



“Addressing the Needs of Military Affiliated Students in the School Setting”

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Introduction

- **Approximately two million military children have experienced a parental deployment since 2001.**
- **1/3 of school age military children show psychosocial behaviors such as being anxious, worrying often, and crying more frequently.**
- **Today, you will benefit from an experiential presentation that is designed to enhance your knowledge related to military affiliated children.**
- **Russana: LAUSD Military Connected Children, Military Spouse and Family, previous employment with Veteran's Affairs, and current Military Co-coordinator at USC Field Education.**
- **Umeka: Military Spouse, Military Spouse and Family, previous employment with Veteran's Affairs, and current Military Co-Coordinator at USC Field Education.**



Learning Objectives

- **An overview of the military culture and its impact on service members, veteran's and military spouses and children.**
- **Will learn how to identify the social emotional effects of the various stages of deployment for all members of a military family.**
- **Will receive strategies that school-based support services personnel may provide to ameliorate transitional periods for military students and their families.**

Military Culture Relevance

❖ Children and Family
Support



❖ Create and sustain
Trauma Sensitive
Schools



Military Culture



“Mission being everything and to never accept defeat”

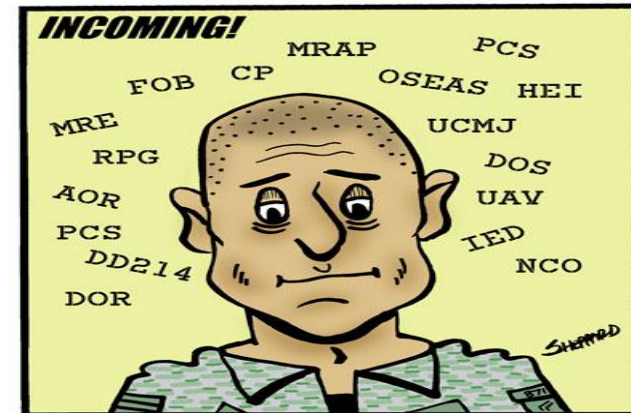
Values

Common Bond

All Veteran's both Combat and Non-Combat

Military Diversity

- Language
- Uniform
- Acronyms
- Appearance
- Fitness
- Stripping down a weapon
- Missions are different



"The longer I stay in the military, the deeper I get into learning a second language."



THIS combination of images obtained from the Department of Defence shows the combat uniforms of different US military services. (Left to right) Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy and the Coast Guard.—AFP



Downside to Military Culture

- **Veteran's Reluctance to seek care when needed**
- **"5 in 10 veterans report a significant mental or physical health issue for which they are not receiving care" (Bustamante, 2014).**
- **Stigma**
- **In 2014, An average of 20 Veteran's died from suicide each day (Veteran Affairs, 2016)**



**Operation
Enduring
Freedom (OEF)**
2001- Present
Afghanistan
Response to 9/11
104,000 troops
serving and 15%
women

**Operation
Iraqi
Freedom
(OIF)**
2003 – 2010
Iraq
248,000
served and
15% women

**Operations New
Dawn (OND)**
2010 to present
2.4 million have
served, 56%
Active Duty;
44% Guard and
Reserve

CURRENT CONFLICTS



Deployment Stressors

- Frequent Relocations
- Mission first over family responsibilities
- High work demands
- Combat Exposures
- Serious Injuries
- War related traumatic events
- Risk for substance abuse, mental, physical health problems
- Reintegration



Family Stress

- **Significant increase in separations, divorce, and domestic violence**
- **Children must cope with their parent who has changed profoundly during war**
- **Reserve and Guards – Only military in the neighborhood. Children may feel unsupported or isolated**



5 MILLION AMERICANS ARE PART OF TODAY'S MILITARY FAMILY

ABC

CHILDREN TYPICALLY MOVE **6 — 9** TIMES BETWEEN KINDERGARTEN AND HIGH SCHOOL



2 THERE ARE  MILLION MILITARY CHILDREN



MILITARY SPOUSES ARE UNEMPLOYED OR ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK

Student Support



Active Duty

- Active Duty Post – Children are surrounded by others who are experiencing the same challenges.**

- Trained Counselors to support them during separation and readjustment challenges.**



Student Support

- **Non Active Duty**

- Children may not receive the same support by trained military counselors in schools.





