



HOMEFRONT

Winter 2022

YELLOW RIBBON HELPS SPOUSE FIND VALIDATION P.8

CHAPLAINS LAUNCH SINGLE AIRMEN PROGRAM P.14

COUNSELING OPTIONS FOR RESERVISTS & FAMILIES P.18

REDUCE STRESS WHEN THE FAMILY IS TOGETHER P.22

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AIR FORCE RESERVE YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM

HOMEFRONT

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YELLOW RIBBON HELPS SPOUSE FIND VALIDATION	6
PARENTS GAIN COMFORT WITH CHILD'S DEPLOYMENT	8
RESERVIST LEARNS ABOUT PERSONAL STRENGTHS	10
CHAPLAINS LAUNCH PROGRAM FOR SINGLE AIRMEN	14
PRE-DEPLOYMENT FINANCIAL PREP	16
COUNSELING OPTIONS FOR RESERVISTS & FAMILIES	18
LEAVING A CHILD WITH A CAREGIVER	20
REDUCE STRESS WHEN FAMILIES ARE HOME	22



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Westover ARB, MA
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Hill AFB, UT
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Senior Airman Pierre Bolden (right) and his spouse Johnnetta participate in the Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon Program event in Los Angeles, Dec. 18. Bolden is assigned to the 459th Security Forces Squadron at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.

YELLOW RIBBON HELPS SPOUSE FIND VALIDATION

By Master Sgt. Courtney Richardson, 944th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Reserve Airmen and their loved ones who attend Yellow Ribbon events are exposed to a wide variety of deployment-related resources, and one spouse said the event she attended provided her exactly what she was seeking—validation.

Johnnetta Bolden attended an Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon event in Los Angeles, California, Dec. 17-19, with her husband, Senior Airman Pierre Bolden from the 459th Air Refueling Wing at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.

Pierre deployed to Kuwait for six months soon after he and Johnnetta married.

“That was his first deployment and the first time I was away from him for that much time. It was strange,” Johnnetta said.

What made the distance more difficult was that she didn’t join her husband when he went to a Yel-

low Ribbon pre-deployment event.

During the pre-deployment event he attended, Pierre said he was hyper-focused on building the best foundation for his wife that he could. Not only did he collect deployment resources related to resiliency and relationships, he also learned about finance, business and legal matters.

“I brought back enough information to not overload her but to set her up with contacts in case she needed help,” he said.

Despite his efforts, Pierre’s deployment was not easy on Johnnetta, who said she had feelings that she didn’t understand.

“I need help confirming that my feelings were normal,” she said. “I’m seeking validation.”

The event’s keynote speaker, retired Lt. Col. Lynne Hull, gave Johnnetta just what she sought.

Hull painted the stereotypical image of a Hallmark movie-like reunion when an Airman returns from deployment, and went on to explain how that expectations about reunions rarely becomes reality.

Hull said reintegration is challenging. Deployers come home tired and jet-lagged and are thrust back into balancing all of life's demands. Loved ones at home establish new rhythms in the deployer's absence, and it can be frustrating and confusing when trying return to the rhythm they had prior to deployment

"Maybe you've been separated for six months and you've grown apart, haven't communicated, and now you have to reintegrate into life as a family. It might not be romantic. It may be hard. There may be weird feelings, but those feeling are normal," Hull said. "Give it some time and be willing to learn a new reality."

Johnnetta said she identified with Hull's presentation, and it brought her relief.

"She definitely went through my range of emotions, and it validated my feelings," Johnnetta said.

Feeling confident from the keynote address and ready to learn more, the Boldens attended several of the event's breakout sessions that best met their needs. Communication and mental health improvement were two subjects in which they had particular interest.

"I know [mental health] issues don't always show right away," she said. "He could be going through something that even he doesn't recognize, and I don't want to take him acting out of character as him being intentionally mean or not caring



Lynne Hull delivers the keynote address at the Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon event in Los Angeles, Dec. 18. Hull is a retired Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel.

about me. Learning to pick up the signs would be a big help."

The Boldens said they also attended and enjoyed classes about leveraging individual strengths and developing values-based goals.

