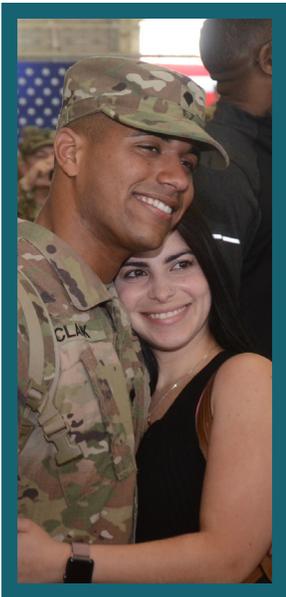




NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER *for*
HEALTHY MARRIAGE *and* FAMILIES



A Support and Resource Guide for Working With Military Families

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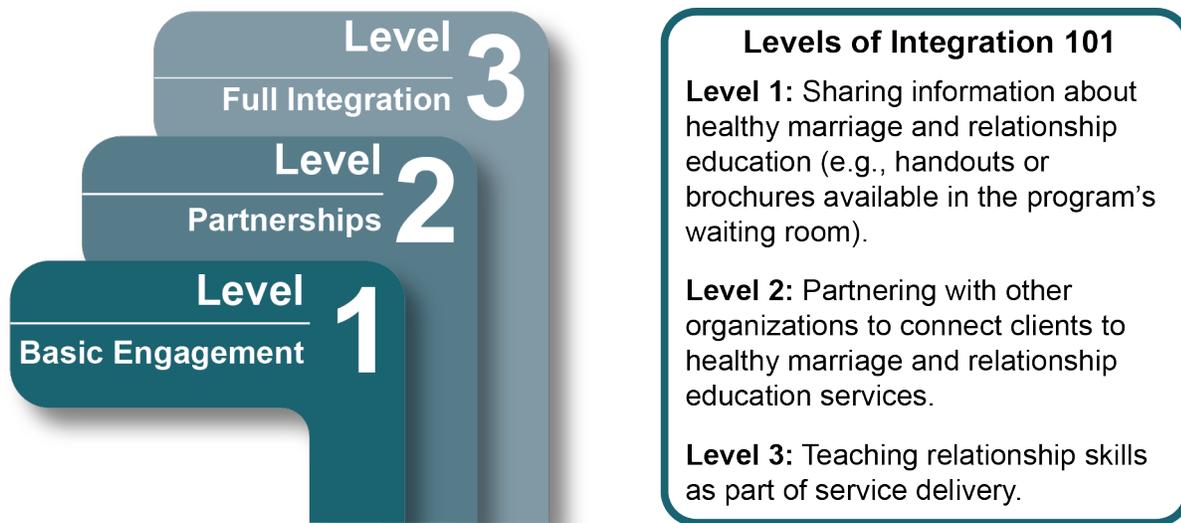
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Introduction

Welcome to *A Support and Resource Guide for Working With Military Families*. This guide is designed to help safety-net service providers and other stakeholders sustainably integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into their services for military personnel and their families. Safety-net service providers are people who work in federal, state, local, and tribal agencies and help others achieve self-sufficiency. This definition is purposely broad because there is a wide array of people who focus their careers on strengthening the stability and well-being of parents, couples, and families. Safety-net service providers are in a good position to help families develop healthy relationship skills such as communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and parenting, because they work within communities and have the support of agency resources.¹

When a safety-net service provider does not share a background with a program participant, discussing or teaching healthy relationship skills may prove to be more challenging. This guide aims to help providers first understand and then appropriately serve military families to ease the challenges for those without a background in or strong working knowledge of the military. Healthy marriage and relationship education skills can be integrated into service delivery systems in different ways based on local strengths, needs, and capacity. The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families has created a Levels of Integration concept to visualize the different types of integration.²

Levels of Integration³



Organizations can integrate relationship skills in a variety of ways, as illustrated above. In some cases an organization might move through the levels of integration sequentially (e.g., start by distributing handouts on parenting; then, build a partnership to refer clients to another agency that teaches parenting courses; and ultimately start a parenting program in-house), but not every organization should try to reach Level 3. When considering programming targeted to military families, for example, agencies should consider how many military families live in the area. If there are relatively few, programs may want to focus on only Level 1 (e.g., provide handouts about healthy communication during deployments) rather than work up to Level 3 (e.g., create a relationship skills program specifically for military families).

This guide is divided into three chapters; each one focuses on one of the Levels of Integration. Each chapter provides links to web resources to help agencies engage with military families at the level discussed.



Welcome Home: 2nd Marine Regiment returns from deployment. A Marine with 2nd Marine Regiment poses for a photo with his family during a homecoming at Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 14, 2017.

Photo by Pfc. Abrey Liggins

How to Use This Guide

Although agencies do not have to follow the Levels of Integration sequentially, this guide is designed to be read in order. As you read the guide, you will gain a greater understanding of military family life and the ways in which you can better serve military families, one level at a time.

Chapter 1 helps build or strengthen an agency's ability to engage military service members and their families by laying the foundation for a better understanding of the U.S. military. This chapter includes information about the military—as an organization, community, and lifestyle—that can help an agency engage and develop sustainable relationships with military service members and their families.

How to Use This Chapter: Understanding military families is critical for engaging them in program services. Having a better understanding of the military organization, community, and lifestyle helps agencies select appropriate materials to share in program offices or give to clients. Links to some of these materials are provided in this guide.

Chapter 2 focuses on how an agency can build or strengthen interagency relationships and connect with military resource networks. When agencies work together, their collective impact is often greater than what they can achieve alone. Agencies can pool talents and resources, avoid duplication of services, and streamline service delivery to military service members and their families.

How to Use This Chapter: When serving military families who live within reasonable proximity of military resource networks, partnerships may be an effective way to connect families to services that are already tailored to their needs. This chapter will help you understand what these existing networks are and how to engage them.

Chapter 3 provides tips, tools, and resources for fully integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into existing service delivery systems for military service members and their families, including curriculum and program development considerations.