ACTIVE DUTY & RESERVE FORCES STATISTICS

(U.S. CENSUS Bureau, 2010 & Department of Defense - 2010)

- **1.5 million active duty servicemembers**
- **210,485 are female servicemembers**
- **857,261 National Guard & Reserves**



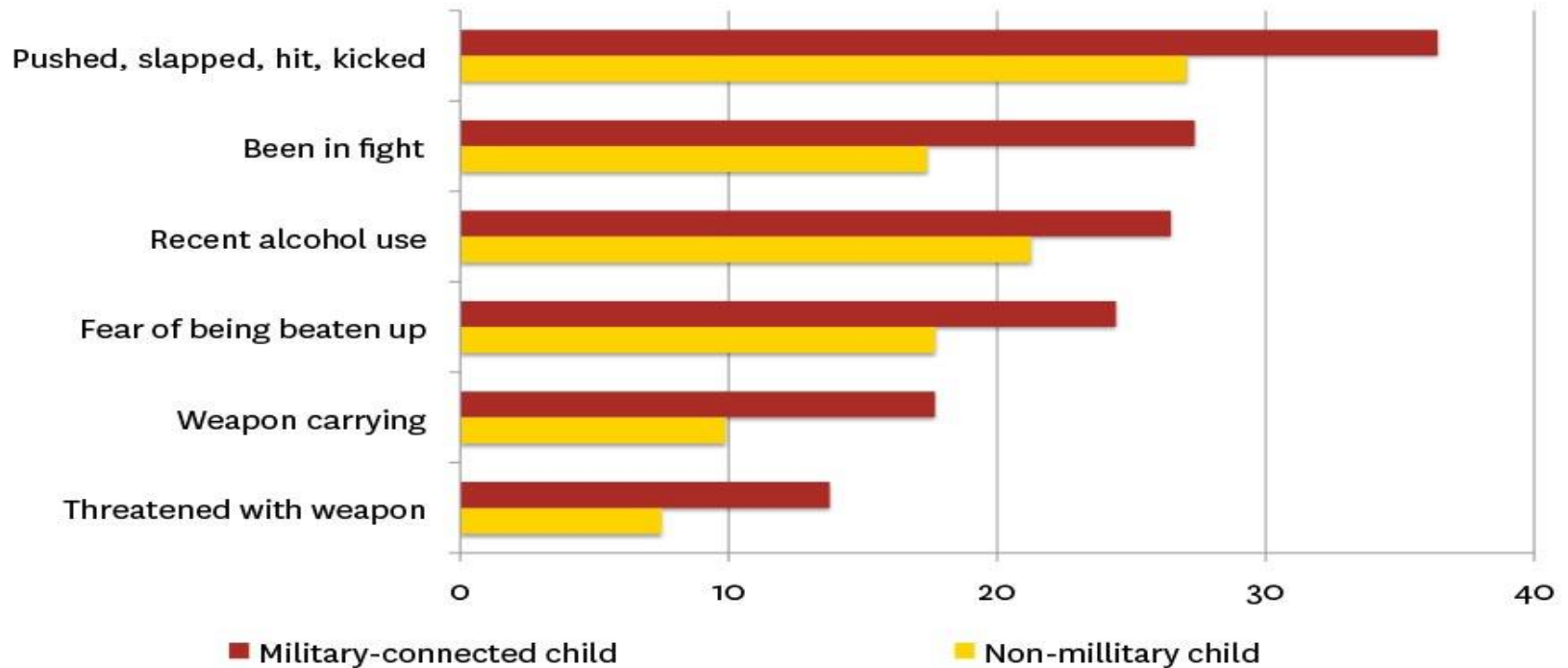
OUR NATIONS VETERANS

(U.S. CENSUS BUREAU - December 13, 2012)

- **Approximately 21.8 million veterans in the U.S.**
- **20.2 million are men**
- **1.6 million are women**
- **17.5 million are white; 2.4 million are Black; 1.2 million are Latino; 265,000 are Asian; 157,000 are American Indian or Alaska Native; 28,000 are Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders**
- **California is among the three states with the highest veteran population of 2 million; Texas and Florida have 1.6 million veterans**

Differences between military- and non-military-connected youth

A USC School of Social Work study examined a statewide survey of 688,000 California students regarding their experiences as middle- and high-schoolers:

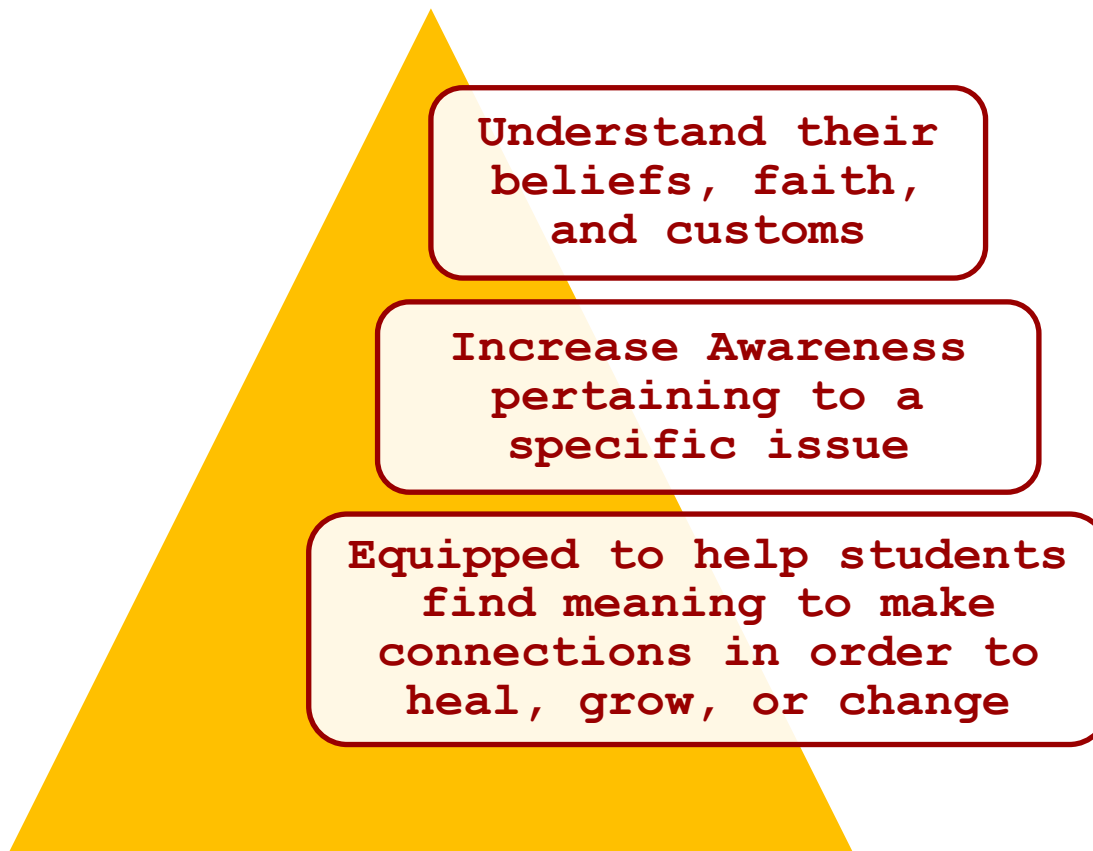


Jackson & North-Hager, 2015

USC graphic



Serving Military Children



There' ll Always Be Baseball

Family Deployment Experience

“Some things change, but a lot stays the same
each time this teen’s dad gets home.”





VETERANS, MILITARY SPOUSES & CHILDREN

(Emphasis on National Guard & Reservist Who Have Less Access to Behavioral Health and Other Services)
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2012; US Army Community & Family Support Center (2005);

- **U.S. Army Community & Family Support Center (2005) reports that over 51% of spouses recently experiencing deployment were separated for 12 months or more**
- **13% of those spouses were separated for 18-36 months**
- **Estimates are that 11-20% of veterans of the Iraq & Afghanistan Wars have PTSD**
- **10% of the Gulf War veterans have PTSD**
- **30% of Vietnam Veterans have PTSD**
- **Compared to 7-8% of the general population diagnosed with PTSD**
- **Leading causes of homelessness among veterans is Co-Occurring PTSD & Substance Use Dependency, SAMHSA: Behavioral Health Issues Among Afghanistan & Iraq U.S. War Veterans, In Brief (2012)**
- **SAMHSA's findings indicate National Guard and Reservists and their families may be at greater risk of experiencing behavioral health challenges**