"I feel really good about what I learned so far," Johnnetta said. "My biggest takeaways were that life equals risk, and when you don't give up, you cannot fail. The thing that stuck with me is that having value-based goals ensures that you are pursuing your goals and not the expectations of others."

Pierre said he was excited to attend with his wife.

"Being at the conference gives her an insight of what I went through to help us feel secure and be mentally prepared for today and for the next deployment," he said. "Being away from distractions gives us space to focus and to get into the right mindset to receive and digest the information."

The couple is expecting their first child in early 2022. 🐣



PARENTS OF DEPLOYER: “WE WON’T BE BROKEN. SHE WILL GROW”

By Master Sgt. Courtney Richardson, 944th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Deployments are often stressful events for Reserve Airmen and their loved ones, especially first-time deployments.

To help ease the stress, the Air Force Reserve Command’s Yellow Ribbon program holds nationwide events to connect deployers and their loved ones with resource that help them before, during and after deployment.

Major Gen. Bret Larson, the commander of the 22nd Air Force at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, spoke with guests at a Yellow Ribbon event in Los Angeles, California, Dec. 18.

“Your resiliency and your family’s resiliency is what gets you here, what keeps you here, and is our strength as a U.S. Air Force,”

he said. "The fact that you can pick up your life, operate in austere locations and know that things are being taken care of at home is really important."

Larson continued the program introduction by explaining the purpose of the conference and why those in attendance are vital to mission success.

"We want you to do your best job on the road for our nation's defense, but you can't if things are not right at home," he said.

Among the event's audience was Senior Airman Kyum Lee from the 302nd Logistic Readiness Squadron at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. She attended the event with her parents.

"I will be deploying to the Middle East in early 2022 and luckily I made it on the list to attend the conference," Kyum said. "Being able to attend this conference really shows me that the Air Force Reserve cares about me and my family."

Kyum has an older brother who is also in the Air Force Reserve, but she will be the first to deploy.

"I invited my parents to come because we were all nervous about me deploying," she said. "I really wanted to spend time with them and I wanted them to learn what the Air Force Reserve is like."

Kyum's parents were concerned the deployment would weaken the relationship they have with their daughter.

"The reality is that I've been really reluctant to accept that she is leaving because I felt like there was going to be some brokenness and that our relationship will never be the same," her father Sung Lee said.

But after listening to several Yellow Ribbon presentations, Kyum's father said he had a change of heart.

"Now I feel, through the conference, that we are going to be ready. We won't be broken. She will grow," he said. "This conference gave us resources to help all of us prepare. We can talk about how she can better herself like with school and saving money. I

feel like we are going to have a stronger relationship before she leaves and while she's gone."

Kyum admitted that the in-person event provided her and her family comfort.

"It helps that we are in a room full of people who are going through the different phases of a deployment," she said.

"We are not alone and

that lessens the fear."

Kyum and her parents said the event provided tips on expectations management, communication skills and building better relationships during deployment.

Kyum's mother Min wasn't sure her busy schedule would allow her to attend the event but was glad she found the time.

"I am very sad about her leaving but I'm proud to see her in a place like this," Min said as translated by Kyum. "I am very happy that I can make it."

Kyum said she feels more at peace with her deployment, especially now that the Yellow Ribbon event helped her family become more comfortable with the Air Force Reserve.

"Being here definitely gave us a reality check about what to expect before I go, but I have a lot more confidence about leaving, and I'm happy that my parents know we aren't alone," she said. 🌻

"Being here definitely gave us a reality check about what to expect before I go, but I have a lot more confidence about leaving, and I'm happy that my parents know we aren't alone."

*Senior Airman Kyum Lee
302nd Logistic Readiness Squadron*



Staff Sgt. Johnny Kheng, an air transportation specialist with the 72nd Aerial Port Squadron at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, attended his first Yellow Ribbon event Nov. 19-21, 2021, in Arlington, Virginia.