How to Use This Chapter: This chapter can serve as a starting point if there is a significant population of military families in your area who are not connected to healthy marriage and relationship education services.

These resources emphasize the *healthy* in healthy marriage and relationship education. Relationship education is not meant to force military couples to get married or stay married,



Key Spouses build community, resilience among Air Force families. Christina D'Amico, Airman and Family Readiness Center community readiness consultant, conducts monthly training for Lauren Pongallo, a Key Spouse for the Battlefield Airborne Communications Node Division, at the Community Support Center on March 21, 2017. The Hanscom Key Spouse Program strives to build a sense of community and resilience among military families through peer support, resource information, and privacy-protected direct lines of communication with unit leadership, including first sergeants and commanders.

Photo by Mark Herlihy

especially if the relationship is physically or emotionally abusive. The resources included in Chapter 3 offer guidance for when an agency suspects that a family or family member might be in danger.

This guide focuses on resources to build the interpersonal and interagency relationships that form the backbone of healthy marriages, military families, and supportive communities. Keep in mind that this guide includes only a fraction of the available resources for military service members and their families. Some of the resources included in this guide are in the form of links to online media. To gain the full benefits of the guide, we encourage you to access these links.

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Chapter 1: Building Interpersonal Relationships With Military Service Members and Families

The Military as an Organization, Community, and Lifestyle

A critical first step in engaging military service members and their families is developing an understanding of the military as an organization, community, and lifestyle. Knowledge of the military is the foundation of sustainable interpersonal relationships with military service members and their family members. This is the focus of Chapter 1.

Knowledge of the military, to include various sub-groups that comprise the military community, will help tailor healthy marriage and relationship education integration activities to the military population. For example, when considering the range of integration options—from distributing brochures to developing full workshops—safety-net providers should keep in mind that certain states have higher concentrations of military service members than others. For providers seeking to deliver educational workshops, the average age and level of education of the military force should be considered. Much of the total military force is age 25 or younger, and relatively few have a bachelor’s or graduate degree. Providers should work to ensure that their audience will relate to and understand the selected curriculum.⁴

The Military Organization

The U.S. Armed Forces is composed of Active Duty members, Reserve and Guard members, and civilians who work for the Department of Defense (DoD). As of Fiscal Year 2015, there were more than 3.5 million people in the total military force. Active Duty members make up 36.8% of the military; Reserve and Guard members comprise 38.7%; and DoD civilian personnel make up the remaining 24.5%.⁵

The Total Military Force

Active Duty: DoD Active Duty (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps)

Reserve and Guard: Coast Guard Active Duty, Ready Reserve (includes Coast Guard Reserve), Standby Reserve, Retired Reserve

DoD Civilian Personnel

Many people are familiar with the five branches of the U.S. military: the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Although each branch has Active Duty members, when we talk about Active Duty personnel in this guide we are referring to the active components of the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. These branches are part of DoD, while the Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security. Information on the Coast Guard’s Active Duty members (1.1% of the total military force) is included in the paragraph above with the rest of the Reserve and Guard members.⁶

Reserve members augment the military’s active components. Reservists are activated during certain periods, such as annual training and deployment, and then are deactivated. In contrast, Active Duty personnel are always activated.⁷ The category of Reserve status that is of interest here is the Selected Reserve, whose part-time service members train, or “drill,” throughout the year and attend annual Active Duty training exercises while also maintaining civilian jobs.⁸ In the categories above, the Selected Reserve members are part of the “Ready Reserve.”⁹



U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers put skills to test at warfighter exercise hosted by 25th ID. 303rd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Soldiers review their unit's standard operating procedures in order to map out their next move during a warfighter exercise hosted by the 25th Infantry Division at Mission Training Complex – Hawaii, Schofield Barracks, April 4, 2017.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Chanelcherie DeMello

Spotlight on the National Guard

The National Guard is the oldest component of the Armed Forces and is made up of 54 individual organizations in each U.S. state and territory. It fulfills a unique dual federal-state mission: providing national defense under federal control alongside Active Duty and Reserve personnel in foreign nations, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and protecting life and property when called upon by a state governor, such as the mobilizations in response to Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Typically, National Guard members serve on a part-time basis—one weekend per month plus two weeks during the summer. However, since September 11, 2001, and throughout the duration of the Global War on Terror, the National Guard has experienced unprecedented activations and extended deployments, working shoulder-to-shoulder with Active Duty counterparts.¹¹

Of the military organization's many subgroups, the two key groups for service providers to understand are Active Duty and Selected Reserve members and their families. The demographic information in this guide will focus on only those two groups, defined in the box below.

In This Guide

“Active Duty” refers to DoD Active Duty (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps).

“Selected Reserve” refers to Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve.

As you can see from the list of Selected Reserve components above, the five military branches with Active Duty members also have Reserve components.¹⁰

Our Active Duty Force is made up primarily of enlisted personnel, who comprise 82.3% of the Force, while officers comprise the remaining 17.7%.¹² Officers are the leaders or managers of the military; enlisted personnel carry out their orders.¹³ Mid- to senior-grade enlisted personnel known as non-commissioned officers (NCOs) also function as leaders within the enlisted ranks.¹⁴ The majority of Active Duty military personnel are assigned, with their families, within the United States or its territories. Roughly 70% of Active Duty personnel are concentrated in the following 10 states: California, Virginia, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Washington, Hawaii, South Carolina, and Colorado. Reservists are somewhat more dispersed across the country.¹⁵

The Military Community

Demographic Characteristics of the Military Community ¹⁶	Active Duty (n=1,301,443)	Selected Reserve (n=826,106)
Gender: Male	84.5%	81.0%
Race/ethnicity: Minority	31.3%	26.0%
Age: 25 or younger	43.8%	34.0%
Education: High school or some college	76.5%	74.3%
Marital status		
Married	54.3%	44.7%
Married to a civilian	47.9%	42.1%
Married to a fellow service member	6.4%	2.7%
Parental status: Have children	41.1%	41.5%
Age range of children: 0–5	42.0%	30.5%
Spouse employment		
Spouse employed	54.0%*	Not available
Spouse unemployed and looking for work	12.0%	Not available

*41.0% of Active Duty spouses are in the civilian labor force and 13.0% are members of the military

There are many similarities between Active Duty and Selected Reserve individuals and families. On the whole, both groups are mostly male and white, and a large majority lack a bachelor’s degree. Roughly one-half of the population is married, and most married service members are married to civilians rather than fellow service members. Slightly more than 40% of members in both groups have children.¹⁷ Later in this guide, we discuss important characteristics and circumstances of vulnerable subpopulations within the military community, including the Reserve.



