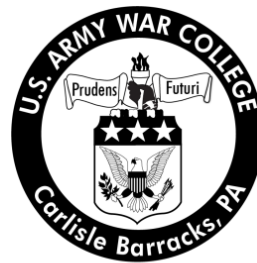


Strategy Research Project

Resiliency Program: Are We Doing Enough for Children and Youth?

by

Ms. Maureen Riggs
Department of the Army Civilian



United States Army War College
Class of 2012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A

Approved for Public Release
Distribution is Unlimited

This manuscript is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01/30/2012		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Resiliency Program: Are We Doing Enough for Children and Youth?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Ms. Maureen Riggs				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Robert Mundell Department of Command, Leadership, and Management (DCLM)				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution: A					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Four years after the signing of the Army Family Covenant, great strides have been made in improving Soldier and Family readiness and well-being, but the Army can do more. The February 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report states, "America's men and women in uniform constitute the Department's most important resource." The Department of Defense recognizes that multiple long deployments are taking a significant toll on service members and their families and pledged to provide lifelines of support focused on their health and welfare. This paper will examine how military children and youth are affected by the military lifestyle with special emphasis on the stress that is associated with a parent being deployed. Additionally the paper will provide recommendation for reducing stress by providing children and youth the skills and tools they need to be more resilient.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Military Family, Deployment, Schools, Well-being					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			UNLIMITED	28	

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**RESILIENCY PROGRAM: ARE WE DOING ENOUGH FOR CHILDREN AND
YOUTH?**

by

Ms. Maureen Riggs
Department of the Army Civilian

Colonel Robert Mundell
Project Adviser

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Ms. Maureen Riggs

TITLE: Resiliency Program: Are We Doing Enough for Children and Youth?

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 30 January 2012 **WORD COUNT:** 5,028 **PAGES:** 28

KEY TERMS: Military Family, Deployment, Schools, Well-being

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Four years after the signing of the Army Family Covenant, great strides have been made in improving Soldier and Family readiness and well-being, but the Army can do more. The February 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report states, "America's men and women in uniform constitute the Department's most important resource." The Department of Defense recognizes that multiple long deployments are taking a significant toll on service members and their families and pledged to provide lifelines of support focused on their health and welfare. This paper will examine how military children and youth are affected by the military lifestyle with special emphasis on the stress that is associated with a parent being deployed. Additionally the paper will provide recommendations for reducing stress by providing children and youth the skills and tools they need to be more resilient.

RESILIENCY PROGRAM: ARE WE DOING ENOUGH FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH?

Let me be clear, stronger military families will strengthen the fabric of America. By spotlighting their devotion to service, internal resilience, and patriotism, all Americans will have examples to emulate.¹

—President Barack Obama

In January 2011, President Obama signed a report, *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*, recognizing the challenges military families face. The President has made the care and support of military families a top national security policy priority.² Sixteen Cabinet Secretaries signed the following Statement of Support to demonstrate and articulate their commitment to supporting Military Families.

We recognize the tremendous service to our Nation made by the men and women of the Armed Services, our Veterans, and their families.

We commit to making the well-being of our military families one of our highest priorities and to improving their access to services and support.

We will ensure that this priority is communicated aggressively across our organizations, receives the necessary resources, and is assessed and strengthened going forward.

Our commitment is enduring; not just for today's military families, but for future generations.³

The Army made similar commitments to Soldiers and their Families on October 17, 2007 when former Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren, former Chief of Staff of the Army, General George W. Casey, Jr., and former Sergeant Major of the Army, Kenneth O. Preston signed the Army Family Covenant. The Army Family Covenant commitments included: 1) Providing Soldiers and their Families with a Quality of Life that is commensurate with their service, 2) Providing our Families a strong, supportive environment where they can thrive, 3) Building a partnership with Army Families that enhances their strength and resilience, and 4) Improving Family Readiness.⁴ This

document includes five specific areas to support the improvement of Family Readiness and they included: 1) Standardizing and funding existing Family programs and services, 2) Increasing accessibility and quality of health care, 3) Improving Soldier and Family housing, 4) Ensuring excellence in schools, youth services and child care, and 5) Expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members.⁵

Four years after the signing of the Army Family Covenant, great strides have been made in improving Soldier and Family readiness and well-being, but more can be done. The February 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report states, “America’s men and women in uniform constitute the Department’s most important resource.” It recognizes that multiple long deployments are taking a significant toll on services members and their families and communicates the departments’ pledge to provide lifelines of support focused on their health and welfare.⁶

