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## Navigating Deployment: Strategies to Help Military Families

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## Navigating Deployment: Strategies to Help Military Families



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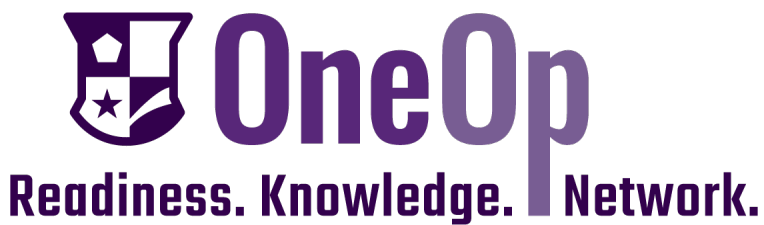
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## Today's Presenters



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## Preview of Coming Attractions

- Describe the stages of deployment
- Articulate common stressors
- Describe characteristics that may increase families' risk of disruption
- Explore research-based strategies for helping military families prepare for and manage daily hassles and stressors
- Highlight additional resources that may aid in your efforts to support military families

A Review of Evidence-Based Strategies to Help Military Families Navigate Deployment


Military REACH at Auburn University

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<https://aub.ie/MilitaryREACH-DeploymentReport>  
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## Deployments + Families

No two deployments are the same

<u>Military Perspective</u>	<u>Family Perspective</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission varies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combat</li> <li>• Humanitarian aid</li> <li>• Restoration of peace</li> <li>• Increased security</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The length of time away varies</li> <li>• The preparation time varies</li> <li>• Unit members are different</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With each deployment, the family is often in a different part of the life course               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single service member</li> <li>• Committed romantic relationship</li> <li>• Young child</li> <li>• Multiple children</li> <li>• Teenage children</li> <li>• Caregiving to elderly parents</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Resources and demands of family life vary</li> </ul>





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## Deployments + Families

No two deployments are the same, *but* understanding patterns of change and recognizing indicators of family distress can improve service provision.





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## Deployment Cycle

Stages	
Predeployment	Begins when service member receives orders to deploy
Deployment	First month apart
Sustainment	2 <sup>nd</sup> month through notification to return home
Re-deployment	Receives notification to return
Postdeployment	Up to 6 months after return

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## Logan's (1987) Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Adjustment Stages		Possible Feelings and Actions
Predeployment	Anticipation of loss	Sadness; anger; irritability; worry; bickering; restlessness; focus on completing the "to do" list
	Detachment and withdrawal	Discomfort; distancing from one another; wanting the departure day to arrive so the deployment can begin
During deployment	Emotional disorganization	Pain from saying good-bye; guilt for feeling relief the deployment has started; disrupted routines; withdrawal from family and friends; disturbed sleep; restlessness; indecisiveness
	Recovery and stabilization	New patterns established; adaptation to new roles and responsibilities; increased confidence; possible stress
	Anticipation of homecoming	Excitement; nervousness; tenseness; apprehension; making emotional room for the returning spouse
Postdeployment	Renegotiation of relationships	Joy; relief; annoyance; adaptation to changes in roles and responsibilities
	Reintegration & stabilization	Relaxation; comfort with one another; enjoyment; establishment of new routines

Source: Adapted from Logan, K. V. (1987). The emotional cycle of deployment. *U.S. Naval Proceedings*, 113, 43-47, Copyright © (1987) U.S. Naval Institute / <http://www.usni.org>.

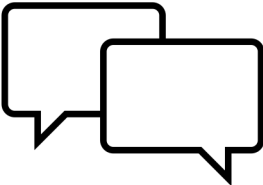
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## Deployment Stressors


**YOUR TURN:** Think about your experiences serving military families in the context of deployment.



- What are some of the challenges that service members face? spouses/partners? children?
- When do the most challenges arise ...
  - predeployment?
  - during the deployment?
  - during reintegration?

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## Deployment Challenges Reported by Spouses

Challenges During Deployment for At-Home Spouses	Percentage of Spouses Reporting the Challenge was a Problem "to a Large Extent"
Loneliness	38%
House and car repairs; yard work	28%
Being a "single" parent	27%
Dealing with issues/decisions alone	24%
Difficulty maintaining emotional connection with deployer	24%
No time for recreation, fitness, or entertainment	22%
Emotional problems in the family	21%
Managing childcare/child schedules	17%
Personal job demands	16%

Source: Data compiled from the 2019 Survey of active-duty spouses. Retrieved from <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/survey-findings/2019-spouses-survey/>

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## In light of these stressors, how are families faring?