VMAQ-3 deploys for final time. Cpl. Joseph Capellini walks with his daughter while his family waits to bid him farewell for a deployment from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., March 29, 2017. Photo by Cpl. Mackenzie Gibson

The Military Lifestyle

To work effectively with members of the military community requires a basic understanding of the life they lead, including unique stressors during times of both war and peace. In this section of the guide, we describe three particular “hallmarks” of the military lifestyle: geographic mobility, separation, and behavioral norms.²⁰

Most Active Duty families (70%) live in civilian communities surrounding the installation rather than on the installation.¹⁸ DoD Reserve families may live great distances from the nearest military installation, as may certain Active Duty service members, such as recruiters and ROTC instructors.¹⁹

Geographic mobility is considered the defining characteristic of the military lifestyle.²¹ Military personnel experience permanent changes of station (PCS) on average every two to three years,²² and they may or may not have a say in the choice of location. Approximately 12.5% of the Active Duty force is assigned overseas.²³ Due to geographic mobility, military families are frequently too distant from their extended families to take

advantage of the informal support they can offer, spouses often lack the opportunity to advance in jobs and careers, and children must change schools on a regular basis (on average, six to nine times).²⁴ While PCSing brings the opportunity for new friends and experiences for all members of the family, it also involves the loss of familiar friends, places, and formal and informal support systems.²⁵

Separations of varying durations are a constant in the military lifestyle. Service members are separated from their families not only by deployment—which varies in length by service branch and by mission—but also by temporary duty assignments (known as TDY or TAD), training, and other unaccompanied assignments. Separations can strain the marital relationship, parenting roles, and the family system as a whole.²⁶ After separation, reunion and reintegration also present challenges.²⁷

Although the military is in many ways a microcosm of American society, it also has **behavioral norms** of its own, including an ethos of selfless service. However, selfless service means putting the mission and the welfare of comrades first, which can affect families. The norm of selfless service may make it difficult for some service members to balance the needs of the military with the needs of their family and may influence a family's willingness to acknowledge need and seek or accept outside help.³² By the same token, another norm within the military is "taking care of families." That is, leaders of military units are charged with supporting the well-being of their service members and families, and are a resource to them.³³

Vulnerable Subpopulations of the Military Community

It is important for safety-net service providers to not only appreciate the hallmarks of the military lifestyle, but also to be attuned to the needs of certain subgroups within the military community.³⁴ Highlighted below are several subpopulations that may be at particular risk.

Active Duty enlisted members tend to be younger than officers (50.3% are age 25 or younger, compared to 13.8% of officers) and have less education than officers (7.6% have a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to 83.8% of officers). Although enlisted members are less likely than officers to be married (51.1% of Active Duty enlisted are married, compared to 69.6% of officers), they are at least as likely to divorce (3.4% of Active Duty enlisted members and 1.6% of officers divorced in 2015).³⁵

PTSD in the Aftermath of the Global War on Terror

The attacks on September 11, 2001, transformed the meaning of commitment for the nation's all-volunteer military force. More than 2.5 million members of the Armed Forces were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn.²⁸ Deployments became more frequent and longer, and rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), widely considered the signature injury of these conflicts, increased markedly.²⁹ While being in the military is always a 24/7 commitment regardless of what is going on around the world, the end of these major U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia in late 2011 signaled a return to a "peacetime" military, with a less demanding deployment tempo and more normal lives for most service members and their families.³⁰ However, the prevalence of PTSD among military personnel remains a concern that DoD continues to monitor and address.³¹



Naval Air Station Jacksonville. Chief Hospital Corpsman Karlojo Atienza, of Naval Hospital Jacksonville, is met by his family upon arrival at Naval Air Station Jacksonville on April 2, 2017 following a successful Continuing Promise 2017 (CP-17) deployment. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Jacob Sippel

False Assumptions Can Derail Rapport

Safety-net providers should be mindful of false assumptions, or over-simplifications, about military life that may lead them to say unproductive or even hurtful things to service members and families. Here are some examples:

- **False:** Everyone who deploys experiences combat.
- **False:** Female service members do not experience combat.
- **False:** Everyone who experiences combat is damaged.
- **False:** As a minority in the military, women find working around men to be intimidating.
- **False:** Growing up in the military is a bad thing.
- **False:** Geographic mobility (i.e., moving frequently) is a bad thing.
- **False:** Saying “I support the troops” is as meaningful as showing your support (e.g., by helping out a family when a service member is deployed or by hiring a military spouse).¹

Active Duty **junior enlisted personnel** (i.e., enlisted personnel in pay grades of E1-E4), comprise a relatively large proportion of the Active Duty Force (43.6%).³⁶ Many junior enlisted personnel enter the military straight from high school, with little life experience.³⁷ Roughly one-third of Active Duty junior enlisted members (33.3%) has a spouse and/or child(ren), and enlisted spouses are more likely than officer spouses to be unemployed and seeking work (13.0% versus 9.0%).³⁸ Given these circumstances, junior enlisted members and families may find themselves short on coping resources, including tangible resources such as income and education and intangible resources such as relationship and consumer skills.³⁹

As citizen-soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, the nation’s large **Reserve and Guard** subpopulation faces the challenges of balancing military service with civilian lives and jobs. These challenges include deployment and other activations, as well as unemployment and underemployment upon return.⁴⁰ Because Reserve and Guard members tend to remain in their home communities, members and their families enjoy the benefit of roots and extended family nearby, but may be geographically isolated from the larger community of “battle buddies” and military spouses who understand them in ways that those at home cannot.⁴¹ Geographic isolation also means

diminished access to installation-centric support services and to military-savvy service providers.⁴² Therefore, members of the National Guard and Reserve and their families may be particularly reliant on state, local, and tribal safety-net service providers. When safety-net service providers lack a basic understanding about the military—in other words, they don’t “speak the language” of their National Guard and Reserve clients—it can jeopardize their rapport with clients and the quality of service they can deliver.