When Soldiers are deployed, they must be to totally focused and able to concentrate on the mission at hand and not be distracted or worried about what is happening with their family at home. If their children are having behavioral issues, suffering from emotional stress, or expressing anger due to the fact that their parent is deployed, that military member needs to know that there are systems in place to support and address the Soldier’s family issues. As stated in the Army Family Covenant, the Army recognizes “the commitment and increasing sacrifices that our Families are making every day” and that “the strength of our Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families.”⁷

This paper will examine how military children and youth are affected by the military lifestyle and specifically the stress that is associated with a parent being

deployed. Additionally the paper will provide recommendations for reducing stress by providing children and youth with the skills and tools to be more resilient.

What is Resiliency?

There are many definitions of resilience, but common elements of resilience include (a) successful adaptation following an event and (b) managing exposure to adverse or traumatic circumstances.⁸ “Physiologically, resilience refers to the body’s ability to regulate hormonal and other responses to stress, quickly returning to a baseline level when stressors abate.”⁹ Resilience involves "mastering the possible," coming to accept what has been lost and cannot be changed, while directing efforts to what can be done and seizing opportunities for something good to come out of the tragedy.¹⁰ Resilient people are more successful because they push their limits and learn from their mistakes.¹¹

The Army defines resiliency as the ability to grow and thrive in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity.¹² The concept of resilience is so important to the Army that it has incorporated a course in resiliency training as part of its Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program. SFC Jose Sixtos, Master Resilience Trainer explains, “All Soldiers, Family members, and Department of the Army civilians will reap the benefits of this program, as will anyone they come into contact with. This program will help in all aspects of our lives, empowering us to strengthen relationships with our Families, our peers and our Soldiers.”¹³ This training is designed to help Soldiers, civilians and Families become more resilient by increasing their strength as defined in the following five areas:

Physical. Performing and excelling in physical activities that require aerobic fitness, endurance, strength, healthy body composition and flexibility derived through exercise, nutrition and training.

Emotional. Approaching life's challenges in a positive, optimistic way by demonstrating self-control, stamina, and good character with your choices and actions.

Social. Developing and maintaining trusted, valued relationships and friendships that are personally fulfilling and that foster positive communication characterized by a comfortable exchange of ideas, views, and experiences.

Spiritual. Strengthening a set of beliefs, principles or values that sustain a person beyond family, institutional, and societal sources of strength.

Family. Being part of a family unit that is safe, supportive and loving, and provides the resources needed for all members to live in a healthy and secure environment.¹⁴

“Science shows that the early exposure to circumstances that produce persistent fear and chronic anxiety can have lifelong consequences by disrupting the developmental architecture of the brain.”¹⁵ Being at war for over 10 years has caused stress and anxiety not only in our Soldiers, but also in their Families and especially in their children. As a result, it is important to provide children with opportunities to practice working through stressful situations in a safe environment so they can develop the skills they need to bounce back. Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg compares resilience to those rubbery stretch bands used for exercising that can be pulled beyond their original lengths, but when you let go, they spring back to their original size and shape.¹⁶ “In

terms of resilience, some children seem naturally graced with the ability to recover from obstacles, while others need extra support.”¹⁷

Research: (How deployment affects military children)

Since September 11, 2001, many military children have experienced one of their parents being deployed to war. Of the approximately one million service member parents who have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, 48 percent have served at least two tours.¹⁸ Deployments are not new to those who serve in the military, but since 2001 the number of deployments has increased while the time between deployments has decreased, causing negative emotional effects on families.

The emotional cycle of deployment is described as being divided into five distinctive stages: Pre-deployment; deployment; sustainment; redeployment; and post-deployment. Each stage is characterized by the time frame associated with it as well as specific emotional challenges that must be addressed and mastered.¹⁹ Based on the information conveyed in several research studies and reports, there is no question that deployment and family separations cause stress in military children.

In January 2011, a one-year RAND study was released that analyzed how deployment affects children. The study revealed that a greater percentage of children from a sample of military families suffered from emotional difficulty and anxiety symptoms compared to other children their age.²⁰ Children may express these stresses in many different ways. The following paragraphs examine current research efforts that focus on how stress may cause a child to experience academic challenges and behavior problems during their parent’s deployment.

