

Deployment Tips For Families

Communicate

Communication is a 2-way street. Your children need to be given plenty of opportunities to discuss their feelings about their parents deployment, but they also need to hear you talk about your feelings about the deployment and how it is affecting you. Remember that just because you know you are “available to talk,” your children might not.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Create a weekly family meeting, or a lunch date with your child/teen - don't force them to talk
- Get information from official sources and then discuss it with your kids at an age-appropriate level
- Turn off the radio while driving and see what gets brought up

Socialize

It is important to build and strengthen social networks during deployment. These networks help your child/teen remember that even though their parent is away there are lots of people who love and care for them. Maintaining your own social network is an important part of self-care and ensures you have adults around you to help you feel supported during tough times.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set up playdates for your kids with friends from school or the neighborhood
- Sign your child up for after school activities or sports
- Get a babysitter and go grab coffee with a friend

Get Organized

Kids of all ages appreciate structure and routine, it builds feelings of safety and security while also strengthening family bonds. Maintaining routines during a deployment can be challenging, be open with your child/teen about changes that might occur.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Create a family calendar with everyone's schedules and activities
- Create a short, simple list of house rules and their consequences
- Create or maintain healthy sleeping, eating, and exercise habits
- Schedule family events such as weekly pizza and movie night or a monthly outing, this is also a useful tool for marking time until the service member returns

Stay Connected

It is important for the entire family to stay as connected with the deployed parent as possible. It is important not just for kids to communicate with their deployed parent when possible but also to have them included in their daily routine.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Use “we” instead of “I” when communicating parenting decisions
- Have the kids kiss a picture of dad before bed or give a tracing of mom's hand a high five
- Record dad reading favorite bedtime stories or mom singing favorite songs
- Share the family calendar with the deployed parent so they can know what you are up to each day
- Arrange to communicate by computer phone or mail as often as possible