TINKER RESERVIST HARNESSSES PERSONAL STRENGTHS AT YELLOW RIBBON

By Tech. Sgt. Lauren Kelly, 507th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Staff Sgt. Johnny Kheng, an air transportation specialist with the 72nd Aerial Port Squadron at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, attended his first Yellow Ribbon event Nov. 19-21, 2021, in Arlington, Virginia.

At the event, Kheng attended many presentations aimed at connecting Air Force Reserve deployers and their loved ones with resources to help them before, during and after deployments. The presentation that resonated the most with Kheng was called “Bring your strengths.”

“I didn’t really realize what my strengths were until I came here,” Kheng said.

He said he learned that individuals primarily have six different strengths.

“I discovered that three of my biggest strengths are gratitude, appreciation of appearance and excellence, and love.”

In July 2020, Kheng was tasked to deploy for six months in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel where his unit worked alongside active duty service members until January 2021.



Staff Sgt. Johnny Kheng and his girlfriend Lukal video chat while during Kheng's deployment. Kheng credited frequent communication for helping maintain his relationship.

"When we deployed in July, my girlfriend Lukal and I had only known each other for four months," Kheng said. "Being apart for a six-month deployment during the COVID-19 pandemic was tough. Very tough. In terms of love, it taught me about trust and patience. Without those, our relationship wouldn't have lasted."

While deployed, with more than 20 other individuals from Tinker, Kheng said the team often worked 12-hour shifts,

seven days a week which eventually adjusted to having one or two days off toward the middle of the deployment.

"At the beginning of the deployment, my biggest stressor was just the unknown," Kheng said. "I had never deployed before. It was my first time, and it was a different environment, a different job. I've never actually worked in this career field outside of training. I was one of the younger ones out there. I had to learn quickly because missions don't stop, and planes have to fly."

Kheng said he learned quickly how to be gracious and show gratitude for the little things while deployed away from his loved ones.

"I had to learn to enjoy the littlest things I had while I was there, from being with individuals that I've never met before, to individuals that I've worked with throughout the years being in the service. I've learned to take it day by day and appreciate everything that was happening around me, good and bad."

Another stressor that Kheng encountered in addition to the new job and new relationship was his role as a full-time student. He earned a bachelor degree in business while he was deployed.

Reserve Airmen and their loved ones are encouraged to attend one Yellow Ribbon event before deploying and two events upon their return. Kheng was unable to attend his pre-deployment event but he plans on attending his second post-deployment event.

"It's been really great, and I've met some really amazing people and have gotten the chance to hear their stories," Kheng said.

"My girlfriend was the most supportive of everyone I know. She was there through the good and the bad throughout my deployment. We have a great relationship now and we've got big things coming up soon."

*Staff Sgt. Johnny Kheng
72nd Aerial Port Squadron*

Kheng grew up in Cambodia until the age of 13 when he and his family moved to the United States. He is now a citizen and travels from out of state to serve as a Reserve Airman at Tinker AFB every month.

"My girlfriend was the most supportive of everyone I know," Kheng said. "She was there through the good and the bad throughout my deployment. We have a great relationship now and we've got big things coming up soon." 🥰

THE YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM SERVES RESERVISTS & THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEMS



BECAUSE SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE EVERYTHING







CALLING ALL SINGLE AIRMEN: YELLOW RIBBON REBALANCES CURRICULUM

By Tech. Sgt. Juliet Loudon, 910th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Air Force Reserve Command's Yellow Ribbon Program launched a new course to better address single Reserve Airmen, whose deployment challenges are often much different than those in long-term relationships.

The Singles Enrichment Program, developed by the Reserve Chaplain Corps, kicked off at a Yellow Ribbon event in Costa Mesa, California, Jan. 29-30. The new program aims to improve overall readiness by focusing on the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of being a single Airman. Yellow Ribbon events provide access to resources to help Reserve Airmen and their loved ones before, during, after deployment.

Two Reserve Airmen in attendance at the Costa Mesa Yellow Ribbon event said they signed up for the new program because it is more appli-

cable to their current situations than the Yellow Ribbon classes they had attended in the past, which were more heavily geared toward families and relationships.

"My first Yellow Ribbon event, I was only 22," said Staff Sgt. Jeron Fyfield from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. "I could see how many of the classes could be useful to others, but not for me."