The primary goal of a RAND study completed in April 2011 was to determine whether parental deployment is undermining the academic performance of the child.²¹

Their sample included school-age children of Army soldiers who resided in North Carolina and Washington State between 2002 and 2008 whose parents had deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in Iraq and compared them to Army children who have not experienced parental deployment at all. The sample included over 44,000 children, regardless of their proximity to Army installations in both North Carolina and Washington State. Since attributes of the children and parents may have changed during the study (for example, the soldier-parent may have changed components or may have been promoted), the study describes the information from 2007 that included 13,966 students in South Carolina and 3,066 students from Washington State. Two-thirds were children of active duty Soldiers, 14 percent were children of USAR Soldiers, and 21 percent were children of ARNG Soldiers, which is proportionate to Army wide figures pertaining to service members that have deployed since 2001.²²

Soldier-parents in the samples from both states had intense deployment schedules. In 2007, two-thirds (Washington State) to three-fourths (North Carolina) of Soldiers-parents had deployed once, and more than one in five Soldier-parents in both states were deployed during the timeframe when academic achievement tests were administered in June 2007. Among those who had been deployed, 23 percent of the Soldier-parents in the North Carolina sample and 10 percent of those in the Washington State sample had deployed three or more times.²³

The study determined that children in North Carolina and Washington State whose parents had deployed 19 months or more since 2001 had modestly lower (and statistically different) achievement scores compared to those who have experienced

less or no parental deployment.²⁴ Grade school and high school children whose parents had deployed 1-6 cumulative months at the time of the test experienced no difference in test scores compared to those whose parents had not deployed. Children with parents that had deployed 7-12 months and 13-18 months respectively had lower average test scores compared to those whose parents had not deployed, although the impact was small and only at the five percent significance level. Longer deployments of 19-24 months and 25+ months were associated with lower test scores for grade school students (who take reading and math tests) with meaningful effect sizes; the relationship between parent deployment and achievement among high school students (who take English and algebra tests) is not significant.²⁵

The connection between parental deployment and achievement scores was similar across rank and component with any differences being small and statistically insignificant. The study also determined there was no evidence that the gender of the deploying parent or the gender of the child had any impact on greater academic challenges. Lastly, there was no difference over time; the relationship between parental deployment and student achievement did not change as the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq continued.²⁶ The study concluded that the negative relationship between parental deployment and student achievement for children whose parents have deployed 19 or more cumulative months in comparison to little if any negative achievement difficulties specific to lower levels of deployment suggest that children, rather than developing resiliency, appear to struggle more with extended months of deployment. Extended time away appears to erode any initial resilience.²⁷

Researchers from RAND interviewed teachers, counselors, and school administrators from elementary, middle or junior high, and high schools regarding their perspectives on the impact deployments have on academic outcomes for children experiencing parental deployment. When examining several of the challenges some children face, it was noted that they may not have been reflected in their achievement scores. For example, a child may exhibit signs of obvious distress (such as poor homework completion, lower grades, moody behavior, or disengagement) that might not translate to lower achievement scores. Alternatively, a child may struggle with and then recover from a deployment before a test has been administered, or struggle after the test has been administered. The bottom line is that a teacher or counselor might observe students challenged by parental deployment even when their achievement test scores comparisons do not reflect that they are struggling.²⁸

Two significant academic challenges associated with children of deployed parents were identified by the teachers and counselors who were interviewed. First, teachers specifically noted that children turned in incomplete homework or they did not turn in any homework at all. Second, school personnel unanimously expressed a concern about school attendance especially when a child was absent from the classroom for an extended period of time, such as when the deployed parent was home on mid-tour environmental and morale leave. Many teachers said they tried to set up agreements with the parents so the child could keep up with their homework while they were on leave, but in many cases the children returned not having completed the work. Missing extended periods of school in the short term puts a child at risk for failing a class, but in the long term, significant learning gaps may occur. Overall, parents were

more likely to take younger children out of school for extended periods of time than older children. There is no way to quantify the degree to which these issues are or were widespread across the Army because that data was gathered largely through focus groups.²⁹

Another issue mentioned by teachers was the fact that during deployment, some families relocate to be closer to sources of support, to include their parents, grandparents or close friends. Teachers explained that children often become disinterested and disengage from their schoolwork once they learn that they will be moving, even if they are not scheduled to leave for an extended period of time. This disengagement not only occurs during deployment periods, but also when a child moves due to a permanent change of station. A secondary concern associated with frequent moves is that many academic course credits earned by the child do not transfer to his or her new school. The variation in academic requirements and the curricula across schools may result in significant knowledge gaps among students.³⁰

