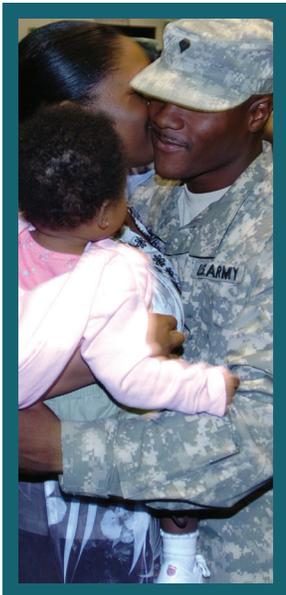




NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER *for*
HEALTHY MARRIAGE *and* FAMILIES



A Support and Resource Guide for Working With Military Families

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Introduction

Welcome to *A Support and Resource Guide for Working With Military Families*. This guide is designed to help safety-net service providers and other stakeholders sustainably integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into their services for military service members and their families. Safety-net service providers are people who work in Federal, State, Local, and Tribal agencies and help others achieve self-sufficiency. This definition is purposely broad because there is a wide array of people who focus their careers on strengthening the stability and well-being of parents, couples, and families.

This guide uses a three-stage process organized in chapters, with tools and resources for each stage.

Chapter 1 helps build or strengthen an agency's ability to engage military service members and their families by laying the foundation for a better understanding of military structure and culture. This process is referred to as building interpersonal relationships with military service members and their families.

This guide focuses on healthy marriage and relationship education because research shows that the core skills it teaches—including communication and conflict negotiation—strengthen both intimate and work relationships, including the ability to build a social support network. Learning these skills can positively impact a person's physical and emotional health, economic self-sufficiency, and stability.

Chapter 2 focuses on how an agency can build and strengthen interagency relationships and connect with existing military resource networks. These connections are important because when agencies purposely work together, their collective impact is often greater than the impact of any single agency alone or agencies operating in silos. By working together, agencies can pool talents and resources,

avoid duplication of services, and streamline service delivery to military service members and their families.

Chapter 3 provides tips, tools, and resources for integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into existing service delivery systems for military service members and their families.

This guide emphasizes the *healthy* in healthy marriage and relationship education. It is not meant to force military couples to get married or to stay married, especially if the relationship is physically or emotionally abusive. The integration resources included in Chapter 3 offer guidance for when an agency suspects that a family or family member might be in danger.

Purpose of This Guide

This guide complements other guides that organizations have created for military couples, families, and youth—all of which have been designed to strengthen military families. This guide includes research-based guidance, links to web resources, and practical tip sheets to help safety-net service providers.

This guide will help stakeholders:

This guide emphasizes Federal and military resources and networks to encourage agencies to integrate services within the existing military resource framework. This type of integration can benefit an agency because it complements, rather than re-creating or duplicating, existing services and resources. Linking services within the existing military resource framework also benefits military service members and their families because it maximizes and streamlines their access to available services.

- Understand military structure and culture;
- Develop, promote, and sustain healthy relationships with and among military service members and their families, as well as other service organizations; and
- Integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into stakeholders' services for military service members and families.

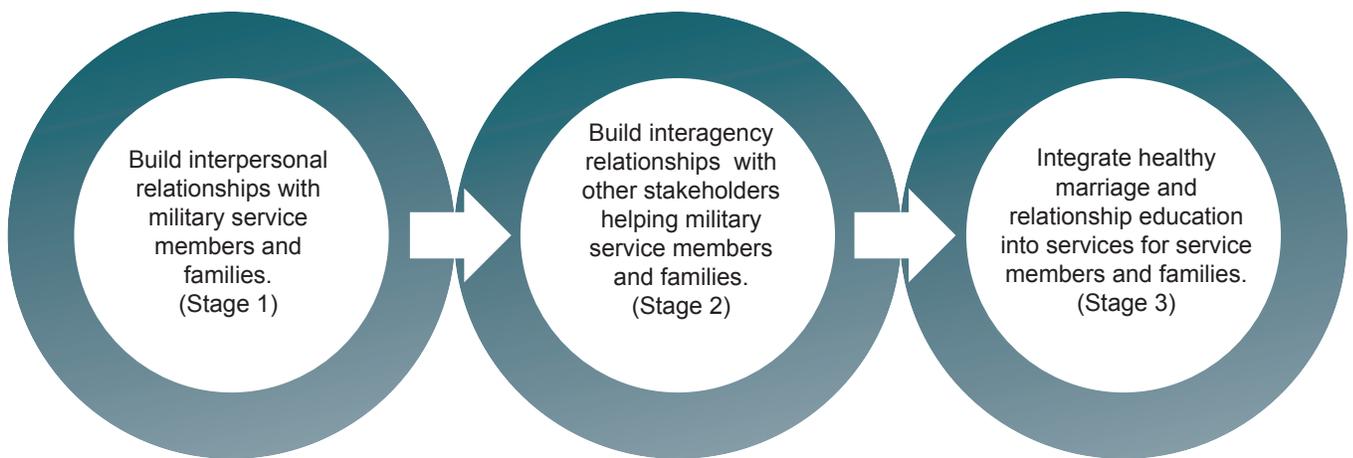
This guide specifically focuses on resources to build the interpersonal and interagency relationships that form the backbone of healthy marriages, military families, and supporting communities. It is important to keep in mind that there are a lot of resources for military service members and their families, and only a fraction are included here.

This guide is designed to help stakeholders—including administrators, supervisors, and safety-net service providers—integrate healthy marriage and relationship skills into existing service delivery systems as part of a comprehensive, culturally appropriate, family-centered approach to promoting self-sufficiency in military families. The term safety-net service providers refers to governmental agencies and programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child support services, child welfare, labor and workforce services, and Head Start, along with other organizations that provide military community and family services, education, youth independent living, and Tribal services.

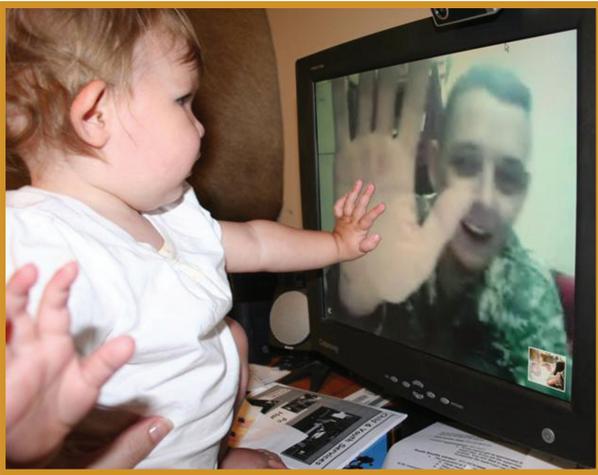
How to Use This Guide

This guide utilizes a three-stage process for integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into safety-net services for military service members and their families. Each chapter of the guide represents one of these three stages.