Master Sgt. Ilona Bowden, from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, said she was excited to see a class that was new, different and relatable.

"I appreciated connecting with people who were in the same situation and were here by themselves," Bowden said.

The program consists of multiple break-out sessions devoted to self-awareness, mindful choices,

healthy relationships and emotional skills. The aim of these sessions is to prepare participants to succeed at work, in their personal relationships and in the community.

"I loved the class and the focus on self-development. It is what I was looking for in previous classes at Yellow Ribbon," Bowden said.

Each Yellow Ribbon event has six breakout sessions. While the majority of attendees can select from various course options for each session, the Airmen in the Singles Enrichment Program are locked into a five-session cohort with the same classmates and chaplain team in each session. This format allows single Airmen to build personal connections over the course of the event.

"This program provides an opportunity to create a community among the participants," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Joshua Kim, Yellow Ribbon's senior chaplain. "It gives them a place to network, connect and establish friendships that can last their entire military career."

The program's format also aims to address the isolation that many single adults have experienced since the pandemic began in early 2020.

"Isolation is one of the main markers of suicidal ideation," said Chaplain (Capt.) Steven Nguyen, one of the program's facilitators who is assigned to Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. "The pandemic has caused people to separate to be safe, but could also be used as an excuse for an Airman to just be alone, which we don't want to see happen. If we get both the Airmen and their support groups into the Singles Enrichment Program, we can mitigate isolation."

The cohort format was a selling point for some of the participants.

"The main reason I took this class was because I was going to be with the same people all weekend. That sold me," said Fyfield, who admitted that at a previous Yellow Ribbon event, he was only able to develop relationships at the small-talk level.

Spending so much time together in a participation-based classroom environment caused the participants to bond quickly.

"As each class went on, the comfort level increased, and I was able to open up more, and

there was a definite vulnerability factor involved—a true sense of togetherness and inclusion," Bowden said.

If there is any indicator of this program's initial success, it is that many of the participants gathered after the event had concluded for the day.

"A bunch of us went to the mall and dinner after class," said Fyfield. "If I had not met them, I would have been in my hotel room watching Netflix all night."

The Reserve chaplains who developed the Singles Enrichment Program hope it becomes a benchmark to help Airmen throughout the Air Force Reserve.

"We are extremely excited about this Yellow Ribbon program that meets the needs of single citizen Airmen and their families," said Kim.

"Traditional Reserve wings do not have the resources to create their own programs to help single Airmen, and this program's core ideas would be a great tool to help Airmen at their home station."

"A bunch of us went to the mall and dinner after class. If I had not met them, I would have been in my hotel room watching Netflix all night."

Staff Sgt. Jeron Fyfield

Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland

Both Bowden and Fyfield said they would spread the word to other single Reserve Airmen that the Yellow Ribbon Program is taking steps to better meet their needs.

"I hope the efforts of providing a weekend long class for singles will break that stereotype, and more single Airmen will attend a Yellow Ribbon," Bowden said.

Brigadier Gen. Anne Gunter was at the Costa Mesa event to speak about resiliency. As the Director of Air Force Reserve Personnel with Air Force Headquarters at the Pentagon, she has a vested interest to ensure Yellow Ribbon is providing course offerings that help all Reserve Airmen. When she had a spare moment, she took time to observe the Singles Enrichment Program.

"This was something needed in Yellow Ribbon for a long time," she said. "I thought the class was fantastic and energizing."

Above all, Yellow Ribbon's senior chaplain wants Airmen to know that at every Yellow Ribbon event, there will be an inclusive community dedicated to the specific aspects of being single.

Kim said, "We want you to know you are cared for and loved, there is a place for you—and all your singleness." 🌈

Courtesy of Military OneSource

There's a lot to think about while preparing for deployment, but it's important to make finances a top priority. Set aside time to review finances with your loved ones so that you can have peace of mind down the road.

1. UNDERSTAND PAY & HOW IT WILL CHANGE

It's no secret that military pay is a bit complicated, and when you deploy, there are even more factors added to the mix. Learning how deployment will change your pay will improve your financial footing prior to deployment.

