

# Military and Veteran Families

A summary of the scientific literature on programs for Military & Veteran families.



## How This Impacts Children's Development

Children with a deployed parent are at greater risk of maltreatment. This may occur because deployment temporarily creates single-parent families, which is a risk factor for child neglect. Deployment affects

children differently at various developmental stages; it may be particularly stressful for children under five, who heavily depend on their parents to meet most of their needs.

[READ THE BRIEF: Military and Veteran Families and Children: Policies and Programs for Health and Development, 2014](#)

### **Talking Points from the SRCD Briefs**

- Since 2001, more than 2 million Americans have served in the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars, and more than 2 million military children have been separated from their parents because of deployments.
- While researchers often define military families as the spouses and dependent children (22 and younger) of active duty, National Guard, and Reserve service members, research shows that the experiences of military life may affect families and children after service members leave active duty.
- 40% of all military children are under the age of five.
- Compared with civilians, service members marry younger and have children earlier.
- The Department of Defense administers what is believed to be the nation's largest and one of the most highly regarded employer-sponsored childcare systems, serving 200,000 children daily and involving nearly 23,000 workers.

### **Policy Considerations in the Briefs**

1. Families respond to deployments in varied ways, with some experiencing distress but maintaining health, while others face severe stress. This highlights the need for a strategy that promotes overall health, screens for risks, and provides additional support for those struggling the most.
2. Broad prevention strategies, including universal prevention help develop resilience-enhancing skills to sustain families through challenges and targeted strategies that help families experiencing multiple deployments, combat-related injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, or a parent's death.
3. Policymakers should enhance existing care systems for families of active-duty personnel and veterans, including the National Guard and Reserve.
4. Federal agencies should gather evidence on programs that help families immediately and in the long term.
5. Service providers should ask children and adults about military connections and ensure that those working with military families are educated on the unique issues they face. Given the racial, ethnic,

cultural diversity, and increasing roles for women within military families, flexible programs and policies that accommodate a variety of backgrounds are essential.

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