Certain types of families may be at added risk. As noted, 41.1% of Active Duty members have children. This figure includes **single parents**, who constitute 4.5% of Active Duty personnel and 9.1% of Selected Reserve members.⁴³ For these service members, balancing the competing demands of a military career and parenthood may be particularly difficult. **Dual-military** families with children



Coast Guard Cutter Vigor returns home. A crewmember from the Coast Guard Cutter Vigorous holds his daughter on the pier July 11, 2016, in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The cutter’s crew returned home following a 55-day deployment in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of the Coast Guard’s Western Hemisphere Strategy. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Melissa Leake

¹ Content based on input from a sample of military community members regarding some questions and comments they have experienced and how they feel about them.



Family matters: Couple tries to find mutuality in murky waters of dual military life. Sgts. 1st Class Roddue and Shandra Hamilton, enrolled in the Married Army Couples Program, face numerous challenges in their efforts to achieve joint domicile and fulfill the requirements of their career fields. Roddue is assigned to the 2nd Staff and Faculty, 71st Student Support Battalion, Army Logistics University. Shandra is a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 23rd Quartermaster Brigade.

Photo by Terrance Bell

face similar difficulties; additionally, dual-military couples do not always receive co-located assignments, requiring them to live apart.⁴⁴ While relatively few married service members are in dual-military marriages, 79.9% of those dual-military marriages are among enlisted members.⁴⁵ Two-parent, single-parent, and dual-military families with members who have special needs (i.e., **exceptional family members**) often rely heavily on health care services, special education, and social supports, which are very difficult and laborious to replicate each time they are required to move.⁴⁶

While there are inherent stressors in the military lifestyle, leaving is also stressful.⁴⁷ **Transitioning members** and their families leave the organization (employer) and community to which they have grown accustomed, give up a steady paycheck and entitlements such as housing or housing allowance and health care, and navigate an uncertain future.⁴⁸ In some instances for the first time in their lives, service members must determine a civilian vocation and pursue schooling or a job.⁴⁹ They—and their spouse, if applicable—must choose where to make their new home, find a place to live, and figure out their new finances, including ensuring continued access to health care. Daunting as these tasks may seem, transitioning military families must also prioritize the needs of their children.⁵⁰

Despite the unique challenges that military life presents, many service members find it rewarding and continue to choose to serve their country. In the 2013–2014 administration of DoD’s large-scale Status of Forces Surveys of Active Duty Members, the 2014 data indicate that 64.0% of Active Duty members were satisfied with the overall military way of life. The same was true of military spouses of Active Duty personnel in the 2015 Survey of Active Duty Spouses: 64.0% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the military way of life, and 66.0% indicated that they were in favor of their spouse staying on active duty.⁵¹

A Personal Perspective

Care for our soldiers, but be humble in how you provide that care, and be humble in how you receive the thanks for that care.—Lt. Col. Mark M. Weber, Minnesota National Guard

Last Lecture—Army Style, a speech given by Lt. Col. Mark M. Weber in celebration of the Army’s birthday and delivered at the Minnesota History Center on June 14, 2012, provides a personal view of what it means to be a service member. Lt. Col. Weber describes the multiple roles filled by today’s soldiers, the need for humility in leadership and service, the importance of distinguishing between volunteer service members and the causes in which they serve, and the gift of saying thank you to service members with actions rather than words.⁵²



USS Lake Erie. Sailors assigned to the guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Erie (CG 70) render honors as the guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill (CG 52) passes by on March 10, 2017. Lake Erie is underway for its family and friends day cruise, which welcomed more than 280 family and friends aboard for the day at sea.

Photo by Seaman Kelsey Hockenberger

A video of the speech is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCIEXOKr-lw>.

In 2013, Lt. Col. Weber passed away from stage IV cancer. After his cancer diagnosis in 2010, he authored the book *Tell My Sons: A Father's Last Letters*, and continued to make public appearances to speak about his experiences.⁵³

Resources to Support Level 1—Basic Engagement

Sharing facts about the importance of healthy marriage and relationship skills is a good starting point for basic engagement with military service members and families, community members, and other stakeholders. Basic engagement strategies can include distributing tip sheets throughout your community, such as at family resource centers, hospitals, or potentially on military installations (if allowable).⁵⁴ The following are examples of appropriate resources that can be shared with military families.

Practical Tips for Healthy Couple, Co-Parenting, and Marital Relationships

Below are links to tip sheets that are useful to safety-net service providers for basic engagement. They include practical tips that anyone can apply to strengthen an intimate or co-parenting relationship.

- Why Trust Matters in Relationships and Marriage
<http://tinyurl.com/why-trust-matters>
- Why Forgiveness Matters
<http://tinyurl.com/why-forgiveness-matters>
- Why Commitment Matters
<http://tinyurl.com/why-commitment-matters>
- Strategies for Couples Dealing With Financial Strain
<http://tinyurl.com/strategies-financial-strain>

Resources Specific to Military Families

The resources listed below are helpful for couples and families who are dealing with some of the specific challenges of military life.