Revisit the basics of your pay today. The Leave and Earnings Statement shows monthly income and leave totals. Leave and Earnings Statements can be found on the MyPay website.

Revisit where your money is going. Because your pay and allowances are delivered through direct deposit, it's important to know where this money is going. Your allotments are automatic distributions of a portion of your pay that can be used to: deposit money into bank accounts; meet financial responsibilities like a car or mortgage payment; pay insurance premiums; invest in securities like mutual funds; and donate to charity. Take the time to understand your allotments and discuss them with your loved ones to avoid any confusion during your deployment.

Determine any additional pay you may be earning. The biggest pay change during deployment is the addition of special and incentive pay. Special and incentive pay is used to compensate for dangerous or hazardous duty assignments or conditions. Currently, there are over 60 types of S&I pay authorized by law. Find out what S&I pay is applicable to your deployment to understand how much your income will change. If you are away from your dependents for more than 30 days, you may also be entitled to family separation allowance under certain conditions. The allowance is \$250 per month, beginning on the day of departure and ending on the day prior to your return home.

2. PUT TOGETHER A FINANCIAL PLAN

A financial plan will help you and your loved ones manage household finances while you're

away and set you up for success upon your return.

Understand how you spend your money. The easiest way to start this process is to think about the expenses that you have every month – like rent, car payments, insurance or streaming services.

Take a look at a couple of months' worth of bank and credit card statements. How much did you spend per month on items like food, transportation, entertainment and utilities?

After looking at your expenditures, determine where you might be able to tighten your belt. Look for ways to save here and there, but don't be too harsh on yourself. It's important to make sure you understand not just your spending habits today, but how they will change during deployment.

Your deployment will change your income, so it's important to set goals for where you want to be financially when your return. Do you want to save up for a major purchase, put more towards your retirement or maybe pay off some debt?

You're not going to get far without credit. If you're planning on making a major purchase on your return, it's a good idea to make sure your credit can support that. You'll want to make sure that the agencies' credit reports match your records. If there are discrepancies, you will need to dispute them with the agency that is reporting them. You can find instructions on how to dispute errors on credit agencies' websites.

You should also think about your taxes. Your deployment will likely have some sort of impact on them, so take the time to understand what it may mean when filing taxable income. If you are stationed abroad or are in a combat zone during the tax filing season, you may qualify for certain automatic extensions related to the filing and paying of your federal income taxes.

If you are earning combat pay, it may be non-taxable. If you are an enlisted member, warrant officer or commissioned warrant officer, none of your

combat pay is included in your taxable income. If you are a commissioned officer, there is a limit to the amount of combat pay you can exclude.

The Internal Revenue Service has a dedicated resource to help military members make accurate and informed tax decisions.

3. PLAN TO SAVE SOME EXTRA MONEY

Whether it's from family separation allowance, special and incentive or tax-exempt combat pay, you're probably going to have a little extra money at your disposal during your deployment. While it's tempting to use all that money on something splashy, it may be helpful to put some of it away for the future. The good news is that there are a lot of tools at your disposal to make the most of those savings, including the Thrift Savings Plan and the Savings Deposit Program.

The Thrift Savings Plan is a federal government-sponsored retirement savings and investment program, similar to a civilian 401K tax-deferred program. Service members can contribute money from their basic, special, incentive and bonus pay without paying federal or state taxes.

The Savings Deposit Program is also available to service members during assignments and deployments to specified locations. It pays back a 10 percent annual return on investment (2.5 percent quarterly) on up to \$10,000 contributed from un-allotted current pay and allowances. Upon withdrawal, a service member's contributions to the Savings Deposit Program will not be taxed, but the interest earned will be.

4. UNDERSTAND YOUR PROTECTIONS UNDER THE SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act provides financial and legal protections for active-duty service members, including National Guard and reserve members, and their families. Taking the time to understand these protections can help you and your loved ones take off some financial pressures during deployment. A few of the financial protections that may apply during your deployment include:

Creditors must reduce the interest rate on debts to six percent for liabilities incurred before you entered active duty. If the debt is a mortgage, the reduced rate extends for one year after active-mil-

itary service. The reduced interest rate applies to credit card debts, car loans, business obligations, some student loans and other debts, as well as fees, service charges and renewal fees. Creditors can challenge this provision if they believe your ability to pay a rate higher than six percent is not materially affected by your military service.