In describing the impact of military deployments and family separations on families, Dr. Gail Manos posits, “Like a stone dropped into a pond, there is a larger ripple effect felt beyond just the individual military member.”³¹ The size of the stone being dropped into the water also affects the size of the ripples and research shows that a child’s ability to cope with deployment-related stress varies by developmental stage, age, and gender.³² When observing behavioral problems, they can be categorized as either externalized (aggression, behavioral problems at home or at school, defiant behaviors) or internalized behaviors (depressive symptoms, anxiety, withdrawal, sadness).³³ In one study, the Pediatric Symptom Checklist subscale analysis indicated

that more than a third of parents reported their children experienced high levels of internalizing symptoms (39%), which included being anxious, worrying often, or crying more frequently.³⁴ Experiences that expose children to fear and anxiety, whether it happens one-time or multiple times, have the potential to affect how children learn, solve problems, and relate to others.”³⁵

One study suggested that children not only experience stress when their parent leaves for a deployment, but also during the multiple phases of the deployment cycle to include the period of time after their parent has returned.³⁶ At the beginning of a deployment, a child can be overwhelmed, sad, anxious, and clingy, manifesting increased somatic complaints or developing aggressive behavior.³⁷ Once children are able to readjust, these behaviors seem to diminish and they are able to adapt to their new routine.³⁸ At the end of the deployment when the absent parent returns, there is excitement, anticipation, and relief, occasionally followed by emotional conflict.³⁹ Reintegration into a family for a service member, who has been living in a warzone for 12 months or more, is a new paradigm for families and limited guidance is available on how to make this a smooth transition.⁴⁰

The National Military Family Association sponsored a RAND study to address the knowledge gaps that have been identified concerning the effects of deployment on the emotional well-being of military families. Researchers surveyed and interviewed military families who attend the 2008 *Operation Purple* camp. The camp was conducted at 63 sites nationwide and attended by children of deployed service members between 11-17 years old. This study was released in January 2011 and included both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component consisted of phone surveys with

one youth and his or her non-deployed or “home” caregiver from each of the participating families at three time periods over the course of one year: baseline in the summer of 2008, six months later in the winter of 2009, and one year later in the summer of 2009. The surveys included the same questions to allow for repeated measurement across time, with the exception of open-ended questions about deployment experiences that changed each time period the survey was conducted. The second, qualitative, component involved in-depth, semi-structured phone interviews with non-deployed caregivers to provide additional detail on how parental deployment affected family life and the experiences of the non-deployed caregiver.⁴¹

The research examined youth functioning in five areas: emotional difficulties, anxiety symptoms, peer and family functioning, academic engagement, and risk behaviors. Under the area of peer and family functioning, caregivers reported youth functioning in this area as comparable to levels found in studies of other U.S. youth. Youth reported their academic engagement (completing their homework or coming to class prepared) and actions in risky or problematic behavior (getting into fights with peers, getting into trouble at school, or using alcohol or other substances) at rates comparable to those observed in other U.S studies.⁴²

With regards to emotional difficulties, caregivers were asked about the child’s emotional health and the extent to which the youth were experiencing difficulties getting along with their peers and family members or feeling sad. Caregiver reports indicated that 34 percent of the youth in the study sample ages 11-14 were experiencing moderate to high levels of emotional and behavioral problems, compared with 19 percent in the national sample of all youth. For study youth across the entire 11-17 age

range, about one-third of the caregivers at baseline reported that their children were experiencing moderate to high levels of emotional difficulties.⁴³

Regarding anxiety symptoms, youth were asked to respond to questions focused on issues such as feeling frightened for no reason or having difficulty sleeping. Thirty percent of the youth reported elevated anxiety symptom levels that indicated the need for further evaluation, compared to 15 percent of youth in other studies. Across the study period, the percentage of those reporting elevated anxiety symptoms decreased but still remained close to one-third of the study sample.⁴⁴