Deployments, though challenging and stressful in the short term, do not appear to be destabilizing or disruptive in the long term and most families weather them fine.

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## Service Members

Profiles of Soldiers Following a Deployment Based on their Personal and Family Reintegration Experiences

Experiencing Difficulties, 8%

Thriving, 39%  
Adjusting Well, 53%

<i>Thriving profile</i>	
Positive personal reintegration:	High
Positive family reintegration:	Very high
Negative personal reintegration:	Low
Negative family reintegration:	Low

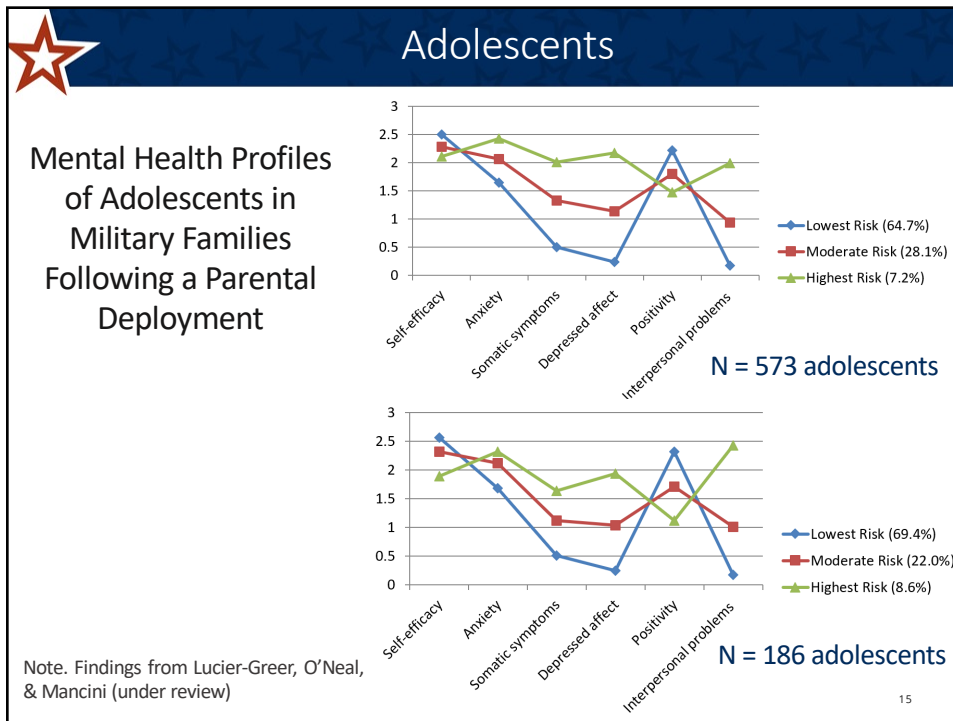
<i>Adjusting well profile</i>	
Positive personal reintegration:	Relatively high
Positive family reintegration:	Relatively high
Negative personal reintegration:	Moderate
Negative family reintegration:	Moderate

<i>Experiencing difficulties profile</i>	
Positive personal reintegration:	Low
Positive family reintegration:	Low
Negative personal reintegration:	Moderate
Negative family reintegration:	Moderate

Note. Findings from O'Neal and Lavner (2021); N = 230 active duty Soldiers

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## So, who is at risk for disruption?

Family needs assessments are valuable in understanding the specific stressors and resources of each family.


Attention should be paid to ...

- children as they may show longer-term issues (Briggs et al., 2019)
- families in which the service member returns with mental health problems or physical injuries (Cramm et al., 2019)
- families that had been violent before the deployment (Kwan et al., 2020)

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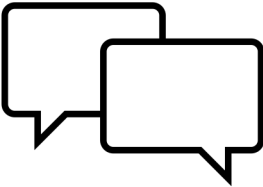




## Deployment Supports


**YOUR TURN:** Think about your experiences serving military families in the context of deployment.

- What are some of the supports and resources that are most helpful to military families?