No sale, foreclosure or seizure of property for nonpayment of a pre-service mortgage debt is valid if made during or within nine months after your service on active duty, unless carrying out a valid court order. This can provide tremendous protections from foreclosure. Be sure to contact your legal assistance office for help with missed mortgage payments.

The Internal Revenue Service and state and local taxing authorities must defer your income taxes due before or during your military service if your ability to pay the income tax is materially affected by military service. No interest or penalty can be added because of this type of deferral.

If you own a small business, your non-business assets and military pay are protected from creditors while you are on active duty.

5. GET FINANCIAL HELP IF YOU NEED IT

Preparing financially leading up to a deployment is no small task. There are a variety of resources to help you and your loved ones with everything from organizing and planning your finances to emergency financial assistance, including:

- **Free, confidential financial counseling or referrals** from an Airman and Family Readiness Center or through Military OneSource.
- **Emergency financial assistance from the American Red Cross**, including financial and disaster assistance, emergency communication support and community education.
- **Financial information during emergencies from the United Service Organizations** – a private, nonprofit organization supporting service members and their families by providing morale, welfare and recreation-type services.

- **Emergency financial help through your branch of service.** Before your deployment, you may want to preauthorize your loved ones to get financial help in case there's an emergency while you're away.

For more information, contact Military OneSource or your Airman and Family Readiness Center. 🐦



7 COUNSELING OPTIONS FOR RESERVISTS AND FAMILIES

Courtesy of Military OneSource

The Defense Department provides a variety of counseling options to all active-duty, National Guard and Reserve service members, survivors, designated expeditionary civilians and their families.

1. INSTALLATION CHAPLAIN

In addition to offering spiritual guidance, chaplains in military units and commands are trained

counselors who are attuned to military life. Many military members find a level of comfort and camaraderie in talking with a chaplain who offers confidential assistance and referral services for concerns that require additional help.

2. THE FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The Family Advocacy Program is a supportive resource for service members and their

families. The program provides support and resources to help families develop and sustain healthy, strong relationships. They can provide individual, couples or family counseling, as well as support groups and other resources. The Family Advocacy Program also assesses, refers and provides counseling for families experiencing domestic violence or child abuse and will also refer at-risk individuals for other immediate professional, medical mental health treatment.

3. TRICARE OR MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITY

Therapy services may also be available through TRICARE. Your primary care manager can refer you to appropriate counseling through a military treatment facility or a network provider in your area. If you are using TRICARE, make sure you understand what services will be covered and what co-pays you may be responsible for.

4. VETERANS AFFAIRS

The VA provides counseling services to assess and treat mental health issues. Veterans Centers have highly trained staff specializing in suicide prevention and offer free readjustment counseling to combat veterans and their families, including those still on active duty.

5. COMBAT STRESS CONTROL TEAMS

Combat stress control teams are available as field resource support for service members during deployments. These teams of mental health professionals are embedded with units and offer unlimited access to help service members address concerns that arise in the field.

5. NON-MEDICAL COUNSELING RESOURCES

Non-medical counseling programs provide confidential, short-term counseling with service providers that possess advanced degrees in a

mental health field and are licensed to practice independently. These services are designed to address a variety of issues, including marital stress, adjustment issues, improving relationships at home and work, stress management, parenting, and grief and loss issues. The two primary resources for non-medical counseling services are Military OneSource and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program.

Non-medical counseling services are available face-to-face, by telephone, online and video.

7. OUTSIDE MILITARY SUPPORT CHANNELS

Some people may be more comfortable working with counselors outside of the military. If you choose a civilian provider for professional assistance, make sure you understand the costs before you begin a treatment program. Community mental health services often use a sliding scale for fees based on the client's ability to pay or may require copays associated with individual insurance.