- Loving Long-Distance: Families Separated by Distance (fact sheet)
<https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF2979.pdf>
- Military Families: Coming Home (fact sheet)
http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Coming-Home-Adjustments-For-Military-Families-089.aspx
- Get Ready for a Deployment Reunion (fact sheet)
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=281382
- Strengthen Your Relationship With Love Every Day (free mobile app)
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/mflc?content_id=290294
- Plan My Deployment (electronic deployment support site)
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/footer?content_id=287593
- 10 Tips for Keeping a Relationship Strong During Deployment (fact sheet)
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=282453

- How to Successfully Communicate as a Couple (fact sheet)
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=282459
- Maintaining a Strong Relationship Through Deployments and Separations (fact sheet)
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=281379

Resources for More Information About Military Families

- *Demographics 2015: Profile of the Military Community* (report)
<http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2015-Demographics-Report.pdf>
- *Marriage and Divorce in the National Guard and Reserves* (research brief)
<http://tinyurl.com/marriage-divorce-ntl-guard>
- *About the Department of Defense (DoD)* (web page)
<http://www.defense.gov/about>



ADA BN deploys to Afghanistan. Spc. Stacy Entwistle, air defender, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 265th Air Defense Artillery, Florida Army National Guard, uses his phone to FaceTime with his wife, Shay, and watch their new-born daughter, Savannah, on June 12, 2015 at the Silas L. Copeland Arrival/Departure Air Control Group, before Entwistle had to board the plane bound for Afghanistan on his first deployment. Entwistle and his wife were expecting Savannah on June 18, but were glad she came early in time to see her daddy hours before deployment. Photo by Amabilia Payen

Chapter 2: Building Interagency Relationships With Other Stakeholders Serving Military Service Members and Their Families

This chapter is designed to help build and strengthen interagency relationships and better connect service providers with existing resources for military families. By working together, agencies can pool talents and resources and streamline service delivery to military service members and their families. Effective coordination prevents duplication of services and resources.

We encourage developing and sustaining interagency relationships with service organizations within the military resource framework. Joining a coordinated network of service providers that already has established protocols for continuous communication and conflict negotiation allows an agency to model the core elements of healthy marriage and relationships at a system level. Integrating service delivery within the military resource framework benefits military members and families because it facilitates their access to available resources through known channels.

A Military Resource Framework

Safety-net service providers should be familiar with the core military resource framework that supports military personnel and their families wherever they may be assigned. You can work with these resources—which include programs, places, websites, and policies—to maximize and streamline access to services for your military clients.

Most installations have a formal **installation family support delivery system** that provides a menu of services, such as financial management assistance, child care and education, family advocacy, exceptional family member programs, spouse education, and relocation services.⁵⁵ These military family support centers have different names depending on the particular armed services branch:

- Army Community Service⁵⁶
- Air Force Airman and Family Readiness Center⁵⁷
- Navy Fleet and Family Support Program⁵⁸
- Marine Corps Community Services⁵⁹
- Coast Guard Work-Life Program⁶⁰

Coast Guard Work-Life is operated at the headquarters level in Washington, DC. Local field staff, typically located at Coast Guard bases, provide services to units within assigned regions. Coast Guard personnel and families can connect to these programs or receive referrals to other services through the unit Ombudsman Program. Ombudsmen are trained volunteers who connect the Coast Guard command to Coast Guard families.⁶¹ The Navy also has an Ombudsman program, and the Marine Corps has Family Readiness Officers who act in a similar capacity. The Air Force's Key Spouse Program and the Army's Family Readiness Support Assistants perform similar duties as well.⁶²



Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Military & Family Readiness Center. Kelli Franklin (right), Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Military & Family Readiness Center community readiness consultant, provides a crock pot to Airman 1st Class Yan Cui from the Loan Locker on June 8, 2016 at JBSA-Randolph. The Loan Locker provides temporary loans of household items to incoming and departing permanent party personnel.

Photo by Joel Martinez



Coast Guard Ombudsman at Large visits military spouses at Sector Anchorage, Alaska. Fran DeNinno, Coast Guard ombudsman at large, visits with military spouses at Coast Guard Sector Anchorage, Alaska, on August 11, 2016. DeNinno and the spouses discussed topics that affect military families such as health care, cost of living and special needs programs.
Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Meredith Manning

Other **family support services** available on installations include the Military and Family Life Counseling Program, which offers nonmedical short-term counseling to military members and their immediate families.⁶³ Military chaplains, who are religious leaders in the military community, also advise and counsel military personnel and their families.⁶⁴ The Army has a well-established chaplain-run relationship education and skills training program called Strong Bonds (see <http://www.strongbonds.org/skins/strongbonds/home.aspx>).⁶⁵

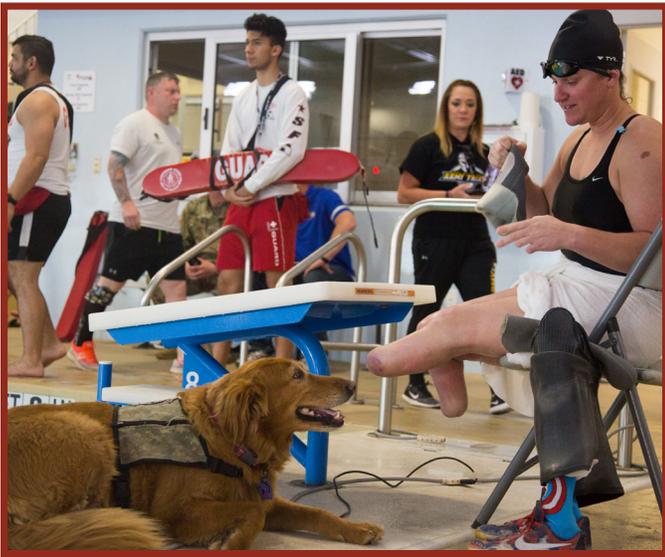
Installation-centric resources may be less accessible to National Guard and Reserve members and Active Component members who are assigned remotely.⁶⁶ For all members of the military community, the DoD operates **Military OneSource** at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>. This premier website is a portal to comprehensive information and services targeting needs related to family and relationship matters, financial and legal issues, health and wellness, education and employment, on- and off-base living, and deployment and transition. Through Military OneSource, eligible service members and family members (including reservists of any activation status

and their family members) can obtain free, time-limited, and confidential nonmedical counseling. The Military OneSource website also offers resources for providers (see <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers>).⁶⁷

