



Kansas: Operation Military Kids

Military Families Coping with Deployment and Prolonged Absence

Phase 1: Anticipation of Departure

This can be a very stressful time for families as they try to accomplish many tasks and still set aside time for memorable moments. Feelings of denial and an anticipation are prevalent during this time.

- Engage the whole family in planning for the departure.
- Take family pictures for the child to keep.

Phase 2: Detachment and Withdrawal

Many prepare themselves for departure by physically and emotionally withdrawing.

- Talk about ways for everyone can stay connected during deployment and absences.
- Create a communication plan that everyone agrees with (emails, video chats, letters, etc.).

Phase 3: Emotional Disorganization

“Pile-up,” frustration, and fatigue are common feelings during this stage. Many changes and adjustments can cause an overwhelming feeling for everyone in the family.

- Adults need to set aside time for themselves.
- Provide a sense of normalcy for everyone by continuing routines and traditions.

Phase 4: Recovery and Stabilization

This is a time when a sense of normalcy can begin to set in. Family members have adjusted to their new roles. Resiliency and coping skills are used and recognized.

- Maintain ways in which everyone can stay connected.
- Make adjustments to the communication plan as necessary.

Phase 5: Anticipation of Return

Though a happy and exciting time, it can also be a very busy and exhausting time. It is important to keep plans realistic for the reunion.

- Involve the whole family in a welcome home arts and crafts project.
- Plan a welcome home celebration with the family, but be sure to respect the returning member’s desire for privacy, space, and quiet time.

Phase 6: Return Adjustment and Renegotiation

Everyone adjusts to their family member being back in the home. Routines and traditions should be kept, but it is important to keep them flexible and negotiable.

- Keep routines as normal as possible to provide a sense of normalcy.
- Transition back into family routines.
- Anticipate changed methods of childrearing, dealing with finances, and other household tasks.

Phase 7: Reintegration, Stabilization, and Sustainment

New roles have been accepted and routines become customary.

- Family members spend time together as necessary.
- Utilize extended family, friends, and other resources within the community.
- Military families begin planning for the next absences.

How You Can Help

- Establish a local Kansas: OMK team in your community or join the state team.
- Sponsor educational, recreational, and social events.
- Sponsor a family day out.
- Provide transportation to school activities, sporting events, or club meetings.
- Sponsor community covenant signings that publicly acknowledge the military-friendly nature of the community and its support networks.

Resources

Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families — www.militaryfamilies.k-state.edu

Military Child Education Coalition — www.militarychild.org

Military OneSource — www.MilitaryOneSource.com

Kansas National Guard — http://www.kansastag.gov/ng_default.asp

National 4-H Military Partnership — <http://4-hmilitarypartnerships.org/>

For more information, contact

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The information for this fact sheet is adapted from:

Military OneSource: *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective*

Real Warriors: *Preparing Children For Deployment*

Zero to Three: *Coping with Separation and Deployment* and *Deployment: Keeping Relationships Strong*

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