The research also examined issues for the youth study that were specifically related to deployment and reintegration. During a deployment, children indicated that the most difficult problems they experienced were dealing with life without the deployed parent (68 percent) and helping the non-deployed caregiver deal with life without the deployed parent (68 percent). Another widely cited concern was not having people in the community that could understand and relate to the challenges associated with a deployment (45 percent).⁴⁵ Related to this last concern, Dr. Leonard Wong and Dr. Stephen Gerras found in their study, *The Effects of Multiple Deployments on Army Adolescents*, that “adolescent attitudes, such as the perception of America’s support for the war, could significantly influence perceptions of the deployment stress.”⁴⁶

With regard to reintegration, when youth were asked about the challenges surrounding the deployed service member’s return home, they identified two issues; 1) fitting the returning parent back into the home routine (54 percent) and; 2) worrying about the next deployment (47 percent). The study found that girls had more problems than boys with the reintegration period. This could be related to the roles they

performed when the military parent was away, issues with not emotionally connecting with the deployed parent (usually the father), or difficulties that teenage girls may have relating to their father. The research also showed that older children, and in particular those in middle or later adolescence, were experiencing more problems with parental deployment and parent reintegration than their younger counterparts. Developmentally, this was logical because older children tend to assume more responsibility in the household when a parent is absent and may experience greater role shifting when they return.⁴⁷

In a survey conducted in March 2009, the frequency and depth of communication between adolescents and their deployed parent was one of the topic areas reviewed as it related to stress. The online survey titled “The Effects of Multiple Deployments on Army Adolescents” targeted and focused on adolescents between ages 11 and 17 whose parents were assigned to large Army installation Commands (at least 5,000 soldiers). The survey participants were provided with four choices to describe the depth of their communication (shallow, somewhat engaged, engaged, and deep), but no specific definitions were provided for these choices.

The findings revealed that more and deeper communication between the homefront and the war zone did not always coincide with lower stress. The difference in stress levels associated with monthly and weekly communication was small, but for adolescents who communicated with their deployed parent several times a week, the stress levels were significantly higher. Although more frequent communication coincided with higher levels of stress in adolescents, it may or may not directly correlate with or cause increased stress. It could be that adolescents who are experiencing

higher levels of stress tend to communicate more with their parent to resolve problems.⁴⁸

In addition, the survey determined that adolescents who reported having “engaged” communication with their parent reported lower stress levels than those who had “shallow” or “somewhat engaged” communication. Adolescents, who reported having “deep” communication, also reported higher levels of stress. While more intimate communication might seem desirable, some adolescents may have their emotions closer to the surface and prefer to keep more distance in their interactions with their deployed parent.⁴⁹

Readily available communication technology expands the reach of these events (war and terrorism) and generates fear and anxiety among millions of people.⁵⁰ Children are more connected than ever before with their deployed parent. Internet communication technology like SKYPE or Yahoo Messenger provides families with the ability to contact each other more frequently and instantaneously. Even though military families welcome this change, some researchers have expressed concern that continuous communication between the family and the deployed service member may not always bring positive outcomes and could even increase family tensions and stress.⁵¹

One of the most important factors that contribute to a child’s well-being and adjustment during a military parent’s deployment is the non-deployed parent’s adjustment to deployment and psychological health.⁵² Parents who reported that they were experiencing a high level of stress were likely to perceive their children as having an increased psychosocial morbidity.⁵³ Cale Palmer explains in his article that,

“Research findings are presented as supporting a theoretical pathway that suggests that the effects of military life on a child’s outcome may follow an indirect pathway involving parental stress and psychopathology, rather than military life directly affecting children of military parents.”⁵⁴

Caregivers who participated in a recent RAND study cited two challenges as the most difficult during deployment: dealing with life without the deployed parent (72 percent) and feeling overwhelmed by the new responsibilities at home (57 percent). Caregivers cited fitting the returning parent back into the home routine (62 percent) as the most difficult challenge during reintegration. Caregiver emotional well-being was most consistently related to a child’s social, academic, and emotional outcomes. Poorer caregiver emotional well-being was also associated with challenges in household management, partner relationships, and parenting.⁵⁵ “School personnel, in fact, conveyed that although it was common to report challenges among students who were experiencing a parental deployment, they noted that they were especially more frequent among students whose non-deployed parent lacked access to a strong system of social support.”⁵⁶

