Supporting Children and Youth: Mentor Training for Senior Corps Volunteers

Providing Support to Military Families

Trainer:
Date:
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, participants will better understand:

- How military families experience the stages of deployment
- How volunteers can support children and youth in military families before, during, and after the service member’s deployment
- Additional support services in the community
Do You Know a Military Family?

More than 2 million American children have experienced a parent’s deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, at least 19,000 children have had a parent wounded in action, and 2,200 children have lost a parent in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Source: Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (January 2009)
Possible Needs of Military Families

- Family may be very young or not financially stable
- Family may not have a strong social support system
- Children may be sent to live with another relative (e.g. grandparent) during parent deployment
- Family may have experienced multiple or extended deployments
- Returning service member may need extensive care
Stages of Deployment

Before the service member leaves

Pre-Deployment

While the service member is away

Deployment
Sustainment
Re-Deployment

After the service member returns

Post-Deployment

Stages of Deployment

**Pre-Deployment:** Begins when service member receives notice and lasts until s/he leaves.

- Service member will need to train and spend long hours away from home
- Family will need to get affairs in order
- Family may feel tension, anticipation of loss, denial

Source: State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and National Guard Child and Youth Program.
Stages of Deployment

Deployment: First month after service member’s departure.
- Family may feel mixed emotions: relief, disorientation, overwhelmed, numb, sad, alone

Sustainment: Second month after service member’s departure until the end of deployment.
- Family develops new routines, sources of support
- Family may feel more confident, in control

Source: State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and National Guard Child and Youth Program.
Stages of Deployment

**Re-Deployment:** The month before the service member is scheduled to return
- Family may feel mixed emotions: apprehension, excitement, burst of energy, difficulty making decisions

**Post-Deployment:** Lasts at least 3-6 months after service member returns
- Service member reintegrating
- Family “honeymoon” period at first
- Renegotiate routines, responsibilities, need for space

Source: State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and National Guard Child and Youth Program.
Readjustment

- The deployment experience changes everyone:
  - Spouses have learned to adapt to new responsibilities
  - Children have grown and changed
  - Service members have changed and may be injured and need care

- Families need time to get used to each other again, develop new routines, roles and expectations
**Exercise: Supporting Children/Youth During Deployment Stages**

**Instructions:**
- Get together in small groups (3-4 people)
- Choose one person to record notes
- Read through the examples and discuss the questions.
- Jot down notes to the questions and be ready to discuss.
  - What can you say to comfort or advise?
  - What more information would you want?
  - What other ideas do you have to help?
Tips for Helping Kids Work Through Their Feelings

- Be sensitive to the pain or mixed feelings the child/youth is experiencing. Don’t expect them to adapt quickly.
- Encourage the child/youth to express feelings, but don’t push. For some kids, creative expression helps (writing, drawing, music, playacting).
- Listen for the feelings behind the words or behaviors. Reassure children/youth that their feelings are normal.
How children understand death depends on their developmental level.

People grieve differently and in their own way.

Know the child/youth and his/her situation; talk to your supervisor about the best ways you can provide comfort and support.

As always, if you suspect the child/youth needs help, tell your supervisor!
How is your community helping veterans and their families?

What resources are available?
Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.

Mother Teresa