The Three-Stage Process



Chapter 1 covers the first stage: building interpersonal relationships with military service members and their families. This chapter includes facts about the U.S. military, as well as a guide to appropriate and inappropriate conversation questions based on conversations with military service members and their families. Developing a deeper knowledge of military structure, culture, and communication can help an agency engage and develop sustainable relationships with the military service members and their families.



Lt. Col. Nathan Blood, brigade effects coordinator for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shares a high-five with his 16-month-old daughter, Mackenzie, during a web camera communication.

Chapter 2 covers the second stage: building or strengthening interagency relationships and connections with existing military resource networks. Interagency relationships parallel interpersonal relationships because when agencies purposely work together, their collective impact is often greater than the impact of any single agency and that of agencies operating in silos. Building interagency relationships strengthens support for military service members and families at the community level by providing services that are coordinated, streamlined, and non-duplicative.

Chapter 3 covers the third stage: providing tips, tools, and resources for the sustainable integration of healthy marriage and relationship education into services for military service members and families. Healthy marriage and relationship education integration can be tailored to community-specific strengths and needs in a variety of ways; integration

can take many forms from simple brochures in a waiting room to multi-week group workshops. This chapter discusses different strategies for integrating healthy marriage and relationship education using a *Levels of Integration* concept developed by the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. It also provides links to integration tools like worksheets and tip sheets that providers can pick up and use to help strengthen military service members and families.

Working within existing community and military resource frameworks and using the tools provided in this guide will help sustain efforts to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education to strengthen military service members and families.

Stakeholders should use this guide as a starting point and quick reference guide:

- To better understand military structure and culture (Chapter 1);
- To better understand and connect with existing resources for military service members and their families (Chapter 2); and
- To learn more about the role that core marriage and relationship skills play in work, school, family, and military environments, as well as strategies for integrating healthy marriage and relationship skills into service delivery systems for military service members and their families (Chapter 3).

Chapters may be used individually, but following the three-stage process in sequence will generate the best results.

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Chapter 1: Building Interpersonal Relationships with Military Service Members and Families

Facts and Nuances of Military Life and Culture

A critical first step in engaging military service members and their families is developing an understanding of military structure and culture. Knowledge of the military is the foundation of sustainable interpersonal relationships with military service members, their spouses, and their family members. This chapter includes basic facts and statistics about the U.S. military and personal perspectives from military service members and their family members. The resources in this chapter will:

- Provide guidance on both appropriate and inappropriate questions and/or statements for military service members and families in the context of service provider inquiries and casual conversations; and
- Provide insight about service member and family member perspectives.

Some of the resources included are in the form of links to online media. To gain the full benefits of this guide, we encourage you to access these links.

Building awareness of the differences among active duty, Reserve, and National Guard purposes, as well as the nature of today's deployment cycles, will enhance understanding of the culture and commitment in today's all volunteer U.S. Armed Forces. This will help develop and sustain relationships with military service members and their families.

Knowledge of U.S. military statistics will help tailor healthy marriage and relationship education integration activities to the military population. For example, when considering the range of integration options—from distributing brochures to developing full workshops—providers should keep in mind that certain states have higher concentrations of military service members than others. For providers seeking to deliver educational workshops, the fact that more than half of enlisted active-duty personnel are under age 25 and only 4.9% of enlisted personnel have at least a bachelor's degree should be factored into curriculum selection to ensure that a young, non-college degreed audience will relate to and understand the material.



Spc. Orlando De Jesus, of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard 130th Engineer Battalion, reads the banner prepared by his children that says: "Welcome home Dad, you are our hero."

Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment

Less than one percent of Americans serve in uniform today, but they bear 100 percent of the burden of defending our Nation. Currently, more than 2.2 million service members make up America's all-volunteer force in the active, National Guard, and Reserve components. Since September 11, 2001, more than two million troops have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Fifty-five percent of the force is married and 40 percent have two children. Only 37 percent of our families live on military installations; the remaining 63 percent live in over 4,000 communities nationwide. Multiple deployments, combat injuries, and the challenges of reintegration can have far-reaching effects on not only the troops and their families, but also upon America's communities. These challenges should be at the forefront of our national discourse.

(The White House, Interagency Policy Support, 2011, p.1)

The section spotlighting the National Guard is included in this chapter for two main reasons. First, National Guard members and their families are more likely than active duty members and their families to live in a community that is not near a military installation. That means more physical stability but less ready access to military support services. Those National Guard members and their families must rely on State, Local, and Tribal safety-net service providers to provide services and support. When such service providers do not understand military culture, the military families can feel disconnected from their communities and community supports.

Second, the increase in frequency and length of deployment cycles brought on by a decade of war has disproportionately impacted the nature of National Guard members' service. National Guard members are meant to serve as part-time military support, but over the last decade they have frequently served lengthy, full-time deployments. Unlike active duty service members, National Guard members typically return to a non-military community, which may not be as ingrained in military culture and prepared to support service members and their families.

U.S. Military Statistics

This section provides basic facts and statistics about U.S. military forces.² Here, active duty refers to members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. National Guard and Reserve refer to members of the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve. Reserve units typically serve on a part-time basis, providing additional combat and specialized services support to active-duty components.

All branches except the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve fall within the reporting structure of the Department of Defense (DOD). The Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve are part of the Department of Homeland Security.

Unlike local community based safety-net service delivery systems, military service delivery systems typically include communication networks for military spouse support during deployments, targeted services for wounded warriors preparing to either return to their unit or return home, and tailored pre- and post-deployment resources.

Active Duty Service Member Fast Facts

Out of 1,458,697 active duty service members:

- 70% are stationed in one of these 10 states: CA, CO, FL, GA, HI, KY, NC, TX, VA, or WA;
- 85.6% are male and 14.4% female;
- 82.8% of officers have a bachelor's or advanced degree;
- 4.3% of enlisted have completed a bachelor's degree;
- 50.3% of enlisted and 13.4% of officers are age 25 or younger;
- 56.4% are married;
- 38.3% are married with children;
- 38.3% are single with no children
- 5.4% are single parents; and
- 4.1% of enlisted and 2% of officers divorced during FY 2010.

Overall Military and Family Member Population

There are more than 2.3 million active duty and Reserve military members—1,458,697 active duty and 857,261 Reserve—and more than 3.1 million active duty and Reserve family members (spouses, children, and adult dependents).

² All military service member and family statistics cited in this guide are taken or synthesized from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy) and ICF International (2011). *Demographics 2010: Profile of the military community*. Retrieved from [KWS ZZZ P LDDU RCHRXUHP LO 0 2 6 5 HSRUW B HP RJUDSKI FVB5 HSRUWGI](#) Other sources are noted throughout.



Lt. Cmdr. Chris Singletary, assigned to the Chargers of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 14, walks with his son on the flight line during a homecoming celebration.

The Army has the largest active duty force, with 561,979 members (38.5% of the active duty force); the Marine Corps has the smallest, with 202,612 members (13.9% of the active duty force).

