

Military Families



What's Happening

Military families live in almost every community. Some parents in the military are on active duty and wear a uniform every day. Others may be in the National Guard or Reserves and only wear a uniform when they are called to active duty.

All military families face unique stresses that can make the difficult job of parenting even harder:

- The military parent must deal with periodic absences and the stresses associated with preparing for duty or reentering civilian life.
- Children must adjust to a parent being away from the family (and, in some cases, in harm's way) and then to the parent's reintegration into the family. Many military children also deal with frequent moves, changing schools, and new caretakers.
- A spouse, partner, or extended family member may face new and increased responsibilities while a military parent is away.

What You Might See

- A parent in uniform in your neighborhood, school, place of worship, or other community setting
- A civilian mother or father parenting solo for extended periods
- A grandparent or other family member caring for a child with a deployed parent
- A change in a child's behavior, either acting out or withdrawing, when a military parent is absent

What You Can Do

- Express appreciation for the family's service to our country. Invite parents and children to share their positive experiences of military life.

- Get to know your military neighbors, particularly if they serve in the National Guard or Reserves. Include them in neighborhood and community activities. Don't wait for your neighbor to ask for help—offer to mow the grass, share a meal, help with small household repairs, or care for the children for a few hours.
- Share information about community resources that provide support in times of need. Ask military parents what would help them most when they are facing a military-related separation, and help them to connect with these supports early.
- Help military parents and the other caregivers in their family understand how transitions, separation, and anxiety can affect their child's behavior. Knowing that acting out or withdrawing are normal can make these challenges easier to deal with.
- Invite military children in your neighborhood to share their thoughts and feelings about the separations and transitions they may be experiencing. If you plan activities for children in your community, remember to include a way for children with a faraway parent to participate.

Remember:

Military families need to feel supported and included in their neighborhoods and communities. You can help!

This tip sheet was created with information from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting> you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.