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## Supports Needed by At-Home Partner


**Supports Indicated by At-Home Spouses as “Important” or “Very Important” to Coping with the Most Recent Deployment**

Support	Percentage Reporting	Support	Percentage Reporting
E-mail to and from deployer	95%	Understanding why deployment is important/necessary	66%
Telephone calls	93%	Support from civilian community	60%
Knowing length of deployment	93%	Contact with someone in deployer’s unit	60%
No changes in length of deployment	84%	Family readiness/support group	57%
Temporary reunions with spouse	83%	Instant/text messaging with deployer	55%
Deployment pay	82%	Reunion planning information or classes	50%
Predeployment information	76%	Local counseling/support services	50%
Recreation, fitness, and entertainment activities	71%	Telephonic counseling/support services (i.e., Military OneSource)	42%
Support from the military community	69%		

Source: Data compiled from Defense Manpower Data Center (2009). 2008 Survey of active-duty spouses: Tabulation of responses (Report No. 2008-041). Tables 22a-22q. Arlington, VA: DMDC.

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## Evidence-based Strategies for Service Provision

In reviewing the supports that are considered important for coping during deployment, we identified four themes, the need for ...

1. information,
2. connection to the deployer,
3. emotional supports, and
4. tangible supports.

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## Evidence-based Strategies in Action

- **Maintaining the homefront** throughout the deployment cycle
  - PRE-DEPLOYMENT
    - Help parents create a childcare plan (and prepare in other logistical ways) (Ross et al., 2020)
    - Educate all families in advance about the deployment cycle and common emotions/challenges at each phase (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011)
  - DURING DEPLOYMENT
    - Encourage and even facilitate military partners to engage in self-care activities (Blank et al., 2012)
    - Help family members monitor the ups and downs deployment, including identifying factors that make some months better than others and brainstorm ways to maximize those factors (Ragsdale et al., 2021)
  - POST-DEPLOYMENT
    - Assess (and normalize) both positive and negative reintegration experiences (O'Neal & Lavner, 2021)
    - Educate couples on the honeymoon stage and how taxing it can be once the stage ends (Louie & Cromer, 2015)

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## Evidence-based Strategies in Action

- **Calibrating communication** throughout the deployment cycle
  - PRE-DEPLOYMENT
    - Facilitate conversations about expectations for communication during deployment and assist families in identifying potential barriers to communication (Sayers et al., 2018)
    - Raise awareness of the importance of pre-deployment preparation for military families' adjustment (Collins et al., 2017)
  - DURING DEPLOYMENT
    - Provide education for at-home parents regarding appropriate and inappropriate disclosures to adolescents (Chernichky-Karcher & Wilson, 2017)
    - Encourage couples to engage in asynchronous communication (e.g., writing letters, sending emails) to promote relationship satisfaction (Carter & Renshaw, 2016)
  - POST-DEPLOYMENT
    - Help families thoughtfully plan ways to include the service member in current daily activities (Knobloch et al., 2017)
    - Build families' communication skills to help couples express difficulties they experience with the transition (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018)

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## Evidence-based Strategies in Action

- **Providing and Receiving Support** throughout the deployment cycle
  - PRE-DEPLOYMENT
    - Disseminate information on military bases explaining the logistical and instrumental tasks necessary for deployment preparation (Collins et al., 2017)
    - Create pre-deployment initiatives specific to younger families, enlisted families, and National Guard and Reserve component families, as they may be less likely to engage in beneficial pre-deployment preparation. (Troxel et al., 2016)
  - DURING DEPLOYMENT
    - To increase service access, offer home-based or online social and emotional support services for military families with young children (Strong & Lee, 2017)
    - Promote military families' community participation and engagement, so military partners and children can support each other during service members' deployment. (Knobloch et al., 2016)
  - POST-DEPLOYMENT
    - Continue to offer services after the immediate return of the service member. Family members often differ in their rate of readjusting (Flittner O'Grady et al., 2018).
    - Ensure access to services for National Guard and Reserve service members both on-installation and once they return to part-time status (e.g., National Guard Family Program) (Griffith, 2017)

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## Additional Resources for Service Provision

Don't go at it alone

- OneOp
- Military REACH
- Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

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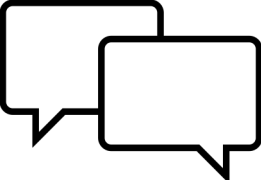





## Now what?

YOUR TURN:

Take a moment to think about how today's webinar pertains to your work.

What are some ways you can apply this information and these deployment readiness strategies to your own work?



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- 1.0 CE from the Commission for Case Manager Certification
- 1.0 CE from the National Council on Family Relations to Certified Family Life Educators (CFLE)
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