Active duty members are 85.6% male and 14.4% female; similarly, the Reserve force consists of 82.1% males and 17.9% females.

Almost 70% of the active duty members stationed within the United States are in one of just 10 States—California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia are also among the top 10 states for numbers of Reserve members, along with Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. However, more than half the Reserve members (58.3%) are spread across the remaining states.

Age and Education

Active duty officers' ages are more evenly spread out than active duty enlisted members, with an average age among all officers of 34.7 years old. About half (50.3%) of the enlisted members are age 25 or younger, whereas only 13.4% of officers are age 25 or younger.

Active duty officers tend to be more highly educated than the general population; 82.8% have a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to 29.9% of the general U.S. population over age 25. About 4.3% of enlisted members (the majority of whom are under age 25) have completed a bachelor's degree.

Most active duty members (79.5%) have a high school diploma or equivalent, but have not completed a bachelor's degree.

Marital and Family Status

More than half of all active duty military members (56.4%) and close to half of all Reserve members (48.2%) are married, and most married service members have a civilian spouse.

Divorce rates are higher than the national rate of 0.3%, especially among enlisted members; almost 2% of active duty and Reserve officers, 4.1% of active duty enlisted, and 2.8% of Reserve enlisted personnel reported to have divorced during FY 2010 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

Rates of single parenthood are low in the active duty force at 5.4%, compared to 9.3% of the Reserve force and 9.6% in the general U.S. population (Lofquist, Lugaila, O'Connell, & Feliz, 2012).

More than one-third of active duty members are single with no children (38.3% or 542,495), and a similar number are married with children (38.8% or 549,409). Active duty members' children primarily range in age from birth to five years (42.3% or 527,670).

	General Population	Active Duty Officers	Active Duty Enlisted
FY 2010 Divorce Rate	0.3%	1.9%	4.1%

A Decade of War: Deployment Cycles Today

The national response to the attacks on September 11, 2001, transformed the meaning of commitment for the nation's all-volunteer military force. Since that date, more than two million members of the Armed Forces have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Deployment cycles are more frequent and longer, with higher post-deployment reports of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury (The White House, 2011).

Despite more than a decade of war, service members remain proud of their service, highly satisfied with their family lives, and happy with their lives overall (Taylor, 2011). These facts suggest that today's military members and their families carry a complex mix of pride, satisfaction, and stress related to their service.



Soldiers from the 772nd Military Police Company based in Taunton swiftly construct a barrier out of sandbags on Narrows Road in Freetown, MA to prevent flood waters from damaging the houses of local residents.

Spotlight on the National Guard

The National Guard is the oldest component of the Armed Forces and is made up of 54 individual organizations in each U.S. State and territory. It fulfills a unique dual Federal-State mission: providing national defense under Federal control alongside active duty and Reserve personnel in foreign nations, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and protecting life and property when called upon by a State governor, such as the mobilizations in response to Hurricanes Katrina in 2005 and Sandy in 2012. Typically, National Guard members serve on a part-time basis—one weekend per month plus two weeks during the summer. However, since September 11, 2001, the National Guard has experienced more frequent calls to duty and extended deployments.

National Guard members, when not on deployment or mobilized to action, tend to stay and live within their local community. That brings both benefits and challenges distinct from active duty service. Active duty service members and their families move frequently and are more likely to live within a military community (on or near a military base). National Guard members experience more physical stability but may have less ready access to military support services.



Caleb Riley (left) and Mark Beals play a board game called "Deployment" during Camp Arrowhead. Camp Arrowhead was designed to provide the kids of the Arrowhead Brigade with tools and friendships to assist with adjusting to the return of their parent from deployment.

School-aged military children describe what education and deployments are like for them in a video created for the White House's Joining Forces campaign. Children responded to these four questions:

- (1) How does deployment affect your daily life?
- (2) What are the differences between military and public schools?
- (3) How does the curriculum change?
- (4) What are the three hardest things to deal with?

View the video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTr2BwmT1z8.

A Personal Perspective

Last Lecture –Army Style, a speech given by Lt. Col. Mark M. Weber in celebration of the Army’s birthday and delivered at the Minnesota History Center on June 14, 2012, provides a personal view of what it means to be a service member (Minnesota National Guard, 2012). Lt. Col. Weber describes the multiple roles filled by today’s soldiers, the need for humility in leadership and service, the importance of distinguishing between volunteer service members and the causes in which they serve, and the gift of saying thank you to service members with action rather than words.



Lt. Col. Mark Weber of the Minnesota National Guard delivers a powerful Army Birthday address at the Minnesota History Center.

The 26-minute video is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCIEXOkrlw.

As of this writing, Lt. Col. Weber continues his own battle with “Buford,” his stage IV cancer, the tale of which he uses to help bridge the discussion between military and non-military audiences. Following the speech, Lt. Col. Weber’s son joins him on stage to sing a duet of *Tell My Father* from the musical *The Civil War*. Lt. Col. Weber’s own father was in the audience during the ceremony. In the song, a dying soldier asks that a fellow soldier bring a message to his father. In part, that message is:

Tell my father that his son didn’t run or surrender
That I bore his name with pride as I tried to remember
You are judged by what you do while passing through....
Tell him we will meet again where the angels learn to fly...
For with honor did I die.²

These lyrics capture the personal purpose and meaning behind the ultimate sacrifice that service members are prepared to make in service to the nation.

Care for our soldiers, but be humble in how you provide that care, and be humble in how you receive the thanks for that care.

Lt. Col. Mark M. Weber,
Minnesota National Guard

² *The Civil War* (the musical) was written by Gregory Boyd and Frank Wildhorn, with lyrics by Jack Murphy.

What to Ask and What Not to Ask: A Guide to Good, Awkward, and Ugly Questions When Talking with Military Service Members and Their Families

The questions included in this section are real questions asked of and statements made to service members, their spouses, and their children regarding service and life in the Armed Forces. The contributing service members and family members categorized questions as “good,” “awkward,” or “ugly.” An explanation of the categorization follows each question. Wherever possible, the contributors’ own words are used. Where it was not, the explanations were developed by a military family member based on discussions with peers and were reviewed by at least one service member. Contributors shared their experiences to provide guidance toward good questions to ask military service members and families and away from awkward and ugly ones.

This section is meant only as a representative sample and does not include all good, awkward, and ugly questions that may be asked of service members and their families.

Good Questions

The “good” questions are all open-ended questions that invite the service member or family member to share either his or her personal story about military life or reflections on the service member’s choice to serve in the military.

For a service member

- *Why did you decide to volunteer for military service?*
- *Why did you re-enlist?*
- *In what capacity do you devote your service?*

Explanation: The U.S. Armed Forces have been all-volunteer since 1973. Asking these questions (in a neutral tone) allows the service member to share a personal story about his or her choice to join the military and continue to serve. The third question demonstrates knowledge of the fact that military service members fill a wide variety of roles, each requiring individual skills and knowledge.



