



# OPERATION: Military

Kids

OPERATION:

★ ★ ★  
MILITARY KIDS

MILITARY FAMILIES  
IN OUR OWN  
BACKYARD.

# Kansas' military-connected youth

Cheyenne 0	Rawlins 204	Decatur 012	Norton 748	Phillips 958	Smith 333	Jewell 534	Republic 766	Washington 893	Marshall 20418	Nebraska 515	Brown 132916	DO. 273613			
Sherman 151	Thomas 546	Sheridan 0	Graham 610	Rooks 730	Osborne 601	Mitchell 493	Cloud 11146	Clay 9012599	Riley 1419941	Pottawatomie 1019580	Jackson 28384134	Alchison 253415	Jefferson 283748	LV 20412088	WY 14212790
Wallace 0	Logan 320	Gove 140	Trego 730	Ellis 325113	Russell 1059	Lincoln 269	Cloud 122078	Dickinson 251309199	Geary 53043908	Wabataunsee 303332	Shawnee 532587392	Douglas 16915981	Johnson 528620379		
Greeley 0	Wichita 0	Scott 003	Lane 0	Ness 2022	Rush 031	Barton 233330	Ellsworth 4153	Saline 138144106	McPherson 264319	Marion 172812	Morris 312723	Lyon 414732	Osage 384751	Franklin 485727	Miami 344535
Harrison 0	Keamy 310	Flinney 252826	Gray 201	Hodgeman 202302	Pawnee 969	Staford 124	Rice 71310	Rehoboth 759670	Harvey 654844	Butler 202297221	Greenwood 4410	Colfax 61316	Anderson 131312	Linn 1083	
Stanton 291	Grant 7257	Haskell 351	Ford 152617	Edwards 041	Kiowa 002	Pratt 676	Kingman 11145	Sedgwick 195617531023	Wilson 211113	Neosho 171023	Woodson 553	Allen 121816	Bourbon 132315	Crawford 726129	
Morton 0	Stevens 000	Seward 8107	Meade 134	Clark 387	Comanche 0	Barber 500	Harper 441	Sumner 483832	Cowley 395248	Chautauqua 122	Montgomery 384331	Labette 181611	Cherokee 24255		

Number of Youth in all branches of the military

Number of military youth in 3 age categories

Top number 0-5

Middle number 6-12

Last number 13-18

Resource, September 2012 DMDC report

DMDC is a computerized database of the Defense Manpower Data Center

# Military Culture



Culture is the knowledge, experience, values, ideals, attitudes, and symbols that are passed on from more experienced members of a community to new members.



# Elements of Military Culture

- Values
- Mission
- Unique cultural aspects
- Unique issues for military kids and families



# Mission of the Army

- ★ Preserve the peace and security, and provide for national defense
- ★ Support national policies
- ★ Implement national objectives
- ★ Overcome any nations responsible for aggressive acts that imperil the peace and security of the United States

# Unique Issues for Military-Connected Youth

- Lack of child care, after-school programs and youth activities; children home alone
- Multiple transitions break down the child's social support network
- Deployment/training cycle repeatedly disrupts family; military parent(s) absent for significant events
- Social/emotional/behavioral reactions may impact the future of the family and youth
- Schools not prepared to recognize, meet needs of children/youth of deployed members
- Normal developmental issues may be forgotten

# Emotional Deployment Cycle of Military Families

## Seven Stages:

1. Anticipation of departure
2. Detachment and withdrawal
3. Emotional disorganization, anxiety
4. Family recovers, stability
5. Anticipation of return
6. Adjustment and renegotiation of roles and routines at return
7. Reintegration and stability until the next deployment



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# A Word of Caution



**Most military-connected youth and their families are resilient**

# Family Studies and Human Services

## Research Questions

- 1) How do children of Kansas National Guard families experience parental deployment?
- 2) What contributes to the well-being and resilience of children of Kansas National Guard families?