Many service members will avoid seeking the help they need for fear of stigma and negative implications for their career. Don't be afraid that counseling will negatively impact your career or the career of your spouse. By and large, counseling falls under protected information and is kept confidential. There are certain limits to privacy, which you should review with your counselor.

For service members or their families seeking counseling through military support channels, those services are confidential and family members may use counseling services without notice or consent of the service member. The only exceptions to confidentiality are for mandatory state, federal and military reporting requirements (for example, domestic violence, child abuse and duty-to-warn situations). Even then, only those who need to be notified will be informed. 🌱



LEAVING YOUR CHILDREN WITH A CAREGIVER DURING DEPLOYMENT

Courtesy of Military OneSource

If you are a service member leaving your child with a caregiver during deployment, doing some planning and organizing in advance can help make adjustments easier for everyone.

The following tips can increase the chance of a successful transition and help things run smoothly while you're away.

COVER THE BASICS

Establish a family care plan. A family care plan is a required deployment readiness document that lists the child's caregivers during a single or dual-military parent's deployment. It should include necessary information and documentation such as powers of attorney and other legal forms, health records and medical information, financial and logistical arrangements, details on how to access installation services, and any other information a caregiver might need to manage the household and care for children while the

service member is away.

Prearrange your child's finances. Don't forget some extra cash for unexpected items like new toys, prom pictures or other fun money. You can set up an allotment or direct deposit to the caregiver's account with the pay clerk at your unit's personnel office or use the myPay online service.

Explain how relationships change. Talk to the caregiver and your child about how their relationship will change. At first, it may be difficult for your child to see the caregiver as a confidant or authority figure, especially if they are not used to seeing each other often.

Keep your child at home. Deployment may be easier for children if they can stay in their own home. A non-military caregiver may move into your military housing to care for your child during your deployment. Discuss this option early in the process to prepare your child and the caregiver for changes and adjustments.

Track behavioral changes. Let the caregiver know your child may have behavioral changes while you are gone that are normal. Younger children may become clingy and fearful. Older children may act out, have trouble paying attention or experience sleep problems. Make sure your child's extended family, teachers, coaches and religious leaders know about your deployment so they can offer support. If these behaviors don't go away over time, the caregiver may want to seek help from Military OneSource, installation Child and Youth Behavioral Military Family Life Counselors, the installation Military and Family Support Center or civilian support services within the local community.

Make notes about routines. Knowing what the normal routines are can help your caregiver get settled and prevent unnecessary conflict. Maintaining normal routines can help provide a sense of stability for children during transitions.

Check in often. Establish a regular time for phone calls and internet chats for the caregiver and for children. Let the caregiver know how to reach you if your children need to talk to you. This is important for maintaining relationships during and after deployment.

MOVING A CHILD TO THE CAREGIVER'S HOME

If moving your children is necessary, the following tips can help make the transition easier.

Make the new home child friendly. A safe place for youngsters to play or a quiet study zone for older youth are just two ways to help your child adjust to a new home.

Find out about school admission requirements. When children change schools during a parent's deployment, they may need their immunization records or may make a move up to the next grade in a certain class. Learn more about available support for helping children change schools, from school liaison and special education support to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. You can also read more about ways to stay connected to your child's teachers during your deployment.

Look for similar programs in the new location. If your child has special needs, make sure a move doesn't disrupt services by accessing services such as an Individualized Education Program or a 504 plan. Learn more about military special education and child care resources such as the

Exceptional Family Member Program, or EFMP. Your installation school liaison can assist you with making your child's transition a smooth one.

Make sure your high school student doesn't miss graduation. Your local installation school liaison can help with all of your education-related questions and issues, including making sure your teen stays on track for graduation. Work with your installation school liaison to verify the out-of-state high school's graduation requirements. Contact the new school's administrative office before your senior enrolls to ensure your teen has taken all the required courses, or can be registered for the necessary classes, to graduate on time.

Emphasize equal treatment. Caregivers may have their own children at home. If the caregiver's children get sent to their rooms for disobeying, the caregiver might want to establish similar consequences for your child to be fair and avoid resentment. Discuss this with your child and the caregiver.

