

Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services

HELPING CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS DEAL WITH DEPLOYMENTS

It is no surprise that children and adolescents who experience the deployment of a Family member(s) face a number of unique challenges and changes that may wreak havoc on their lives. The following helpful tips will help Army Reserve Families deal with deployments more successfully when it comes to children and adolescents.

Talk about the deployment in advance, Provide comfort items and Include children and adolescents in planning

Give your child and adolescent time to get ready for the separation and to share questions and concerns. Such items include a picture of the child with the parent(s) being deployed to an item from the parent(s) being deployed like a t-shirt or cap. Your child and adolescent may be able to give input on ways to spend time together prior to deployment, plans for deployment day, what chores he/she can do during deployment, and plans for homecoming day.

Encourage children and adolescents to stay in touch with the deployed parent(s)

In addition to the traditional letters, cards, emails, and care packages, children and adolescents can send drawings, paintings, and even copies of schoolwork.



Make communication with your children and adolescents a top priority during deployment

Share your feelings openly. By talking about your feelings, you give your children and adolescents permission to express their feelings too. Encourage your children and adolescents to ask questions. Then, provide answers that are right for your child's/adolescent's age and maturity level. Be honest. Children and adolescents can usually tell if they are being lied to or if the truth is being withheld from them. Often, they imagine far worse than the reality. So it is best to share honestly in an age appropriate way. Be reassuring, positive, and express your love and appreciation.

Maintain daily routines & Be consistent with discipline

For example, going to bed and eating dinner at the same times as usual can help your children and adolescents feel more secure. Handle problem behaviors as you did before the deployment. Do not use the deployment as an excuse to soften your previously instituted discipline plan.

Talk to schools and other caregivers

Too often schools and other caregivers have no idea a parent(s) has been deployed. Talking to them early and often will help them seek out additional resources and/or trainings. Further, it will help them to keep a closer eye on your children and adolescents. Encourage them to maintain frequent communications and/or updates on your child's/adolescent's academic progress along with their behavioral and social interactions.

Get help, if needed

If your child or adolescent is not coping well a month after deployment, professional help may be needed. Great resources to find assistance include Army Reserve Family Programs and Child, Youth and School Services, your child's/adolescent's health care provider, a mental health professional, a school counselor, and Military OneSource.

Take reunion slowly

Try not to be disappointed if your child or adolescent does not react the way you expect on reunion day. Even if your child or adolescent is thrilled to see the deployed parent(s), they also feel angry the parent(s) went away. With patience and love, these negative emotions should stabilize.

Separation is never easy; But with the right support, it is manageable. For more information, please visit www.arfp.org and <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment>.



This information has been provided by the Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services. For more information on resources and programs, please visit **WWW.ARFP.ORG/CYSS**