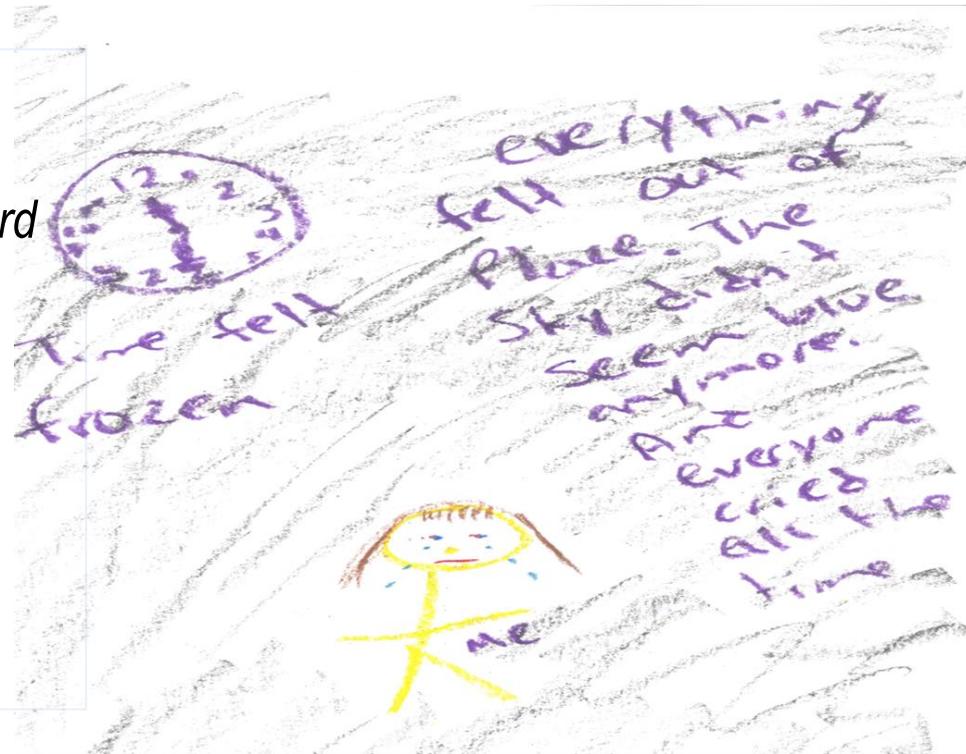
### **Theoretical Framework:**

Resilience should be understood considering the multiple systems that interact with the adolescent - family, school, peers, community, society and culture (Lerner & Castellino's *Developmental-Contextual Model of Adolescent Development*; 2002).

# Development of the Self

- Adolescents often described themselves as having grown up because of deployment.
- Military kids mature sooner than their peers.

*"I felt like I grew up more - I didn't.  
I acted more mature than other kids  
I did more at home than most, like third  
graders.  
I would help.  
I did not just like chores.  
I would like, every now and then  
I would cook a full meal.  
I liked it, but it was still it was not like  
other kids."*



# Family Life

- Concern for the well-being of family members was common

***Worry***

***Conflicting emotions***

***Parentification and added responsibilities***

***Family support and family pride***

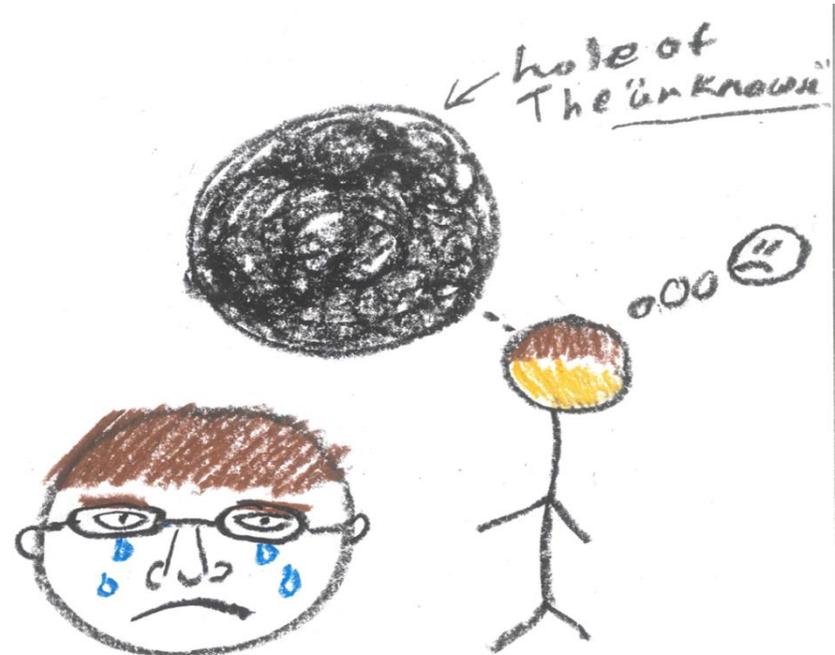


*“Well it’s (family pride) kind of double meaning, [be]cause, you, like can imagine that you don’t even realize how strong somebody has to be to leave their whole family behind just to fight for their country. And also, your whole family has to be really strong too, like, stay together through all of it.”*