MILITARY CHILDREN STATISTICAL DATA

- U.S. has approximately 2 million military children; 1.1 million are school aged, the majority attend public schools
 - CA has 157,419 military children; 86,433 are school aged, the majority attend public schools
- The following six counties have the highest percentage of military children:

County	Total Military Children	Active Duty	Nat'l G./Reservists
San Diego	61,549	90%	10%
San Bernardino	13,485	79%	11%
Los Angeles	11,100	50%	50%
Solano	6,438	78%	22%
Ventura	4,982	75%	25%
Kings	4,650	93%	7%
Orange	3,826	50%	50%



CHALLENGES FACED BY MILITARY CHILDREN

(Sogomonyan, F. & Cooper, J.L. (May 2010): Trauma Faced by Children of Military Families: What Every Policymaker Should Know: National Center for Children in Poverty; Department of Defense Data (2010); National Center for Education (2009-2010)

- *At least **19,000** children have had a **parent wounded in action***
- *Over **2,000** children have lost a parent in Iraq or Afghanistan*
- ***Wartime parental deployments** can be one of the most stressful events for a child's life*
- ***Multiple moves & frequent deployments** are realities for many children in military families*
- *Parents report **1 in 5** children coped poorly or very poorly to deployment separation*
- ***1/3** of children with a deployed parent were said to be at "high risk" for psychosocial issues*

CHALLENGES FACED BY MILITARY CHILDREN

21



(Sogomonyan, F. & Cooper, J.L. (May 2010): Trauma Faced by Children of Military Families: What Every Policymaker Should Know:

National Center for Children in Poverty; Department of Defense Data (2010); National Center for Education (2009-2010)

- ✓ ***Children 3-5 with a deployed parent exhibited greater behavioral symptoms than their peers without deployed parents***
- ✓ ***Children 11-17 had higher prevalence of emotional and behavioral difficulties than peers in the general population***
- ✓ ***Prior to October 2002 non-military families rates of maltreatment/child abuse were slightly higher than that of military families***
- ✓ ***Since 2003 rates of maltreatment in military families have out paced those of non-military families, which is attributable to U.S. deployment of higher numbers of troops to Afghanistan & Iraq***
- ✓ ***Physical, sexual and emotional abuse was 42% higher among enlisted soldiers in the U.S. Army during combat deployment than during non-combat deployment***



Challenges Faced by Military Families/Children, Continued

- **Veterans with PTSD** commit acts of **domestic violence** at rates higher than veterans without PTSD
- Few studies have explored the impact of **Parental TBI on military children**; studies demonstrate that depression is the leading diagnosis associated with TBI
- **Depression** can impact a parents ability to be emotional available for their children and result in harsh, indifferent, and inconsistent parenting
- Research shows that **living on a base** is linked to reduced difficulties for military families/children during and after deployments
- **National Guard and Reservists families** are less likely to be integrated into military social support networks and less familiar with benefits and how to access them.
- **Less than 50% of the National Guard/Reserves families** surveyed reported a consistent level of support during pre-deployment, deployment and post deployment/reintegration



Service Member	Spouse/Partner	Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased stress about impending deployment • Exhilaration about performing duty/obligation to serve • Overwhelmed with increased training and preparation for deployment • Fear of not seeing family again • Concerns about relationship surviving deployment • Concerns about personal injury & death • Concerns about spousal/partner fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about relationship surviving the separation • Concerns about service member being injured and coming back different • Concerns about fidelity during separation • Distancing from one another natural tendency (prepare for the loss) • One major argument is common • Preparation of legal, personal, banking and housing affairs • Grieving loss of member due to frequent drills and preparation for deployment • Financial concerns & ambivalence about carry extra load for parenting, housekeeping, paying bills, etc. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Infants/Toddlers</u> (unable to communicate stress, but can pick up on parental/caregiver stress)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased clinginess • Easily upset & harder to comfort • Separation Anxiety; Crying and whining • Changes in eating and sleeping habits • Increased aggressive behavior <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Preschoolers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retuning to younger behaviors (bedwetting, thumb sucking, etc.) • Emotional outbursts, tantrums, & testing limits • Fear of separation & clinginess • Increased aggressive behaviors toward others • Easily agitated/harder to comfort <p style="text-align: center;"><u>School-Age Children</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting out, angry outbursts • Problems at school • Increased crying for attention • Fear of separation from loved ones • Changes in eating and sleeping habits <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Adolescents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems at school • Increased risk taking behaviors • Withdrawn, won't open up about feelings, moodiness • Increased focus on peer group • Changes in eating/sleeping habits • Fearing greater responsibility (being the "man" or "woman" of the house) • Sense of pride in service member • Decreased sense of safety