Additional resources target the needs of the Guard and Reserve community. **Joint Services Support (JSS)** is an advocacy organization for National Guard service members, families, and veterans. JSS is composed of a network of partners providing initiatives such as the Family Program, Transition Assistance Advisors, and Psychological Health Program (see <https://www.jointservicesupport.org/Default.aspx>).⁶⁸ The congressionally mandated **Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program**, led by the DoD Office of Manpower and Reserve Affairs, addresses unique challenges facing this community, helping members and families to balance military service with their civilian lives through education and linkage with available resources (see <http://www.yellowribbon.mil/yrrp>).⁶⁹ Additionally, safety-net providers should be aware of **Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve**, a largely volunteer-driven DoD program in all states and territories that helps Guard and Reserve members resolve conflicts with their employers related to their military commitment (see <http://esgr.mil>).⁷⁰

Transition resources also are available. For service members and families who are transitioning out of the military, installations implement a fairly extensive, congressionally mandated transition assistance program known as Transition Goals, Plans, Success (or **Transition GPS**) offered by the DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP). For more information, see https://www.dodtap.mil/transition_gps.html. Transition GPS is available online for those who cannot access the program at an installation.⁷¹ In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service has offices throughout the country (see <https://www.dol.gov/vets>) that offer dedicated services for transitioning service members, including Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program specialists, and the National Guard has dedicated Transition Assistance Advisors.⁷²

All the service branches have resources dedicated to supporting **wounded, ill, and injured** personnel and their families as they heal and transition either back to service or to civilian life. For more information, see the Army Warrior Care and Transition Program at <http://www.wtc.army.mil>;



Army Trials 2017 at Fort Bliss. U.S. Army veteran Christy Gardner and her Department of Defense certified service dog Moxy compete in the swimming event for the Warrior Care and Transition's Army Trials at Fort Bliss, Texas, April 6, 2017. About 80 wounded, ill and injured active-duty Soldiers and veterans competed in eight different sports for the opportunity to represent Team Army at the 2017 Department of Defense Warrior Games. Photo by Pvt. Genesis Gomez

Air Force Wounded Warrior Program at <http://www.woundedwarrior.af.mil>; Navy Wounded Warrior/Safe Harbor at <http://www.navywoundedwarrior.com> (which also serves the Coast Guard); and Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment at <http://www.woundedwarriorregiment.org>. Some installations are home to dedicated units that facilitate the recovery and transition of wounded warriors. For example, at a number of installations with major military treatment facilities, there are Army Warrior Transition Units and dedicated Soldier and Family Assistance Centers.⁷³

Unlike civilian service delivery systems, the military resource framework typically includes communication networks for military spouses, such as the Army's Family Readiness Groups. Organized at the unit level as a means of promoting unit families' deployment readiness, these largely volunteer-driven networks may operate year-round and are a source of social support, accurate information, and assistance for military spouses.⁷⁴



Breakfast is served. Marines with 3rd Marine Regiment are served food during a unit breakfast held at Barracks 7241, aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, March 11, 2017. The Family Readiness Office with 3rd Marines cooked pancakes, scrambled eggs and linked sausages for the Marines as a way to give back to the Marines for their hard work and training. Photo by Lance Cpl. Jesus Sepulveda Torres

Additional Resources Focused on Military Children and Youth

Most installations have child and youth services, including child development centers and other school-age child care.⁷⁵ Installation **School Liaison Officers (SLOs)** are responsible for facilitating the school transitions of children and youth, particularly those attending schools in the community. The local military family support center will be able to refer you to the local SLO.⁷⁶ **MilitaryKidsConnect**, at <http://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil>, is an online community of military children (ages 6 to 17) that provides access to age-appropriate resources to support children from pre-deployment through a parent's or caregiver's return. The website has a special page for educators.⁷⁷

The **Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)**, at <http://www.militarychild.org>, is a nonprofit organization that since 1998 has been dedicated to ensuring “quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition.” MCEC offers resources and training for parents and students as well as for professionals working with military-connected students.⁷⁸

Resources to Support Level 2—Partnerships

As previously mentioned, developing partnerships with providers in the community and in the military resource framework is a great way to pool resources and expertise for the benefit of military families. All partners should share a common vision of promoting healthy marriage and relationships, which may require educating other stakeholders about the positive effects of a healthy marriage on family safety and stability, employment, and self-sufficiency.⁷⁹

Through partnerships, agencies can identify resources and experts on various components of healthy relationship skills—such as communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial management—and collectively integrate the components into a group workshop or class for military service members and families. The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families provides tips and tools on developing partnerships to promote healthy marriage and relationship education, including a collaboration assessment and partnership agreement template, at <http://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org/partnerships>.⁸⁰

Referrals to Existing Providers

Another way to strengthen military couples is by partnering with a military community-based healthy marriage program or a counseling service whose providers understand military stressors, such as deployment.

- The Real Warriors Campaign's marital counseling web page provides information on military counseling and healthy marriage programs at <http://www.realwarriors.net/family/care/maritalcounseling.php>.
- The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network (part of the Cooperative Extension system) provides information on local contacts for civilian healthy marriage programs at <http://www.fcs.uga.edu/nermen>. For couples who either cannot access military services or feel more comfortable using a civilian provider, local marriage and family therapists can be identified via <http://www.therapistlocator.net/iMIS15/therapistlocator>.



Deployed Superheroes Dinner. Chief Master Sgt. Erica Hammond, 436th Medical Group superintendent, helps carry a gift basket with Sophia Ehlers, daughter of Tech. Sgt. Ryan Ehlers, 436th Aerial Port Squadron load planning, at a Deployed Families Dinner on April 13, 2017, at the Youth Center on Dover Air Force Base, Del. Photo by Senior Airman Zachary Cacicia

Chapter 3: Fully Integrating Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Into Services for Military Service Members and Their Families

For agencies that are interested in developing a healthy marriage and relationship education program, this chapter provides information about the role that core marriage and relationship skills play in work, school, family, and military environments, to enhance agency understanding of the purpose of marriage and relationship education programs. Also included are resources to support program development and curriculum selection.