Bryson Couch, 2-year-old son of a Fighbertown Marine, looks at a photo of his father while sitting at home.

For a service member or spouse

- *When did serving become more “who” you are than “what” you are?*
- *How has your service shaped your concept of family?*

Explanation: These questions similarly allow the service member and spouse to tell their personal stories and explain how military service has shaped their lives.

For a child of a service member

- *What do you like about growing up in the military?*

Explanation: Contributors shared, “It’s way better than ‘Doesn’t moving around all the time suck?’ and it made me feel like the asker was interested in what I had to say instead of insulting the only way of life I knew.”

Awkward Questions

The “awkward” label is used for questions or statements that demonstrate a lack of understanding of military culture, but do not touch on deeply personal subjects like relationship intimacy or experiences around death. Awkward questions or statements tend to have underlying assumptions or presumptions about military life or culture. It may be easiest to avoid them by asking open-ended questions (e.g., who, what, when, where, how).

Self-reflection is useful before asking personal questions to assess whether a question is based on a previously held assumption. During self-reflection, it is important to examine any personal beliefs about military life and service, the source of those beliefs, and the completeness and reliability of any information and sources.

For a service member

- *I would have never guessed you were in the military and went to Iraq/Afghanistan. You're so friendly [or cheerful, smart, etc.].*

Explanation: This assumes that all those who have been deployed are haunted, angry, beat down, or suffering from permanent mental conditions. Most service members lose neither their basic personalities, nor their sense of humor after serving in a war zone.

- *Aren't you worried about the exposure to violence that your kids have by you being in the military?*

Explanation: A service member shared, “I think, and obviously [my teenage son] does as well, that this exposure—measured and appropriate—is actually good for them. It's about having a world view rather than an insular one.”

- *You were in the Air Force; what type of plane did you fly?*

Explanation: Service members in every branch fill a wide variety of roles, each requiring individual skills and knowledge. Instead of assuming the service member was a pilot, ask what the service member's specialty is or was.

For a service member or spouse

- *Is it really like it is on [insert name of reality TV show]?*

Explanation: No, it is not for the vast majority of military families.

- *Any of the following leading statements before, “But, I totally support the troops. I mean, I really do.”*
 - *[President X] is/was an idiot. We wasted so much money, and all those people died for nothing but oil.*
 - *I could never do what you did and I would die before I let my kids join the military. They're too smart for the military.*

Explanation: A contributor shared, “I support the troops” becomes a blanket for people to say pretty much anything else.” Others shared that actions demonstrating support—such as offering transportation assistance or making a casserole for the wife of a deployed husband who has just given birth—carry more meaning than the mere statement of “I support the troops.”

For a female service member



Sgt. Guadalupe Rodriguez hands snacks to a family waiting to receive medical care during a women's medical engagement held outside Combat Outpost Riley in Afghanistan.

Additionally, U.S. laws and policies continue to evolve. Current DOD policy provides for limited restrictions that prohibit assigning a female service member to any unit whose primary mission is direct ground combat. It is not uncommon for female service members assigned to other units to have served alongside ground combat unit members in Iraq and Afghanistan. Further modifications to DOD policy are currently under review (Burrelli, 2012).

- *Were you ever scared you'd be raped over there?*

Explanation: This question assumes that all female service members will eventually be assaulted when deployed to a war zone, which is not supported by available facts. As of February 29, 2012, there were 20,062 deployed female service members (Burrelli, 2012). In -2011, 42 out of 2,439 unrestricted reports of sexual assault in the military were suspected to have been committed by a foreign national.³

- *It's gotta be tough for a female to serve; don't you get intimidated by working around all the men?*

Explanation: This makes an inaccurate global assumption that there is differential treatment of female service members within the military culture and structure. Many female service members do not feel this way, particularly younger members.

- *Where are you from? (Or when the questioner knows the child is in a military family) Where do you call home?*

Explanation: A contributor shared, "I am 26 years old and I still don't know how to answer that question. At best, that question requires an answer that is longer than was wanted or at worst made/ makes people look at me like I'm a unicorn because I don't have an answer to a seemingly easy question."

- *Doesn't it suck to have to find new friends every time you move?*

Explanation: A contributor shared that asking "What do you like about growing up in the military?" was better because it "made me feel like the asker was interested in what I had to say instead of insulting the only way of life I knew."

³ The DOD addresses the issue of sexual assault through a variety of policies, programs, research, and activities. Victims have a choice of making restricted or unrestricted reports. Restricted reporting allows for confidential medical care and services without initiating an investigation. Unrestricted reporting allows for services and also initiates a criminal investigation. The DOD estimates that there are 19,000 sexual assaults in the U.S. military annually, the majority of which are unreported. Of the 3,192 sexual assault reports made in FY 2011, 2,439 were unrestricted and of those, 42 were suspected to have been committed by a foreign national. U.S. Department of Defense (2012, April). Department of Defense annual report on sexual assault in the military: Fiscal year 2011. Retrieved from www.sapr.mil/media/pdf/reports/Department_of_Defense_Fiscal_Year_2011_Annual_Report_on_Sexual_Assault_in_the_Military.pdf.

Ugly Questions

The following “ugly” questions—all asked of a service member, spouse, or family member—universally produce responses of disbelief and many result in less than composed emotional responses from military service members and their families. Although some measure of curiosity is natural, it is *not okay* to ask these questions. Avoid these negative reactions from military service members and their families by asking a “good” question, offering to provide concrete assistance to the family during or immediately after deployment, or simply thanking the service member and his or her family for their service.

For a service member, spouse, or family member

- All forms of *“Did you kill people or see people get killed?”*

Explanation: A service member shared, “Within days of coming home from Afghanistan I was in a restaurant at dinner with about 12 folks. The woman seated next to me leaned over and asked, ‘So, what was the worst thing you saw while you were there?’”

Another service member shared, “I’ve been asked ‘How does it feel to be a baby killer?’ And I can honestly say that I don’t recall ever killing any babies. Well, baby bugs. And I ran over a baby squirrel once. But then my girls started crying so I pulled over and I buried it so they’d calm down.”

Not all service members engage in direct combat. That said, a war zone is dangerous and injuries and deaths occur. Service members receive pre- and post-deployment briefs to help prepare for and cope with war zone realities and their transition back to non-war zone life. Their most traumatic experiences are deeply personal and not always shared with their own loved ones, which means that they are not appropriate topics for casual discussion with curious friends, service providers, or strangers.

- The child of a service member shared, *“It’s a tie between ‘Did your Dad kill people?’ or ‘Are you scared your Dad is going to die?’”*

Explanation: The contributor shared, “To the first one, not only do I not know the answer to that question, but I do not want to know, and he’s still my Daddy. To the second one, yes, I am. Since the age of three I have been exceedingly aware of what deployments and war are and that Daddy may not be coming back, but I’m not about to divulge that information to a person who just asked me about it like that.”

