

Uniformed Services West Chapter Healthy People 2010 Chapter Grant Program

Collaborative Development of an Advocacy and Intervention Strategy for Military Youth During Wartime

MAJ Keith Lemmon, M.D., FAAP⁺ - COL George Patrin, M.D., CHE^{**} - COL Elisabeth Stafford, M.D., FAAP^{!!!}



⁺Madigan Army Medical Center, Department of Pediatrics

^{**}California Medical Detachment, Presidio of Monterey Army Health Clinic

^{!!!} Brooke Army Medical Center, Adolescent Medicine Fellowship



Introduction/ Background

-As the United States and its allies enter the sixth year of the Global War on Terrorism, the secondary effects of prolonged war stress on military youth are beginning to be more fully recognized and characterized.

-Emotionally connecting and engaging military youth support is crucial to helping military youth during the stresses of wartime.

-Unique, developmentally appropriate, tri-service, youth deployment support video resources have been collaboratively developed and studied and are becoming available to military youth, their families, and their care providers.

METHODS:

-Objective data on the effects of military deployment on child and adolescent mental health has yet to be systematically gathered.

-However, through collaborative practical experience and emerging research, it is becoming more clear that military children and adolescents exposed to parental deployment experience ambiguous loss and stress, often beyond normative levels, that may become toxic if not detected and addressed in a timely manner.

-Since significant academic investment in exploring these effects has not yet occurred, more practical and empiric strategies have emerged as interim solutions.

-Participants from across the Armed Services have begun a collaborative effort to oversee and coordinate research, training, youth support, and advocacy efforts.

-Some of the major facilitators of this effort have included the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Uniformed Services Section and Uniformed Services West Chapter of the AAP, the Office of the Army Surgeon General, and military pediatricians from all branches of the service.

RESULTS:

The major impetus for this work came with a \$20,000 grant awarded by the AAP in May 2005 through the Friends of Children Fund and the Healthy People 2010 Chapter Grant Program.

The grant provided an initial investment and to the following collaborative efforts:

1. Creation of a DVD entitled Mr. Po and Friends Discuss Family Reunion After Deployment (newly revised and enhanced in 2007 with funding from US Army MEDCOM) - a support product for school age children and families.



2. Creation of a DVD entitled Military Youth Coping with Separation: When Family Members Deploy (newly revised and enhanced in 2007 with funding from US Army MEDCOM) - a support product for older children and teens and an emotionally sensitizing glimpse for all concerned stakeholders at the effects of deployment on families



3. Creation of The Interactive Military Youth Stress Management Plan and enhancements to the DVD that include a parent and youth serving professional perspective on the effects of deployment on youth

4. Creation of an AAP sponsored deployment support web site entitled Helping Children and Adolescents Through the Difficulties of Deployment in the Family - a resource for families, youth serving professionals and researchers



[HTTP://WWW.AAP.ORG/SECTIONS/UNIFSERV/DEPLOYMENT/INDEX.HTML](http://www.aap.org/sections/unifserv/deployment/index.html)

5. The Military Youth Deployment Support Video Program and associated resources have been adopted by several national military youth serving organizations:

Organizations using the videos for training and youth support:

[National Military Family Association – Operation Purple Camps](#)

[Army Reserve Child and Youth Services](#)

[Operation Military Kids](#)

[Military Child Education Coalition](#)

Organizations that are linking to AAP Military Youth Deployment Support Website or streaming videos on their site:

[Military One Source](#)

[Military Homefront](#)

[Army Behavioral Health](#)

[Army Medical Department Center and School](#)

[American Hospital Association](#)



6. The Adoption of an AAP Annual Leadership Forum Resolution in March 2007– Prioritized into the Academy's top 10 (out of 81 adopted resolutions) – the resolution reads:

Be it RESOLVED, that the Academy create a policy statement that addresses the emotional needs and stress challenges of family on the well being of children and adolescents in military families experiencing separation, injury or death, and be it further RESOLVED, that the Academy educate pediatricians and youth-serving professionals about the unique culture and needs of children and adolescents in military families.

7. -Development and implementation of a research protocol designed to measure the effectiveness of the video interventions as well as the mental health effects of deployment on military children and adolescents
-Initial data was collected in Feb 2007 from families of the 3rd Infantry Division of Ft. Stewart, GA and is being analyzed as follow up data continues to be collected
-Work on developing an automated data collection program based at the AMEDD Center and School Web site continues to be explored to gather larger data sets for analysis.

8. Funding has been committed for an initial reproduction and distribution of 50,000 copies of the Military Youth Deployment Support Video Program through the United States Army Medical Command.



Future Vision

-Continue to develop collaborative relationships between civilian and military agencies working to support military youth.

-Expand distribution of video program products through triservice and civilian networks

-Continue to study the efficacy of these products

-Consider production of new emotionally connecting, destigmatizing products for more specific populations such as youth whose parents have sustained serious physical injuries, post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, etc.

-Consider large scale, epidemiologic study of military youth similar to the those done in soldiers.