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Tips,  
Tools and  
Resources for  
Individuals

# Help Military Families

Deployed military members leave behind spouses, children and parents who must try to maintain life as usual while their loved one is away. Often, they are left to settle into a new community without the benefit of local family and friends. Giving a bit of your time can make a world of difference.

**INCLUDED IN THIS KIT:**

- 1 Overview**
- 2 The Basic Steps**
- 4 Military Culture Tip Sheet**
- 6 Resources for Connecting with Military Families**

# Help Military Families Overview

## Overview

There are nearly 200,000 military personnel deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and thousands more that are geographically separated from their families during assignments when it is not feasible for the family to accompany them.

## The Problem

Deployed military members leave behind spouses, children and parents who must try to maintain life as usual while their loved one is away. In addition, they are often left to settle into a new community without the support of local family and friends.

Because the military family may be new to town or on their own, it can be even more stressful for them to locate childcare, register children for school, schedule doctor appointments and maintain a home. These problems are compounded when the spouse is deployed. In many instances, it can be just as stressful when a spouse returns from deployment, especially if that person has been injured.

## The Solution

Military families that are settling into a new home and community have many needs that can be met by volunteers who may be able to babysit, help with errands, locate a handyman, jumpstart a car, or prepare a meal. Volunteers can also be a resource to find others in the community who can provide support.

## Time Commitment

Varies.

## Special Considerations

Skills vary—offer what you know how to do.



Often the most valuable service you can provide is just being there and listening.

OVERVIEW, continued

## Who Can Do This?

Primarily individuals or faith-based groups.

## Great Reasons To Do This Project

Military men and women and their families make tremendous sacrifices as they serve our country. Your support lets them know how much their service is appreciated. Members of the military represent the leaders of the next generation. By supporting them we are encouraging them to continue their service—eventually outside the military, in our communities.

# The Basic Steps

Take a grassroots approach and follow these steps to volunteer in your community. For more structured opportunities to help military families, go to our More Resources section to find additional opportunities with organizations with a strong track record of helping military families.

### 1 Get Started

Although military populations vary from community to community, there are countless ways to connect with military families in your hometown.

Check in with local veterans service organizations. Or, if you live near a military or guard base, contact the base's Family Resource Center.

Ask neighbors, school counselors, faith-based groups, and other community/fraternal organizations like Masons, Kiwanis and Lions Club to identify a military family in your neighborhood.

Educate yourself about military culture (see attached Tip Sheet) and the different branches of service.

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## 2 Introduce Yourself

Introduce yourself to the military family and let them know that you are available.

If none of your immediate neighbors are military families, try to find a common gathering place such as a library or guard base where you might offer to organize a potluck dinner during which you can introduce yourself and others who are willing to help.

Follow through. Continue to reach out and offer specific help. For example, you might offer to babysit once a week or ask if you can pick up something at the grocery store while you are out shopping.

Keep in mind that simply talking, communicating, and listening can have a valuable impact on the emotional well-being of the family member. Everyone wants and needs to be heard.



Get more ideas on how to identify a family that could use some support with the attached Resources for Connecting with Military Families.

## 3 Spread the Word

Inspire others and share your experience at [www.CreateTheGood.org](http://www.CreateTheGood.org)

### Key Resources and Tools

- Military Culture Tip Sheet
- Resources for Connecting with Military Families

# Military Culture Tip Sheet

## Challenges Faced by Military Families

- Because of reassignments, known as PCS (permanent change of station), military families move much more frequently than their civilian counterparts.
- Nearly 1 million, or 43%, of military personnel are parents.
- The average military child will attend between six and nine schools in grades K-12.
- Wives of military personnel are less likely to be employed than wives of civilians.
- Frequent moves and family separations pose financial difficulties.
- More than half of enlisted personnel report financial difficulties and struggles to pay bills.
- Families of Reserve and Guard members do not typically have the same support system or resources available to Active Duty members because they are geographically dispersed and do not typically live near a major military installation.



The military emphasizes strength, courage and bravery, which can make it difficult for service men and women to feel comfortable asking for help.

## Military Organization

- The military consists of four branches: Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.
- There are Active Duty military members and Reserve members.
- All of the U.S. military services have both active duty and reserve components. To the active duty (AD) service member, the military is a full time job. Members of the Reserves typically have another job in addition to their Reserve obligation.

## MILITARY CULTURE TIP SHEET, continued

- The National Guard is a unique component of the military reserves. Simply put, the National Guard is a state militia. The Governor of the state in which they enlist and serve commands the state's National Guard members. Only the Army and Air Force have a National Guard component.
- All U.S. military services follow the same general structure of ranks and responsibilities for enlisted personnel, noncommissioned officers, and commissioned officers.
- Enlisted personnel provide the "skilled blue collar" and technical support for the military, much as "blue collar" workers do to the civilian work force in America. Enlisted personnel represent 90% of military forces.
- Commissioned Officers are required to have at least a Bachelor's degree. They are the managers of the military services, although in contrast to civilian occupations, officers are legally obligated to serve as leaders and are held accountable for this additional responsibility.
- The military has a fraternization policy, which prohibits personal and business relationships among officer and enlisted service members. Although it has most commonly been applied to officer-enlisted relationships, fraternization also includes improper relationships and social interaction between officer members as well as between enlisted members. This policy doesn't apply to spouses, yet their friendships can still be influenced by it.
- Military personnel are legally available for duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

# Resources for Connecting with Military Families

Although military populations vary from community to community, there are countless ways to connect with military families in your hometown. If you live near a military base, contact the base's Family Resource Center. School counselors, churches, synagogues and religious institutions and other community/fraternal organizations like Masons, Kiwanis and Lions Club may also be able to direct you to military families. The organizations listed below will help volunteers who would like to help military families, or will help volunteers to direct military families to new organizations that can help them.