- All forms of *“How can you leave your children?”*
- To a female service member, *“So, if you deployed, who stayed with your daughter?”*
- To a male service member, *“How can you leave your wife alone with a one-year old child?”*
- To any service member, *“How could you leave your baby behind? I try to think of leaving my babies, and I just couldn’t do it.”*

Explanation: Parents typically do not like leaving their children for extended periods. Service members are no different from other parents in that regard. Nevertheless, they are keenly aware that their voluntary service means the possibility of deployment, which necessitates leaving their families outside of the war zone. All service members must have a family plan that indicates their plans for child care in case of deployment, and military leaders typically encourage service members to communicate regularly with their families about both expected and unexpected changes and adjustments before and after deployment.

- All suggestions of cheating or impropriety: For example, a female service member was asked, “Do you really believe that your husband remains faithful to you while on deployment?”

Explanation: It is generally inappropriate to suggest that infidelity is present in someone else’s marriage or relationship without a factual basis. This holds true for military service members, notwithstanding that divorce rates within the military are higher than the national average. The preparation for, separation during, and readjustment following deployments place stress on marital and family relationships. For this reason, healthy relationship skills are important to help couples manage this stress in healthy ways that build on existing family strengths.

- All suggestions that the service member can choose which war(s) to fight: “Do you think what you’re going over there to do is worth it?”

Explanation: All members of the Armed Forces volunteer for service and serve at the pleasure of the President. The service members’ personal or political views do not have any bearing on their duties. This type of question places service members in the uncomfortable position of having to state whether their personal views conflict with their professional obligations.

More Facts, Statistics, and Resources

Demographics 2010: Profile of the Military Community (Report)

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Marriage and Divorce in the National Guard and Reserves (Research Brief)

tinyurl.com/marriage-divorce-ntl-guard.

Air National Guard (Fact Sheet)

www.af.mil/information/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=160.

About the Department of Defense (DOD)

www.defense.gov/about/.

Chapter 2: Building Interagency Relationships with Other Stakeholders Serving Military Service Members and Their Families

This chapter is designed to help build and strengthen interagency relationships and better connect services with existing resources for military families. When agencies purposely work together, their collective impact is often greater than the impact of any single agency and that of agencies operating in silos. By working together, agencies can pool talents and resources and streamline service delivery to military service members and their families.

The Military Resource Framework

Developing and sustaining interagency relationships with other service organizations within the existing military resource framework is encouraged. Joining a coordinated network of service providers that already has established protocols for continuous communication and conflict negotiation allows an agency to model the core elements of healthy marriages and relationships at a systems-level.

This section highlights community-based efforts that are coordinated nationally and affiliated with the DOD or the White House. They represent efforts within the existing military resource framework that have established protocols for selection and coordination. Coordination is important because it (1) complements rather than re-creates or duplicates existing services and resources and (2) parallels healthy relationships at the systems level by taking advantage of established protocols for communication and coordination. Integrating your service delivery into the existing military resource framework also benefits military service members and families because it maximizes and streamlines their access to available services through known channels.

Military and White House Initiatives to Coordinate Community-Based Assistance

The White House has made supporting military service members and their families a top national security priority. As a result, there are several coordinated national efforts to meet family member needs at the community level. The sites listed below provide more information on these efforts and how to join them.

- The National Guard and Reserve's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program sponsors Yellow Ribbon communities, which are comprehensive networks that connect and coordinate agencies, organizations, resources, and employers to support service members and military families. To become a Yellow Ribbon Community, a community must develop a sustainable action plan demonstrating its commitment to service members and military families. These communities primarily service National Guard and Reserve members and families. More information can be found at www.btyr.org/.
- The DOD has established criteria for support organizations that serve active duty members and families. The www.ourmilitary.mil website (listed by category of assistance) is managed by the DOD Office of Community and Public Outreach. These organizations can be found at www.ourmilitary.mil/resources/community-support-for-our-military/.
- The Joining Community Forces Initiative seeks to develop and strengthen family assistance and raise awareness of military and civilian support networks in local communities. Information on the initiative can be found at www.jointservicessupport.org/communityforces/.

The Joining Community Forces Initiative

Joining Community Forces (formerly known as Inter-Service Family Assistance Committees) expands on First Lady Michelle Obama’s and Dr. Jill Biden’s Joining Forces campaign. This initiative focuses attention on local and community efforts to support service members, military families, and veterans. With the help of the DOD; other Federal, State and Local agencies; and non-profit entities, Joining Community Forces:

- Fosters a sustainable network of local support;
- Facilitates government, non-government, non-profit, and corporate partnerships;
- Leverages state-generated content, best practices, and training; and
- Guides community leaders and local commanders towards establishing and sustaining their own Community Forces (Joint Services Support, 2012).

More information can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces.



First grade teacher Beth Kocis briefs students and accompanying parents before traveling to place yellow ribbons at the homes of Soldiers deployed with the North Dakota Army National Guard’s KFOR-12 contingent.

Resource for Military Children and Local Educators

MilitaryKidsConnect, at www.militarykidsconnect.org/, is an online community of military children (ages 6 to 17 years old) that provides access to age-appropriate resources to support children from pre-deployment through a parent’s or caregiver’s return. The website has a special page for educators.

I will ensure that the commitments, partnerships, and resources endure well after the guns are silenced and our service members come home.

– President Barack Obama

Chapter 3: Integrating Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education into Services for Military Service Members and Their Families

This chapter provides information about the role that core marriage and relationship skills play in work, school, family, and military environments. It also explains different strategies for integrating healthy marriage and relationship skills into existing service delivery systems for military families.

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

Healthy marriage and relationship education teaches core relationship skills to individuals (such as youth) or couples, on a voluntary basis, to help them attain, maintain, or strengthen a healthy marriage or committed relationship. It often occurs in a group setting and is not meant to be therapy or clinical treatment for couples already experiencing serious issues.

A couple's relationship health can ebb and flow based on life circumstances, and it can change over time. Based on an extensive literature review, Child Trends identified the following as core constructs of a healthy marriage (Anderson et al., 2004):



Army Sergeant First Class Charles McElveen and his wife Luticia work together on an exercise during an Army-sponsored Strong Bonds relationship workshop. Focusing on conflict resolution techniques and other methods of strengthening relationships between spouses.

Statistics tell us that children from two parent families are less likely to end up in poverty, drop out of school, become addicted to drugs, have a child out of wedlock, suffer abuse or become a violent criminal and end up in prison. Building and preserving families are not always possible, I recognize that. But they should always be our goal.