One RAND study focused on academic performance and behavioral health revealed that some parents struggle more than their children with deployments. Teachers and counselors observed that parental psychological and behavioral health, and the changing home life may lead to many of the challenges that students face during these multiple and extended deployments. The school staff also suggested that some parents were experiencing depression, which is a tremendous stressor on children who are anxious or worried about their parents. These depressed parents may

not engage with the school sufficiently, may miss meetings with teachers, fail to bring children to school activities, and may not ensure their children are completing homework. In fact, it was reported that some parents keep children out of school as a source of comfort to them during the deployments because they did not want to be separated from them.⁵⁷

Teachers at all grade levels in both North Carolina and Washington State reported that boys are often worried or concerned about a situation at home, because they are now the “man of the house” and need to take care of the mother and siblings. The teaching staff noted that children can become the emotional partners of their home caregiver, which places undue burden and stress on their lives. Children often share with teachers their anxieties about helping their caregiver when their mother or father was deployed. When the non-deployed parent is depressed or unable to handle the deployment, many children take on parental supervision or support roles for their families. School officials believe that schools are becoming the stable place or sanctuary for students when their home life is chaotic or uncertain. Finally, teachers and counselors also shared that some parents are stressed to the point of anxiety and communicating with these parents when they do come to school can be difficult.⁵⁸

Recommendations

There are still many unknowns pertaining to the effects of deployments and family separations on children. Additional analysis is needed to understand the scope and severity of these challenges. The Department of Defense should recommend expanding these studies to specifically address how military members, their spouses, and children are handling the reintegration period of the deployment cycle and the long-term effect deployments have on the parent/children relationship. Other factors related

to reintegration are the rising number of divorces related to deployment, unemployment associated with downsizing, and the increased diagnosis of post traumatic stress in Soldiers returning from deployment. Two additional areas to consider when conducting further research are: 1) how military children who have experienced a parent being deployed transition to adulthood, and 2) how military children who have experienced a parent being deployed will react to parenting.⁵⁹

Second, the Army needs to partner with schools to develop a program that will balance behavioral health intervention with a prevention program that teaches students the skills that foster resilience. Schools could use this program with both military and non-military children. By making the instruction model available to all children, the Army would ensure that current military children obtain the skills required for resilience, that future Soldiers are resilient, and that neighbors and communities have the skills to support Soldiers in the future. The focus on prevention for all students may result in a decrease in Army intervention resources that are required to meet future student and Soldier needs, increase the recruitment pool of eligible military candidates, and build community capacity to support Soldiers and their Families.⁶⁰

By joining forces and partnering with schools to develop prevention programs that will help build resilience in our children, the following outcomes are probable: 1) expose common conceptual errors that can interrupt optimal ways of dealing with stressful daily events and replace them with effective thinking and analytical processes, 2) reframe feelings of vulnerability and helplessness by utilizing healthy coping mechanisms, 3) learn and practice ways to adapt to new unpredictable situations that allow individuals to succeed despite adversity, 4) build healthy relationships by

enhancing self-regulation and self-determination, 5) implement ways to diffuse anger and frustration in order to eliminate violence toward others, and 6) reinforce habits of resilience that discourage self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, suicidal ideation, depression, or other forms of self-harm.⁶¹

Lastly, a non-deployed parent's psychological health has been specifically linked with a children's ability to cope and adjust to a life with deployments. The Army must target interventions that will best support family resiliency and address family distress. In their study, "There and Back Again: How Parental Experiences Affect Children's Adjustments in the Course of Military Deployments," Manon D. Andres and Dr. Rene Moelker identified that, "Helping spouses cope with the absence of the service member increases the chances that children will also be doing well in the course of parental absence. But more than that, focusing on families rather than individuals—as family members and their experiences are strongly related—should be central in family support interventions."⁶² The Army must develop systems to identify spouses who are experiencing psychological difficulties and methods to motivate them to ask for and seek the support they need to survive and sustain their family. In the book, *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings*, Dr. Kenneth R. Ginsburg explains to parents, "The greatest gifts you can give your child are to live a balanced life and to demonstrate that when life inevitably offers us challenges, we take active steps to get back on track."⁶³

Conclusion

Recognizing that eliminating aggravating factors for mitigating the detrimental effects of parental deployment does not always provide positive outcomes, strategies should focus on what positively contributes to children successfully coping with parental

deployment.⁶⁴ Military families deserve only the best programs and services available to support them during and after their service to our country. Military children represent the future of our Nation. It is vital that we prepare them to deal with difficult situations, so they can bounce back with a stronger degree of determination to succeed than they possessed when they started. By building resilience in our children, we can support their academic success and their social and emotional well-being as they develop into adults. It is imperative that children have supportive relationships at home, in school, and within their community, with trusted adults who genuinely care for them, role model healthy coping strategies, and provide them with opportunities to practice being successful as they adapt to the changes they experience throughout life.