If possible, introduce your child or teen to people in the new environment to make the transition easier. It's always nice to know someone when you move. Ask your installation school liaison about the youth sponsorship program, and check out more ways to help your children cope with moving.

TIPS FOR A SUDDEN DEPLOYMENT

Planning is especially important when deployment happens suddenly. In this case:

Choose an interim caregiver. Ask a trusted neighbor or close friend to fill in as an interim caregiver until your child's predetermined caregiver can take over. Be sure to name the interim caregiver in your family care plan and include a special power of attorney for the interim caregiver.

Maintain an emergency fund. To be sure you have immediate funds for your child should a deployment pop up quickly, create an emergency fund. Speak to a financial counselor through your installation Personal Financial Management Services office located at the Military and Family Readiness Center. You can also call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.

Planning ahead and preparing as a family can help everyone adjust a little more easily to the changes that deployment brings. 🍷



HOW TO KEEP STRESS AWAY WHILE EVERYONE IS HOME

Courtesy of Military OneSource

You've got experience adapting to unexpected changes in your military life. And that "roll-with-it" attitude will guide you as you help your family learn ways to reduce stress and build resiliency while spending more time together during the 2019 coronavirus pandemic

(COVID-19). Localities may have lifted some restrictions, but quarantines could be reinstated to stop the spread of the virus and its variants. Here are some ways to deal with the pressures of sheltering in place and adjusting to changing health guidelines.

Stay calm. The uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 can increase the stress on your family. Focus on what you can control by employing some of the following strategies.

Lead by example. Your children are watching how you handle the quarantine, and they will pick up on your stress. Do your best to model healthy ways to handle stress by using coping skills when you feel tension building up.

Limit exposure to news sources. Reduce your anxiety by setting daily limits on the time you spend watching or reading the news. Start with 10 minutes a day and adjust depending on what works for you. Follow these stress relief tips throughout the day and share them with your family.

Keep your children informed. Ask your children what they know about the coronavirus and what they are concerned about. Talk with your children about COVID-19 and provide age-appropriate, reliable information. Help clear up any misunderstandings they may have and stay focused on the positive.

Engage in relaxation techniques. Find a quiet place at home, get comfortable and try this Chill Drill designed for service members and families. Stick to a schedule. Structure can bring you a sense of calm and certainty during this uncertain time. If you are working from home, here are some Tips for teleworking during the outbreak of COVID-19.

Stay connected. Family, friends and your military community can provide support and strength at times like this. Consider these ideas to stay connected while keeping your distance.

Keep in touch with family and friends. Schedule time to connect with family and friends through virtual coffee dates, dinner parties or casual catch-up sessions using video chat apps or phone calls. Bring back the art of handwritten letters and include your children, perhaps show-

ing off their artwork. You'll brighten peoples' day with mail from your family.

Flex your muscles together. Exercise is a huge stress reducer. Engage the family in a game of tag or by taking turns creating balance challenges and scoring it like a game of H-O-R-S-E. Create an obstacle course in the house or yard and time each other as you run, walk, crab walk, walk backward or skip through the course. Be creative. Go on a "Simon Says" walk around the house or yard and take turns being the leader.

Use your military community resources. If finances are causing you stress, review your options on Military OneSource. There are different relief organizations that may be able to address your specific situation.

Read together. Couch cuddles while reading to your children can build great memories. You can also use reading as quiet time – something you all do from separate rooms to give everyone space to relax. Use your MWR Digital Library for video books that read to children or e-books for older youth and adults.

Make dinner a group effort. Connect with your children by having them help with planning and cooking dinner as well as setting and clearing the table and washing and drying the dishes. Doing these activities together teaches them life skills and, more importantly, creates a space for them to talk about whatever is on their minds. They may talk more when doing tasks beside you than talking face-to-face.

Military families tend to be resilient. Keep reaching toward your family and military community for support and know that Military OneSource is always here to serve and support you.

Stay current. Stay up to date on the latest information regarding COVID-19. Select legitimate news sources that provide facts and not escalating drama.

Remember that it is natural for all relationships to feel tested during an emergency or crisis. 🧡