– President George W. Bush

- Commitment to each other and any children
- Satisfaction
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Lack of domestic violence
- Fidelity
- Quality interaction/time together
- Intimacy/emotional support
- Duration/legal marital status

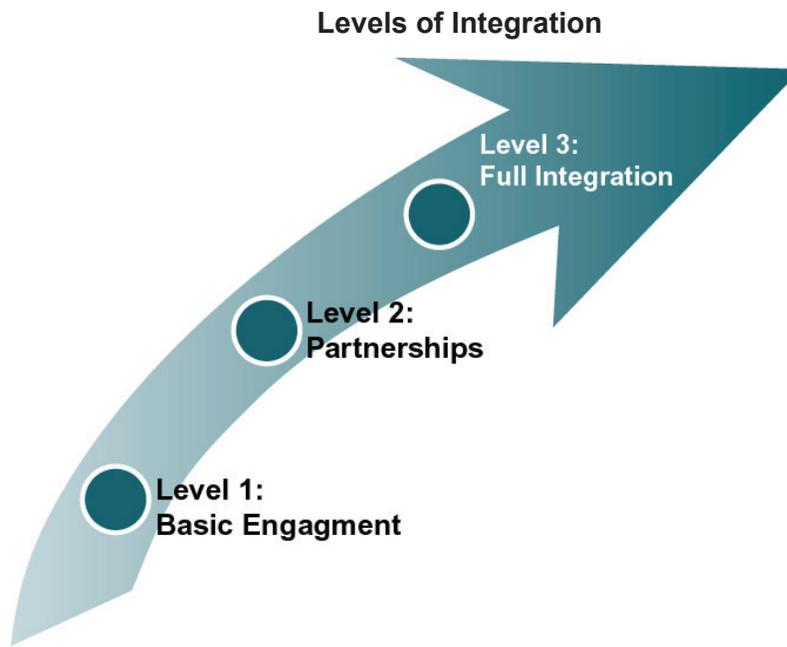
A healthy marriage is *not* based on socio-economic status, employment status, or family characteristics.

Research shows that an unhealthy marriage can negatively impact the couple's physical and mental health, job functioning, and parenting, as well as their child's social and cognitive skills and educational achievement (Anderson et al., 2004).

Given the potential impacts of a healthy marriage on family safety and stability, employment, and self-sufficiency, there has been national interest in integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into service delivery systems to benefit families, employers, and national welfare.

Integration Tips for Safety-Net Service Providers

Healthy marriage and relationship education skills can be integrated in different ways based on local strengths, needs, and capacity. The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families has created a *Levels of Integration* concept to visualize levels along a continuum of integration efforts.



Level 1- Basic Engagement

Sharing facts about the importance of healthy marriage and relationship skills is a good starting point for basic engagement of military service members and families, community members, and other stakeholders. Basic engagement strategies can include distributing tip sheets throughout the community, such as at family resource centers, military housing offices, or hospitals.

Level 2 - Partnerships

Engaging community members and other stakeholders also helps agencies reach the next level of integration—partnerships. Developing partnerships with providers within the community and the military resource framework is a great way to pool resources and expertise for the benefit of military families. All partners should share a common vision of promoting healthy marriage and relationships, which may require educating other stakeholders about the positive impacts of a healthy marriage on family safety and stability, employment, and self-sufficiency.

Through partnerships, agencies can identify resources and experts on various components of healthy relationship skills—such as communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial capability—and collectively integrate the components into a group workshop or class for military service members and families. The National Resource Center for Health Marriage and Families provides more tips and tools on developing partnerships to promote healthy marriage and relationship education, including a collaboration assessment and partnership agreement template, at www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org/partnerships.

Level 3 – Full Integration

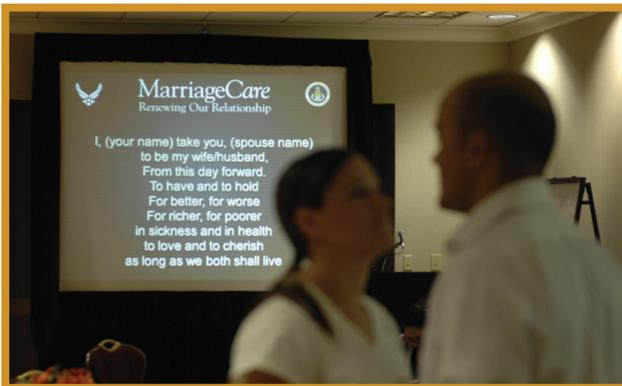
Most military installations offer healthy marriage and relationship education courses, workshops, or retreats to military service members, but the offerings vary by installation. For example, not all installations offer healthy marriage and relationship skills education to single or co-parenting service members. Additionally, many military service members and families do not live near a military installation; this is especially true for National Guard and Reserve members. Thus, stakeholders in communities throughout the country can help strengthen military families' health and well-being by fully integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into existing social service delivery systems that also serve military families. All service providers should be trained or cross-trained so they are prepared to discuss and teach core skills (e.g., communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial management) as an interwoven part of service delivery. Well-established partners can help effectively integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into service-delivery systems by providing training, tips, and other resources. State, Local, and Tribal stakeholders should contact the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families at www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org for assistance.

Integration Resources

The following section includes tip sheets for distribution, practical information about incorporating family safety protocols, resource links to help identify existing healthy marriage education providers and marital counselors that may serve as potential partners or accept referrals to provide services to military service members and families, and resource links to help agencies develop their own healthy marriage or relationship education programs.

Practical Tips for Healthy Couple, Co-Parenting, and Marital Relationships

Below are links to tip sheet samples that were created for marriage and relationship education professionals, but are useful to safety-net service providers for basic engagement. They include practical tips that anyone can apply to strengthen an intimate or co-parenting relationship.



Capt. Spencer Crandall and his wife Kristen say their vows to each other again during a marriage retreat in Charlotte, NC.

- *Why Trust Matters* (Tip Sheet)
tinyurl.com/why-trust-matters.
- *Why Forgiveness Matters* (Tip Sheet)
tinyurl.com/why-forgiveness-matters.
- *Why Commitment Matters* (Tip Sheet)
tinyurl.com/why-commitment-matters.
- *Strategies for Couples Dealing with Financial Strain* (Tip Sheet)
tinyurl.com/strategies-financial-strain.

Long Distance Relationships and the Home and Away Series by Ohio State University Extension

The resources listed below are part of a series specially developed by Ohio State University Extension to strengthen couple and family relationships when one partner's job takes him or her away from home. All or part of the fact sheets may be copied without permission for educational or non-profit purposes, with credit given to Ohio State University Extension.

- *Long Distance Relationships* (Fact Sheet)
ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/Long_Distance_Relationships.pdf.
- *Making the Most of Your "Home Time"* (Fact Sheet)
ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/Home_Time.pdf.
- *Keeping the Romance Alive* (Worksheet)
ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/ha_3.html.
- *Roles and Responsibilities: Who Does Them When You Are Gone?* (Worksheet)
ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5190.html.
- *Strategies for Staying in Touch* (Fact Sheet)
ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/Strategies_Staying_in_Touch.pdf.



A deployed paratrooper with 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, uses an online video chat program to talk with his wife and children back at Fort Bragg, NC., during the Christmas holidays. Many service members use chat programs, such as Skype, to stay connected with their families.

