

# ***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**



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

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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.

# Grieving Families

- ▶ 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!***

# Community Support

**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