# School and Friends

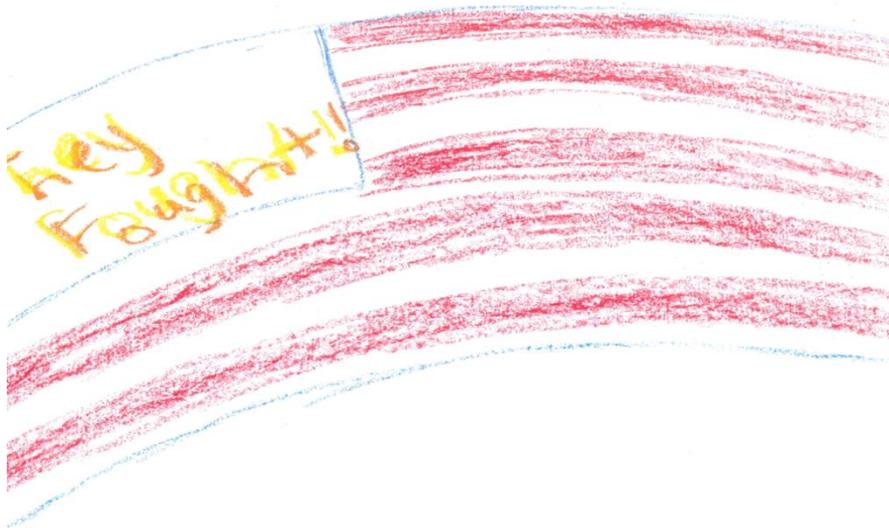
- Friends and school helped distract from the stress at home, although it lacked meaningful support.
- Involvement in school sports helped interrupt stressful lives.
- Most adolescents did not cite school as being an important resource.

*“...get queasy, you’re just done with school, you’re done with your friends, you can’t go to them for support and it’s just really hard.”*



# Community Connection and Social Media

- *Neighbors*
- *Kansas National Guard Specific Resources*
- *“...people who you can relate to, and people at like school. It is kind of different like having a...school Army.”*
- **Societal and media messages.** They want people to know that their parents “protect families” – in the US and abroad.



# In Conclusion. . .

- Themes revealed **resilience, self-reliance**, the importance of family, and experiences within other systems.
- Peers and schools could **not be solely relied upon** for emotional support.
- Support primarily sought from the **immediate family**; children benefited from **open family discussions**.
- Presented as strong, self-reliant and **mature beyond their years** - able to tolerate high levels of stress - but **conflicting emotions** still permeated their deployment experience.
- Intense **family pride and loyalty** often masked fear and worry.



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## Preventive Medicine

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ypmed](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ypmed)



### Prevalence and correlates of victimization and weapon carrying among military- and nonmilitary-connected youth in Southern California



Tamika D. Gilreath<sup>a,\*</sup>, Ron A. Astor<sup>a</sup>, Julie A. Cederbaum<sup>a</sup>, Hazel Atuel<sup>a</sup>, Rami Benbenishty<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Southern California, School of Social Work, 669 W 34th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0411, USA

<sup>b</sup> Bar Ilan University, Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, Ramat Gan 5290002, Israel

#### ARTICLE INFO

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objectives.** The present analysis sought to explore the normative rates and correlates of school victimization and weapon carrying among military-connected and nonmilitary-connected youth in public schools in Southern California.

**Methods.** Data are from a sub-sample of the 2011 California Healthy Kids Survey (N = 14,512). Items to assess victimization and weapon carrying were separated into three categories: physical acts (e.g., being pushed or shoved), nonphysical acts (e.g., having rumors spread about them) and weapon carrying.