Safety First: What to Do if You Suspect Intimate Partner Violence or Child Maltreatment

Healthy marriage and relationship education is part of a holistic, preventive approach to strengthening families; it is *not* a safety intervention and it is not about forcing couples to stay in unhealthy or abusive relationships. For couples who are experiencing high physical or emotional conflict, particularly based on power and control dynamics, healthy marriage and relationship education may not be an appropriate or timely resource. The sites listed below can help providers locate local marriage therapists for couples who are interested in repairing a high conflict relationship or seek assistance for suspected intimate partner violence or child maltreatment.

Most safety-net service providers have protocols for reporting suspected violence or child maltreatment. All staff should be trained to follow those protocols. Below are some additional resources that may be helpful.

For Intimate Partner Violence.

- Local domestic violence shelters or the National Domestic Violence hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) can help providers that suspect intimate partner violence. Visit www.thehotline.org/ for more information. In 2011, the DOD established a confidential hotline for victims of sexual assault at 877-995-5247. Victims can also visit www.safehelpline.org.

For Child Abuse or Neglect.

Child Welfare Information Gateway can help with suspected child maltreatment. This website, at www.childwelfare.gov/responding/how.cfm, has national crisis hotline information and links to State reporting phone numbers and other resources. Child Welfare Information Gateway is a service of the Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- Agencies near a military installation should also contact their local Family Advocacy Program. All providers subject to DOD policy *must* report child maltreatment to the military installation’s Family Advocacy Program. MilitaryHOMEFRONT’s child abuse page, at www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/tf/childabuse, has more information and provides links to local advocacy programs.



Pfc. Michael Catlin and Pfc. Sara Catlin, deployed five months apart of each other but completed their tour together with Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division.

Referrals to Existing Providers

Another way to strengthen military couples is by partnering with a community-based healthy marriage program or a counseling service whose providers understand military stressors, such as deployment.

- Real Warriors’ Marital Counseling page provides information on military counseling and healthy marriage programs, at www.realwarriors.net/family/care/maritalcounseling.php.
- The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network (part of the Cooperative Extension system) provides information on local contacts for civilian healthy marriage programs, at www.nermen.org/stateinit.php. For couples who either cannot access military services or feel more comfortable using a civilian provider, local marriage and family therapists can be identified via www.therapistlocator.net.

Program Development and Curriculum Considerations

When there are no healthy marriage programs in a community or the existing programs are not tailored to meet the needs of military service members and their families, service providers should consider pooling community and military resources to develop a program or partnering with organizations that have expertise in teaching one or more of the core healthy marriage constructs and understand military structure and culture. Free and low-cost curricula are also available that can be adapted to meet service members’ and families’ needs.

There are many other considerations involved in program planning, development, and implementation that cannot fully be covered in this guide. The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families website contains lots of helpful tips and tools on full integration and program development at www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org/program-development.

Conclusion

The three-stage process outlined in this guide is designed to assist efforts to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into existing service delivery systems for military service members and their families. Understanding military life and cultural nuances are the foundation for developing interpersonal relationships with military service and family members. Interagency relationships create synergy for the integration of healthy marriage and relationship education at the community level and help establish a common vision of the benefits of healthy marriage and relationship education.

Integration efforts can be simple, through steps such as distributing brochures. Gaining community support and nurturing partner relationships may lead to a service delivery system that can support the full integration of healthy marriage and relationship education through workshops and classes.

As providers become more aware of the benefits of healthy marriage education skills, they can better identify appropriate opportunities to discuss and teach healthy relationship skills such as communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial capability.

Resources

Federal and Federally Sponsored Resources

National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families

The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families is a service of the Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which offers a variety of tools and resources designed to educate interested stakeholders in the benefits of integrating healthy marriage education into existing social service systems. The Resource Center also provides a range of training, services, and support to interested State, Local, and Tribal government agencies as they work to integrate these healthy marriage and relationship skills into their existing services in order to best support the families in their communities.

www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org/

Military Homefront—Resources for Service Providers

This DOD-sponsored site offers information about existing military support services for major stressors that impact military couples, including financial management, the exceptional family member program, new parent support, and deployment support.

www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/sp

Military Homefront—Deployment Guide

This is a comprehensive preparation guide for service members and their families, whether the service member is deploying as active duty, National Guard and Reserves, or an Individual Augment.

www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/sp/deploymentreadiness

Military OneSource

Military OneSource is a free service provided by the DOD to service members and their families to help with a broad range of concerns including money management, spouse employment and education, parenting and child care, relocation, deployment, reunion, and the particular concerns of families with special-needs members. It also includes more complex issues like relationships, stress, and grief. Services are available 24 hours a day by telephone and online.

www.militaryonesource.mil

Joining Community Forces' ISFAC Guide

This guide has all the information and tools needed to establish a valid, effective Community Force, including templates for charters, a sample memorandum, communication guidance, and more.

www.jointservicessupport.org/communityforces/documents/ISFAC.pdf

Joining Community Forces' Commander's Guide(s)

This guide can help generate a Commander's Family Support Communication Plan and Toolkit (designed for Commanders and State Leadership).

www.jointservicessupport.org/communityforces/documents/ISFAC-commander.pdf

America's Heroes at Work

A Department of Labor program that addresses the employment challenges of returning service members and veterans living with Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

www.americasheroesatwork.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's website has information and pre-screening tools for military families for food programs, including SNAP and WIC.

www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/getinvolved/military.htm

Service-Specific Family Resources

Air Force - Combat Support and Community Service

www.usafservices.com

Army One Source

www.myarmyonesource.com

Coast Guard – Office of Work-Life

www.uscg.mil/worklife

Marine Corps Community Services

www.usmc-mccs.org

National Guard Bureau Joint Services Support Gateway

www.jointservicessupport.org

Navy Fleet and Family Support

www.ffsp.navy.mil

Non-Profit Resources

National Military Family Association's Finding Common Ground: A Toolkit for Communities Supporting Military (Toolkit)

www.militaryfamily.org/publications/community-toolkit/

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

Toll free number: 1-800-959-TAPS (8277)

www.taps.org/

Operation Homefront

Provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of service members and wounded warriors.

www.operationhomefront.net/

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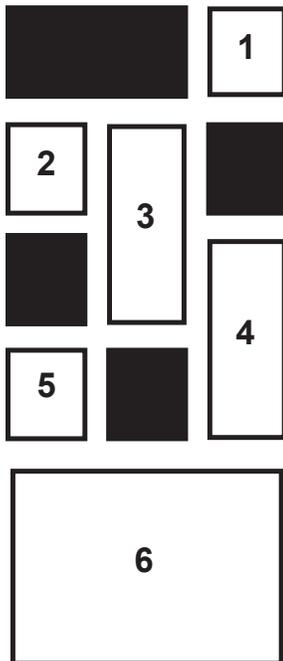
This guide was prepared by the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages and Families.