## American Legion - [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

With nearly 3 million members in close to 15,000 American Legion posts around the world, the American Legion's local posts assist veterans and their family members to file benefits claims and represent veterans denied benefits to which they feel they are entitled. They also offer career services, scholarship assistance, a family support network, and more.



Check out these programs to see how you can best contribute your time and talent.

## American Red Cross - [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

The nation's premier emergency response organization aids victims of devastating natural disasters and aims to prevent and relieve suffering. They also support and comfort military members and their families; collect, process and distribute lifesaving blood and blood products, and have a deep history in helping military members and their families. Click on "volunteer" under the Giving and Getting Involved tab.

## America Supports You (Department of Defense - DoD)

[www.ourmilitary.mil/help.shtml](http://www.ourmilitary.mil/help.shtml)

This DoD site provides a directory of organizations specifically devoted to helping veterans. For additional helpful information for military and their families, visit DoD's Community Relations site [www.ourmilitary.mil/help.shtml](http://www.ourmilitary.mil/help.shtml)

**RESOURCE LIST**, continued**Armed Services YMCA** - [www.asymca.org](http://www.asymca.org)

Provides support services to military service members – with particular focus on junior enlisted men and women and their families. Services include childcare, hospital assistance, spouse support services, food services, holiday meals, and more.

**Army Family Liaison Office/Army Well-Being** -

[www.armywell-being.org](http://www.armywell-being.org)

Serves all Army soldiers, civilians and families of active Army, the Guard, Reserves and Retirees. This website offers health, career, personal life, community, and education resources.

**Army Family Readiness Groups** - [www.armyfrg.org](http://www.armyfrg.org)

Offers information and resources to assist soldiers and their families during deployment. The Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG) provides the functionality of a FRG in an online setting to offer timely unit news, up-to-date information on military and community resources, quick access to unit and FRG leadership, and more.

**Coast Guard Ombudsman** - [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)

Serves as a link between a Coast Guard command and the families of the command. An Ombudsman can assist families to locate resources, communicate information from the command to the families, and take concerns of families back to the command.

**Give an Hour** - [www.giveanhour.org](http://www.giveanhour.org)

This national nonprofit organization provides free mental health services to members of the military, veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, their families and their communities. Currently, there are more than 4,400 licensed mental health professionals volunteering their time on the Give an Hour network.

**The United States Junior Chamber (Jaycees)** -

[www.usjaycees.org](http://www.usjaycees.org)

This organization helps young people build the bridges of success for themselves. They sponsor the Support Our Troops program that sends care packages to the troops and promotes a license plate program that raises funds that publicly support the troops.

**RESOURCE LIST**, continued**National Guard Family Programs** - [www.jointservicesupport.org](http://www.jointservicesupport.org)

Offers a staff directory for each state, as well as a list of upcoming events and trainings. The site's mission is to enhance the quality of life for National Guard members, their families, and their communities.

**National Military Family Association** - [www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org)

A leading advocate for improvements in the quality of military family life. Educates military families about their rights, benefits and available services. Provides information about the issues that affect their lives and promotes and protects their interests by influencing the development and implementation of legislation and policies.

**Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society** - [www.nmcrcs.org](http://www.nmcrcs.org)

This Society partners with the Navy and Marine Corps to provide financial, educational, and other assistance to Service members and their eligible family members and survivors, when in need. Eligible recipients receive interest-free loans for emergencies or educational purposes and needs-based scholarships. They also offer budget counseling services, thrift shops, and visiting nurse services.

**Navy Ombudsman** - [www.cnrsw.navy.mil](http://www.cnrsw.navy.mil)

Navy Family Ombudsmen are communications links, information and referral resources, and advocates for command family members. Ombudsmen are volunteers and spouses of service members within the command and are the point of contact for all family members connected to the command.

**Operation Homefront** - [www.operationhomefront.net](http://www.operationhomefront.net)

Provides emergency assistance and morale to our troops, to the families they leave behind, and to wounded warriors when they return home. Operates a variety of programs – vehicle donation, furniture, holiday, as well as assistance services, including food, financial, moving, housing, hurricane relief and scholarship programs.

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs** - [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

The VA's goal is to provide excellence in patient care, veterans' benefits, and customer satisfaction. They offer a wide variety of services, including disability compensation, health programs, housing services, and has more than 1500 facilities

**RESOURCE LIST**, continued

across the nation. Complete a volunteer form at [www.volunteer.va.gov](http://www.volunteer.va.gov) and a local VA representative will contact you.

**United States Marine Corps: Key Volunteers** -

[www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)

Works to provide communications and to establish community within units. Educational resources and services foster personal growth and enhance the readiness of Marine Corps families. The Marine Corps Family Team Building program includes Family Readiness Program Training; Readiness and Deployment Support Training; Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills; and LifeSkills Training.

**USO** - [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org)

Provides morale, welfare and recreation-type services to uniformed military personnel and their families.

**Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)** - [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

The VFW, with its Auxiliaries, includes 2.2 million members in approximately 8,100 posts worldwide. Their mission is to “honor the dead by helping the living” through veterans’ service, community service, national security and a strong national defense. They helped to establish the VA; created a GI bill for the 20th century, and developed the national cemetery system, and also fought to improve VA medical center services for women veterans.

**Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)** - [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

WWP’s main objectives are to raise awareness, enlist the public’s aid for the needs of severely injured service men and women, help these service members aid and assist each other, and provide unique, direct programs and services for these service members.