**Results.** The bivariate results indicate that youth with a military-connected parent had higher rates of physical victimization (56.8%), nonphysical victimization (68.1%), and weapon carrying (14.4%) compared to those with siblings serving (55.2%, 65.2%, and 11.4%, respectively) and nonmilitary-connected (50.3%, 61.6%, and 8.9%, respectively) youth. Having a parent in the military increased the odds of weapon carrying by 29% (Odds Ratio = 1.29, 95% confidence interval = 1.02–1.65). Changing schools and a larger number of family member deployments in the past 10 years were associated with significant increases in the likelihood of victimization and weapon carrying.

**Conclusions.** The results of this analysis warrant a focus on school supports for youth experiencing parental military service, multiple relocations and deployments of a family member.

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Nationally, there is a growing concern surrounding adolescent victimization and weapon carrying. Several potential risk factors for peer victimization and weapon carrying have been identified in the litera-

In addition to family relocations, a large number of military students have also experienced the deployment of their parents or siblings, often to warzones, over the past decade (Chawla and Solinas-Saunders, 2011;



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Original article

## Well-Being and Suicidal Ideation of Secondary School Students From Military Families

Julie A. Cederbaum, Ph.D.<sup>a,\*</sup>, Tamika D. Gilreath, Ph.D.<sup>a</sup>, Rami Benbenishty, Ph.D.<sup>b</sup>,  
Ron A. Astor, Ph.D.<sup>a</sup>, Diana Pineda, M.S.W.<sup>a</sup>, Kris T. DePedro, Ph.D.<sup>c</sup>, Monica C. Esqueda, M.Ed.<sup>d</sup>,  
and Hazel Atuel, Ph.D.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Social Work, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

<sup>b</sup> School of Social Work, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

<sup>c</sup> College of Educational Studies, Chapman University, Orange, California

<sup>d</sup> Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

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*Keywords:* Military; Family; Adolescent; Depressive symptoms; Suicidal ideation

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The mental health of children is a primary public health concern; adolescents of military personnel may be at increased risk of experiencing poorer well-being overall and depressive symptoms specifically. These adolescents experience individual and intrafamilial stressors of parental deployment and reintegration, which are directly and indirectly associated with internalizing behaviors.

**Purpose:** The present study sought to better understand the influence of parental military connectedness and parental deployment on adolescent mental health.

**Methods:** Data from the 2011 California Healthy Kids Survey examined feeling sad or hopeless, suicidal ideation, well-being, and depressive symptoms by military connectedness in a subsample ( $n = 14,299$ ) of seventh-, ninth-, and 11th-grade California adolescents. Cross-classification tables and multiple logistic regression analyses were used.

**Results:** More than 13% of the sample had a parent or sibling in the military. Those with military connections were more likely to report depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. Controlling for grade, gender, and race/ethnicity, reporting any familial deployment compared with no deployments was associated with increasing odds of experiencing sadness or hopelessness, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation.

**Conclusions:** Findings emphasize the increased risk of mental health issues among youth with parents (and siblings) in the military. Although deployment-related mental health stressors are less likely during peace, during times of war there is a need for increased screening in primary care and school settings. Systematic referral systems and collaboration with community-based mental health centers will bolster screening and services.

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### IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

This study's findings indicate an increased risk of mental health issues among youth with a parent or sibling in the military and a need for screening and referral systems in primary care and school settings.

# What Prevents Families From Seeking Help?



- Lack of community awareness.
- Civilians typically do not notice or meet the needs of military families.
- Civilians are unfamiliar with helpful resources.
- Deployments and trainings repeatedly disrupt families.
- Families are often hesitant to ask for help.