Deployment

Service Member	Spouse/Partner	Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loneliness ● Guilt ● Fear of death/serious injury ● Proud/enthused to serve country ● Sorrow related to burden spouse/partner must carry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tearfulness ● Loneliness ● Fear of death/injury of spouse/partner ● Overwhelmed with added responsibilities & limited support ● Frustration with absence of loved one ● Increasing confidence/independence ● Anticipation/anxiety relative to reuniting with spouse/partner ● Diminished coping skills; possibly resulting in increased sleeping, eating, drinking, etc. ● Worries related to service member's fidelity ● Shame/guilt related to infidelity pressured to maintain normalcy/ routines and sense of safety for self & children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feelings of abandonment ● Pervasive fear of death/injury of parent or loved one ● Overwhelmed/resentment with added responsibilities ● Reduced concentration and focus ● High levels of sadness ● Grief/loss issues ● Academic problems (1 in 5 children) ● Disrespectful toward authority figures (parent/teachers) ● 37% worry about deployed parent/loved ones' safety



Post-Deployment/Reintegration

(Can be the most difficult stage of the deployment cycle)

Service Member	Spouse/Partner	Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially joy, relief, celebration to reunite with family • Trepidations about changes in family/power structure • Worries about reassuming parental role • Recognizes reality of/may resist a new normal • Struggles with intimacy & reconnecting with partner • Possible complications with PTSD, TBI, SUD • Hidden wounds of guilt/ shame related to acts during war • Sleeps incessantly or not at all (sleep disturbances) • Agitated & anxious • Hyper-vigilant • May feel need to sleep with weapon for perceived safety issues • Longs for support of military unit (distant) • Loss of sense of purpose & importance • Misunderstood • Unrealistic desire to return to old normal • Conflictual & rigid (military values and ethos) • Easily frustrated by mundane worries of civilians • Overwhelmed with “honey do list” • Can take as long as 6 months for service member to reintegrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially joy, relief, celebration • Struggle to get to know member all over again • Sorting out family roles (shared decision making/responsibilities) • Resolution of parenting decisions & childrearing • Overwhelmed with responsibilities of spouse who returns with injuries/PTSD/TMI/Depression • Increased verbal altercations • Domestic violence • Frustration at the loss of privacy and independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May take time for small children to bond with returning parent • Older children maybe more bonded with custodial parent • Stress/anxiety around rebuilding relationship with service member • Exacerbation of academic problems • Defiance/disobedience with returning parent • Clinginess with returning parent • Demanding in attempt to make up for loss time/experiences

Role of the School Social Worker



- Deployment stressed has been shown to decrease with community, military & religious support
- School Social Workers & other PPS disciplines can be an essential part of the needed support for military impacted students

Astor and others (2012) suggest that social workers' roles in the school setting may include:

- 1. Creating a school climate that recognizes the challenging circumstances military families & students face**
 - Gaps in school attendance & learning secondary to frequent moves
 - Social-emotional challenges related to the absence of the deployed parent (sometimes both parents may be deployed)
 - Adjustments associated with adjusting to living with a relative or surrogate, if deployed member is a single parent
 - Sometimes pervasive sense of isolation residing in a civilian world that does not understand what they face
- 2. Develop strategies and procedures that reduce the stress and emotional challenges that come with entering a new school**
 - Coordinate welcome activities that introduce the parent and student to essential personnel
 - Where possible, arrange for a school tour for the student and his/her parent
 - Assign the student a buddy, who is from a military family, if doable
 - Review the students school history and to the extend possible assure that the student receives credit for work completed (particularly high school students, who may be on track to graduate from their previous school, but have additional requirements to meet in order to move toward graduation at the new high school)
 - Advocate for students to try out for extracurricular activities, such as sports, cheerleading, drama/plays, etc. (student may enter a school after the tryouts have been closed)
- 3. Provide staff developments for teachers and administrators about the unique culture of military families and challenges students face secondary to frequent moves, deployed parent, bullying and social isolation**