Acknowledgments

This guide would not have been possible without the generous contributions of service members, military spouses and family members, and civilian supporters. In particular, many individuals shared their personal experiences for *What to Ask and What Not to Ask: A Guide to Good, Awkward, and Ugly Questions When Talking with Military Members and Their Families about Their Service* in Chapter 1. Contributors include Sergeant Amber Blanchard, U.S. Marine Corps; Bekah Clark; Senior Master Sergeant Tyler Foster, U.S. Air Force; Lieutenant Colonel Cliff W. Gilmore, U.S. Marine Corps; Lieutenant Colonel Jas Logue, Australian Army; Gunnery Sergeant Angela Mink, U.S. Marine Corps; Senior Master Sergeant Charles Ramey, U.S. Air Force (Ret.); Anup Samanta; Master Sergeant Jason Tudor, U.S. Air Force (Ret.); Lieutenant Colonel Mark Weber, Minnesota National Guard; and Tech Sergeant Julie Weckerlein, U.S. Air Force Reserve.

Photo Credits

Cover Photos



1. Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Rosalie Garcia (5/23/12).
Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Roel Lunod, of the guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill (CG 52), receives the first hug from his daughter during a homecoming celebration at Naval Base San Diego.
2. Photo by Staff Sgt. Lakisha Croley (3/11/10).
U.S. Air Force Capts. Regina and Jared Wall, C-130 pilots with the 39th Airlift Squadron at Dyess Air Force Base, TX, served on their second deployment together with the 737th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at an air base in Southwest Asia.
3. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Anderson (1/23/10).
A Clearwater, FL, based Port Security Unit 307 member embraces his child after returning home from an extended deployment to the Middle East. While deployed, PSU 307 members provided harbor defense and security to ports, seaward approaches, and waterways within U.S. Central Command's area.

4. Photo by Staff Sgt. Rob Strain (11/3/08).
Spc. Joshua Gillard, a truck driver with the 418th Transportation Company, 180th Transportation Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, hugs his wife C'alace and daughter Jordan at the Kieschnick Physical Fitness Center on Fort Hood. About 200 Soldiers from the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) returned home during the ceremony.
5. Photo by Cpl. Jennifer Pirante (2/27/12).
Sgt. Lindsey Sine, supply administration and operations specialist with I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), holds her daughter, February 27, 2012, as approximately 150 Marines and sailors prepare to deploy to Afghanistan. Family members and friends gathered to say goodbye to the Marines and sailors who would be forward deployed for approximately one year.

6. Photo by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti (5/22/11).

The Joint Service Color Guard presents the Colors at the opening ceremony of the 2011 Joint Services Open House held on Joint Base Andrews, MD. The Color Guard was comprised of all five branches of the military.

Page 3: Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Meadows (8/16/08).

Lt. Col. Nathan Blood, brigade effects coordinator for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shares a high-five with his 16-month-old daughter, Mackenzie, during a web camera communication. Blood was high-fiving Mackenzie from the forward operating base and she returned it from Fort Polk, LA.

Page 5 Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph Rivera-Rebolledo (1/13/12).

Spc. Orlando De Jesus, of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard 130th Engineer Battalion, reads the banner prepared by his children at the Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on January 13, 2012 after returning home from his tour in Afghanistan. De Jesus is one of the many members of the PRANG who has served during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. De Jesus returned from his tour in Afghanistan to reunite with his family. The banner reads: “Welcome home Dad, you are our hero.”

Page 7: Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Justin Smelley (11/19/12).

Lt. Cmdr. Chris Singletary, assigned to the Chargers of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 14, walks with his son on the flight line during a homecoming celebration. HS-14 completed a deployment aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73).

Page 8: 65th Public Affairs Operations Center, Massachusetts National Guard (3/30/10).

Soldiers from the 772nd Military Police Company based in Taunton swiftly construct a barrier out of sandbags on Narrows Road in Freetown, MA to prevent flood waters from damaging the houses of local residents, March 30, 2012. A bridge on Narrows Road was severely damaged and rendered impassible by the swift moving waters.

Page 8: Photo by 1st Lt. John Shaff (11/3/12).

Caleb Riley (left), 11, son of Capt. Ian Riley, and Mark Beals, 10, son of Maj. Mark Beals, play a board game called “Deployment” during Camp Arrowhead at the North Fort Chapel, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, November 3, 2012. Camp Arrowhead was designed to provide the kids of the Arrowhead Brigade with tools and friendships to assist with adjusting to the return of their parent from deployment.

Page 9: Video by Sgt. John Angelo and Staff Sgt. Ben Houtkooper. (6/19/12).

In spite of his battle with stage four cancer, Lt. Col. Mark Weber of the Minnesota National Guard delivers a powerful Army Birthday address at the Minnesota History Center in Saint Paul June 14, 2012. Weber and his son also sing the Civil War era song “Tell My Father” in honor of Father’s Day.

Page 10: Photo by Lance Cpl. Courtney White (10/13/10).

Bryson Couch, 2-year-old son of a Fightertown Marine, looks at a photo of his father while sitting at home.

Page 12: Photo by Cpl. Megan Sindelar (7/10/10).

Sgt. Guadalupe Rodriguez hands snacks to a family waiting to receive medical care during a women’s medical engagement held outside Combat Outpost Riley, July 10, 2010. Rodriguez is assigned to the female engagement team, Regimental Combat Team 7. This is her second deployment, first to Afghanistan. Rodriguez, 29, is from Sells, AZ.

Page 16: Photo by Bill Prokopyk (10/9/09).

Centennial first grade teacher Beth Kocis briefs students and accompanying parents before traveling to seven homes in Bismarck to place yellow ribbons at the homes of Soldiers deployed with the North Dakota Army National Guard's KFOR-12 contingent.

Page 17: Photo by Staff Sgt. Ben Navratil (4/21/12).

Sgt. 1st Class Charles McElveen and his wife Luticia work together on an exercise during an Army-sponsored Strong Bonds relationship workshop at the Opryland Hotel on April 21, 2012. The workshop was a chance to work on conflict resolution techniques and other methods of strengthening relationships between spouses.

Page 19: Photo by Airman 1st Class Krystal Jeffers (9/23/12).

Capt. Spencer Crandall, currently assigned to U.S. Air Forces Central, and his wife Kristen say their vows to each other again during a marriage retreat in Charlotte, NC, September 23, 2012. During the 3-day retreat, the chaplain who led the event broke down the meaning of different lines of their vows and what those lines meant to each other.

Page 20: Photo by Sgt. Mike MacLeod (12/28/09).

A paratrooper with 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist Brigade), deployed in Iraq since August 2009, uses an online video chat program to talk with his wife and children back at Fort Bragg, NC, during the Christmas holidays, 2009. Operation Homelink, a nonprofit organization that works with corporate donors to link families and their deployed soldiers with computers, partnered with Dell Computer to donate 75 computers to families of 1/82 AAB paratroopers prior to its deployment.

Page 21: Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret (12/5/08).

Pfc. Michael Catlin and Pfc. Sara Catlin, deployed five months apart of each other but completed their tour together with Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division.

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