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

Statistics tell us that children from two-parent families are less likely to end up in poverty, drop out of school, become addicted to drugs, have a child out of wedlock, suffer abuse, or become a violent criminal and end up in prison. Building and preserving families are not always possible, I recognize that. But they should always be our goal.

– President George W. Bush

Healthy marriage and relationship education teaches core relationship skills to individuals (such as youth) or couples, on a voluntary basis, to help them attain, maintain, or strengthen a healthy marriage or committed relationship, or prepare for one in the future. It often occurs in a group setting and is not meant to be therapy or clinical treatment for couples already experiencing serious issues.⁸¹

A couple's relationship health can ebb and flow based on life circumstances, and it can change over time. Based on an extensive literature review, Child Trends identified the following as core constructs of a healthy marriage:

- Commitment to each other and any children
- Satisfaction
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Lack of domestic violence
- Fidelity
- Quality interaction and time together
- Intimacy and emotional support
- Duration and legal marital status⁸²



Army Reserve command holds Strong Bonds event in the birthplace of the national anthem. Couples hold hands during an exercise on January 27, 2017 as part of a 99th Regional Support Command Strong Bonds event in Baltimore, Maryland. Photo by Sgt. Russell Toof

A healthy relationship is *not* based on socioeconomic status, employment status, or family characteristics. Research shows that an unhealthy marriage can negatively affect the couple's physical and mental health, job functioning, and parenting, as well as the social and cognitive skills and educational achievement of their children.⁸³

Given the potential effects of a healthy marriage on family safety and stability, employment, and self-sufficiency, there has been national interest in integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into service delivery systems to benefit families, employers, and national welfare.⁸⁴



Deployed brother, sister reunite after 10 years apart. U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Mary Jane Palumbo, 134th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron aviation resource manager, and her brother, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Quincy Mora, AH-64 Apache mechanic, video chat with family while deployed on January 7, 2017. The brother and sister are originally from the Federated States of Micronesia and have not seen one another in ten years.

Photo by Master Sgt. Benjamin Wilson

that serve military families. All service providers should be trained or cross-trained so they are prepared to discuss and teach core skills (e.g., healthy communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial management) as an interwoven part of service delivery. Well-established partners can help effectively integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into service-delivery systems by providing training, tips, and other resources.⁸⁷ State, local, and tribal stakeholders can contact the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families at <http://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org> for assistance.

Program Development and Curriculum Considerations

When a community lacks healthy marriage or relationship programs, or the existing programs are not tailored to meet the needs of military service members and their families, service providers should consider merging community and military resources to develop a program or partnering with organizations that have expertise in teaching one or more of the core healthy marriage constructs and understand military structure and culture. Free and low-cost curricula are also available that can be adapted to meet service members' and families' needs.⁸⁸

There are many other considerations involved in program planning, development, and implementation that cannot

Some military community partners (e.g., chaplains) may already be addressing the importance of healthy marriage and relationship skills with military individuals and families across all levels of integration. Most military installations offer healthy marriage and relationship education courses, workshops, or retreats to military service members, but the offerings vary by installation. For example, not all installations offer healthy marriage and relationship skills education to single or co-parenting service members.⁸⁵ Additionally, many military service members and families do not live near a military installation; this is especially true for National Guard and Reserve members.⁸⁶ This creates an opportunity for civilian service delivery systems to facilitate provision of these critical skills to service members and families.

Resources to Support Level 3— Full Integration

Stakeholders in communities throughout the country can help strengthen military families' health and well-being by fully integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into existing social service delivery systems



525th Fighter Squadron returns home. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Curry, a quality assurance technician with the 3rd Maintenance Group hugs his three-year-old daughter Autumn at Hangar 25 on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska on April 21, 2017 upon returning from a 7-month deployment. For many families, this was their first time being separated from their loved ones for an extended period of time.

Photo by Senior Airman Kyle Johnson

fully be covered in this guide. The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families' website contains helpful tips and tools on full integration and program development at <https://healthymarriageandfamilies.org/program-development>.

Safety First: What to Do if You Suspect Intimate Partner Violence or Child Maltreatment

Healthy marriage and relationship education is part of a holistic, preventive approach to strengthening families; it is *not* a safety intervention and it is not about forcing couples to stay in unhealthy or abusive relationships. For couples who are experiencing high physical or emotional conflict, particularly when based on power and control dynamics, healthy marriage and relationship education may not be an appropriate or timely resource.⁸⁹ The sites listed below can help providers locate local marriage therapists for couples who are interested in repairing a high-conflict relationship or seek assistance for suspected intimate partner violence or child maltreatment.

Most safety-net service providers have protocols for reporting suspected violence or child maltreatment. All staff should be trained to follow those protocols. Below are some additional resources that may be helpful.

For Intimate Partner Violence

- Local domestic violence shelters or the National Domestic Violence hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) can help providers who suspect intimate partner violence. Visit <http://www.thehotline.org> for more information. In 2011, DoD established a confidential hotline for victims of sexual assault at 877-995-5247. Victims can also visit <http://www.safehelpline.org>.

For Child Abuse or Neglect

- The Child Welfare Information Gateway (<https://www.childwelfare.gov>) can help with suspected child maltreatment. This website has national crisis hotline information and links to state reporting phone numbers and other resources. The Child Welfare Information Gateway is a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Agencies near a military installation should also contact their local Family Advocacy Program. All providers subject to DoD policy *must* report child maltreatment to the military installation's Family Advocacy Program. Military OneSource's child abuse page, at http://www.militaryonesource.mil/footer?content_id=288688, has more information and provides links to local advocacy programs.