# Barriers to Seeking Help in the Military

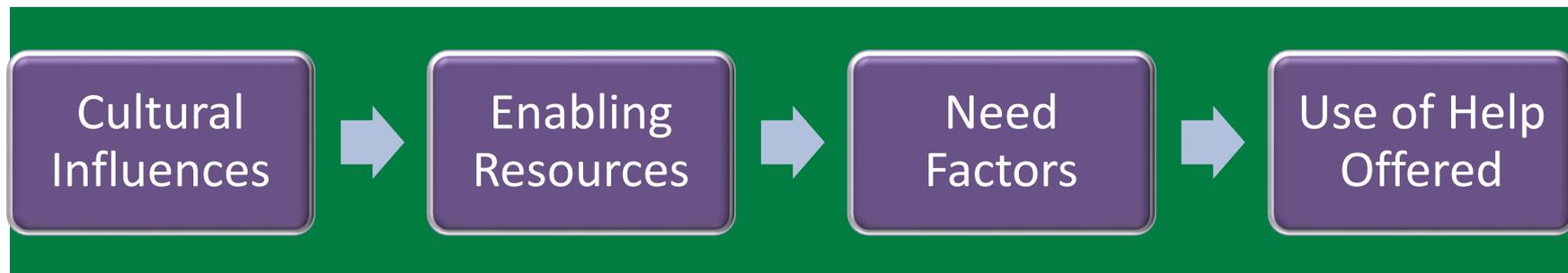


- Negative affect on one's career
- Fear of being excluded or demoted
- Being seen as weak, dependent, and incompetent
- Belief that one should have control over their own problems
- Disconnect with civilian values
- Civilians cannot understand or help their unique struggles
- Lack of access to resources, networks

(Blaisure et al., 2012; Greene-Shortridge et al., 2007, Hoge et al., 2004; Lunaso et al., 20120; Visco, 2009; Wright et al., 2012)

# Understanding Help Seeking

- Perception of the distress
- Ability to cope
- Self-efficacy, self-reliance, competency
- Belief there is a solution
- Attitude toward self-disclosure, openness, vulnerability



(Hinson & Swanson, 1993; Lee, 1996; Vogel, 2003; Vogel et al., 2006; Wacker & Roberto, 2008)

# Effectively Offering Help

- Be a **credible source** (fairness, open-mindedness, honesty)
- Focus on **family strengths**
- Be **respectful** of military culture
- Gain **support** and **collaborate**
- Build **rapport** and respect
- Build **trust** through **listening**



*"First and foremost, we listen. The biggest thing that we do is to help normalize a lot of the feelings that people have and to help put them in perspective."*

(Dr. Reich in Kubetin, 2008, p.22)

# Building from Strength

*“. . . resilience is nurtured by caring relationships – with our loved ones and with our communities.”*

(Blaisure et al., 2012, p.81)



- Promote opportunities for family communication, flexibility and connection
- Educate others about military culture
- Reduce the stigma associated with seeking help
- Have realistic expectations
- Promote contact with others who are experiencing similar problems
- Model positive coping skills
- Maintain contact during good and bad times
- Celebrate and recognize strength

(Blaisure et al., 2012; Gerwitz et al., 2011, Greene-Shortridge et al., 2007; Marek et al., 2012)

# Communities Can Foster Strong Military Families

- Communicate resilience
- Focus on strengths
- Build circles of support around each family member
- Be appropriate - know when to “stand down”, and don’t give up!





For more information or to register, contact:

**Operation Military Kids (OMK)  
K-State Research and Extension**

**Jackie Lynn Cox,  
OMK Retreat Coordinator  
cox1@ksu.edu  
(785) 532-1947 or 532-5773**

**Space limited to 12 girls and their female mentors.**

**Retreat fee of \$30/participant is due by 25<sup>th</sup> of July, 2014. Your fee helps pay for: three meals, snacks, materials and location.**

**Sponsored by:**



## ***Lean In* military-connected Girls and Moms (female mentor) Retreat**

Come join us at a weekend retreat for military-connected (guard, reserve, active duty) middle school age girls, their sisters, and mothers/female mentors held in Kansas. *Lean In* is filled with fun, health and learning about girl power to prevent bullying and build resilience. Retreat leaders are K-State University female students, their instructors, and professors.

***Is a member of your family connected to the military? And are you a middle school aged girl or will be next school year?***

**If so, come join us!  
August 1<sup>st</sup> (Friday) to  
August 2<sup>nd</sup> (Saturday), 2014  
from 1pm to 1pm at the  
First United Methodist Church,  
Harris Activity Center,  
Manhattan, KS**



# Learn More . . .

Elaine Johannes – [ejohanne@ksu.edu](mailto:ejohanne@ksu.edu)

Kansas Operation: Military Kids (OMK)

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785-532-5773 or 785-532-7720