among male students compared with female students and among Black students compared with White, Latino, and other students.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops for military-connected youth who relocate frequently that help to establish a strong connection to their new school and peers
- Educate high school counselors and teachers who work with military-connected youth about the multiple stressors that they may face and how to support youth's resilience
- Develop school-based interventions aimed at addressing fighting to fit the unique needs of adolescents in military families, particularly those with additional risk factors

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend education of professionals (e.g., child caregivers, mental health, education professionals) on the unique stressors military-connected youth may experience
- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that can support military-connected youth and their families health and well-being
- Support collaboration between the DoD and local education units (i.e., elementary, middle, and high schools) coping skills curricula for military-connected youth

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## METHODS

- Youth participants in Nevada completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a biennial, anonymous, and voluntary survey. The overall response rate was 71%.
- Youth answered questions on substance use in the past 30 days, physical fighting (in the past 12 months), and mental health.
- Analysis examined the relationships between military-involved youth and physical fighting at school, after controlling for demographics, substance use, depression, and bullying victimization.

## PARTICIPANTS

- In the study were 3,928 youth participants who attended a high school in Nevada.
- Participants identified as 40% Latino, 36% White, 9% Black, and 15% other.
- About 10% of participants went to school in a rural county and 13% reported family military involvement.

## LIMITATIONS

- The question regarding family military involvement did not differentiate between deployment and nondeployment; therefore, the relationship between deployment and youth fighting behaviors could not be determined.
- The measures of physical fighting could not differentiate between victimization and perpetration; therefore, results need to be interpreted with caution.
- The results are only representative of youth from the state of Nevada; therefore, findings can't represent other contexts.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Assess the relationship of interpersonal violence and military-connected youth through a national sample
- Evaluate the effectiveness of school-based interventions designed to improve the well-being of youth from military families
- Explore how deployment, family relocation, exposure to violence in the household, and other stressors relate to being in a military family and impact physical fighting among adolescents

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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