- 4. Provide staff developments for teachers and administrators about the unique culture of military families and challenges students face secondary to frequent moves, deployed parent, bullying and social isolation**

- 5. Identify and coordinate needed social, academic and emotional services with the military School Liaison Officer (SLO)** (Person in the
four branches of the military, who works to support the military families be academically and emotionally successful)

- 6. Expedite special education services for military children** who may enter school after the start of the school year

- 7. Promote military parents' involvement in school activities**, such as PTA (But, be mindful that the custodial parent may have less time than parents with social supports in the community)



Role of School Social Worker continued...

8. Develop a system for acquiring students records in a timely manner

9. Coordinate middle school and high school military clubs with the assistance of the Military Children Education Coalition

10. Don't pathologize all military families, instead provide psycho-education to normalize their experiences

- Broaden school personnel's understanding of the resilient nature of some military children (well traveled, ability to quickly acclimate to new situations)





Role of School Social Worker continued....

11. Coordinate a parent support group for military parents and students to increase protective factors and decrease stress caused by isolation, parent's deployment

12. When another move is initiated provide the support and coordination with the next school to remove potential obstacles and challenges for the parent and student

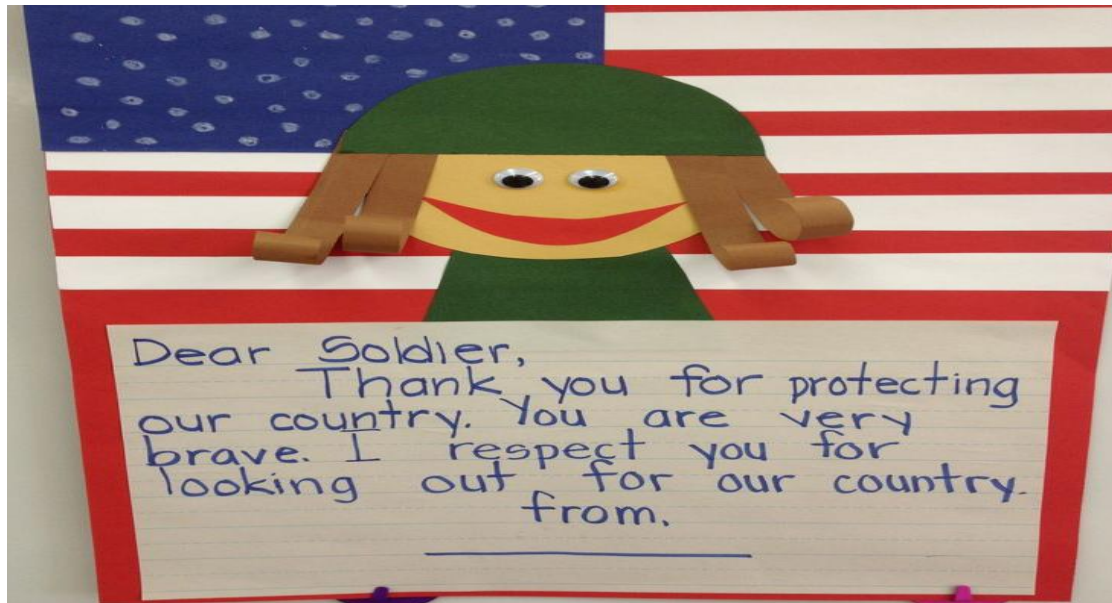
13. Monitor attendance and behavior of military affiliated students to identify early signs of the emotional toll frequent moves and the absence of a parent can cause (provide professional mental health support, if indicated)



Role of School Social Worker continued.....

14. Regardless of our position on the various wars and conflicts, engender pride for those who serve by having students adopt a soldier and become pen pals; wall of heroes where military affiliated students may post pictures of their loved one who is deployed; Veterans Day poster contest, etc.

15. Be mindful of those students who have uncles, sisters, brothers, close friends deployed; they may suffer the same stress, social emotional challenges and loss that students who have parents deployed





Group Discussion

- Discuss your experience during the presentation related to your assigned role
- In what ways may you support the military connected student in your assigned role and/or in your current role
- Identify and share any strategies/interventions that may help to promote a trauma sensitive school related to the military connected student in your current or assigned role





Thank you for your time!



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