Additionally, the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families offers an online Family Violence Prevention course that includes general information and raises awareness about the importance of addressing domestic violence, child maltreatment, and family safety, and includes information to increase safety-net service providers' understanding of these issues. It also seeks to help providers identify other beneficial resources or referrals in the community that may support their efforts to institute healthy relationship policies and practices (see <https://training.healthymarriageandfamilies.org/login/index.php>).

Conclusion

This guide is designed to assist efforts to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into existing service delivery systems for military service members and their families. Understanding military life and cultural nuances is the foundation for developing interpersonal relationships with military service and family members. Interagency relationships create synergy for the integration of healthy marriage and relationship education at the community level and help establish a common vision of the benefits of healthy marriage and relationship education.

Integration efforts can be accomplished through simple steps, such as distributing brochures. Gaining community support and nurturing partner relationships may lead to a service delivery system that can support the full integration of healthy marriage and relationship education through workshops and classes. As providers become more aware of the benefits of healthy marriage education skills, they can better identify appropriate opportunities to discuss and teach healthy relationship skills such as communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and financial capability.

Additional Resources

Federal and Federally Sponsored Resources

- *National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families*

The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families is a service of the Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It offers a variety of tools and resources designed to educate interested stakeholders in the benefits of integrating healthy marriage education into existing social service systems. The Resource Center also provides a range of training, services, and support to interested state, local, and tribal government agencies as they work to integrate these healthy marriage and relationship skills into their existing services in order to best support the families in their communities.

<https://healthymarriageandfamilies.org>

- *Military OneSource*

Military OneSource is a free service provided by the DoD to service members and their families to help with a broad range of concerns, including money management, spouse employment and education, parenting and child care, relocation, deployment, reunion, and the particular concerns of families with special-needs members. It also addresses issues like relationships, stress, and grief. Services are available 24 hours a day by telephone and online.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil>

- *Military OneSource—Resources for Service Providers and Leaders*

This page of resources aims to help those who serve the military community by providing information about deployment, money management, wounded warrior programs, and more.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/service-providers>

- *Military OneSource—Resources Related to Deployment and Transition*

These resources assist service members and their families with deployment and transition to help meet their needs through all stages of military life.

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment-and-transition>

- *U.S. Department of Agriculture*
The U.S. Department of Agriculture's website has information and pre-screening tools for military families for food programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/get-involved/military-and-veteran-families>

Service-Specific Family Resources

- Army Community Services
<https://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance/about-acs>
- Army One Source
<http://www.myarmyonesource.com/default.aspx>
- Coast Guard Office of Work-Life
<http://www.uscg.mil/worklife>
- Marine Corps Community Services
<http://www.usmc-mccs.org>
- National Guard Bureau Joint Services Support Gateway
<https://www.jointservicesupport.org>
- Navy Fleet and Family Support
https://www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program.html

Nonprofit Resources

- National Military Family Association's Finding Common Ground: A Toolkit for Communities Supporting Military Families (Toolkit)
<http://www.militaryfamily.org/assets/pdfs/community-toolkit.pdf>
- Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Toll free number: 1-800-959-TAPS (8277)
<http://www.taps.org>
- Operation Homefront
<http://www.operationhomefront.org>
- National Military Family Association
<http://www.militaryfamily.org>

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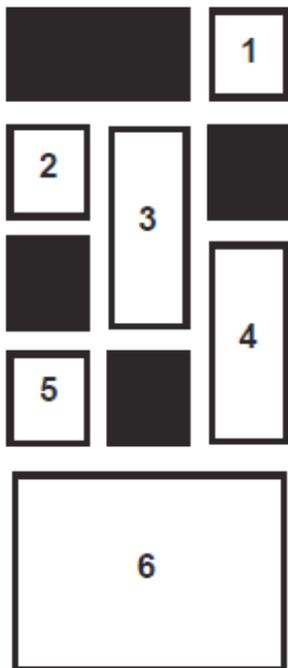
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This guide was prepared by the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families, with significant contribution from Suzanne Lederer, Ph.D.

Acknowledgments

This guide would not have been possible without the generous contributions of service members, military spouses and family members, and civilian supporters. In particular, to create our callout box about false assumptions faced by service members and families in Chapter 1, many individuals shared their experiences with us regarding questions they have been asked. Contributors include Sergeant Amber Blanchard, U.S. Marine Corps; Bekah Clark, Senior Master Sergeant; Tyler Foster, U.S. Air Force; Lieutenant Colonel Cliff W. Gilmore, U.S. Marine Corps; Lieutenant Colonel Jas Logue, Australian Army; Gunnery Sergeant Angela Mink, U.S. Marine Corps; Senior Master Sergeant Charles Ramey, U.S. Air Force (Ret.); Anup Samanta; Master Sergeant Jason Tudor, U.S. Air Force (Ret.); Lieutenant Colonel Mark Weber, Minnesota National Guard; and Tech Sergeant Julie Weckerlein, U.S. Air Force Reserve.

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1: Chief Petty Officer Amy Petersen, the officer in charge of Coast Guard Station Boston, holds her son during an award ceremony on April 13, 2016, in Hull, Massachusetts. Peterson said family is the most important thing to her, and the Coast Guard is one of her families.
Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Cynthia Oldham

2: Friends and families of Marines with Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron (VMAQ) 2 greet their loved ones as they return to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., April 9, 2017.
Photo by Lance Cpl. Zachary Ford

3: A family embraces their service member after being away for six months on April 10, 2017, at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho.
Photo by Senior Airman Malissa Lott

4: Families reunite after the 3rd Battalion, 321st Field Artillery Regiment Welcome Home Ceremony, April 27, 2017 at Green Ramp.
Photo by Sgt. Benjamin Parsons

5: William Ezra Warren is held by his father, Sgt. William Thomas Warren Jr., United States Army Space and Missile Defense Command, at Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Fort Bliss, Texas, April 6, 2017.
Photo by Sgt. Aura Conejos

6: The Joint Service Color Guard presents the Colors at the opening ceremony of the 2011 Joint Services Open House held on Joint Base Andrews, MD on May 22, 2011. The Color Guard was comprised of all five branches of the military.
Photo by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti

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