Endnotes

¹ *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*, January 14, 2011, http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111_initiative/strengthening_our_military_january_2011.pdf (accessed December 6, 2011).

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴ Army Family Covenant, October 17, 2007, <http://www.tamc.amedd.army.mil/news/2008/Tripler%20Army%20Family%20Covenant%20poster.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2011).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Robert M. Gates, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2010), 49.

⁷ Elizabeth M. Lorge, "Army Leaders Sign Covenant with Families," <http://www.army.mil/news/2007/10/17/5641-army-leaders-sign-covenant-with-families/> (assessed December, 6 2011).

⁸ Suniya A. Luthar, "Resilience in Development: A Synthesis of Research across Five Decades," in *Developmental Psychopathology, Vol. 3: Risk, Disorder, and Adaptation*, Dante Chicchetti & Donald (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006): 742.

⁹ Faith Ozbay, et al., "Social Support and Resilience to Stress: From Neurobiology to Clinical Practice," *Psychiatry* 4, no. 5 (May 2007): 35.

¹⁰ Froma Walsh, "Traumatic Loss and Major Disasters: Strengthening Family and Community Resilience," *Family Process* 46, no. 2 (June 2007): 207.

¹¹ Kenneth R. Ginsburg and Martha M. Jablow, *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings* (Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011), 4.

¹² Resilience Training for Basic Combat (Red Phase) PSB 02010/V 1, February 10, 2010, [https://www.resilience.army.mil/sso/lifecycle/RT_for_Basic_Combat_Training_\(Red_Phase\)_LP_10Feb10.pdf](https://www.resilience.army.mil/sso/lifecycle/RT_for_Basic_Combat_Training_(Red_Phase)_LP_10Feb10.pdf) (accessed December 6, 2011).

¹³ Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Brochure, 4th Edition, <http://csf.army.mil/downloads/Soldier-Small-Brochure.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2011).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9, February 2010, <http://www.developingchild.net> (accessed December 6, 2011), 1.

¹⁶ Ginsburg and Jablow, *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings*, 24.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Impact of Deployment of Member of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children: Report to the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 2010), 9.

¹⁹ COL Douglas A. Walddrep, et al., "Impact of Deployment on Family," *Iraq War Clinician Guide*, http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/manuals/manual-pdf/iwgc/iraq_clinician_guide_ch_13.pdf (accessed December 6, 2011), 83.

²⁰ Anita Chandra, et al., *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, January 2011), http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR913.html (accessed December 6, 2011).

²¹ Amy Richardson, et al., *Effects of Soldiers' Deployment on Children's Academic Performance and Behavioral Health* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, April 2011), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1095.pdf (accessed December 6, 2011), 16.

²² Ibid., 13-14.

²³ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁴ Ibid., 20.

²⁵ Ibid., 18-19.

²⁶ Ibid., 27.

²⁷ Ibid., 28.

²⁸ Ibid., 31-32.

²⁹ Ibid., 33-35.

³⁰ Ibid., 34 & 43.

³¹ Gail H. Manos, "War and the Military Family," *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 49, no. 4 (April 2010): 297.

³² U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Impact of Deployment of Member of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children*, 29.

³³ U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Impact of Deployment of Member of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children*, 19.

³⁴ Eric M. Flake, et al., "The Psychosocial Effects of Deployment on Military Children," *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* 30, no. 4 (August 2009): 276.

³⁵ Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9, February 2010, <http://www.developingchild.net> (accessed December 6, 2011), 1.

³⁶ Patricia Lester, et al., "The Long War and Parental Combat Deployments: Effects on Military Children and At-Home Spouses," *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 49, no. 4 (April 2010): 311.

³⁷ Flake, et al., "The Psychosocial Effects of Deployment on Military Children," 272.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Chandra, et al., *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families*, xiv.

⁴² Ibid., 24-32.

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 32-34.

⁴⁶ Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerras, *The Effects of Multiple Deployments on Army Adolescents*, (January 2010), <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=962> (accessed December 6, 2011), 32.

⁴⁷ Chandra, et al., *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families*, 35-39.

⁴⁸ Wong and Gerras, *The Effects of Multiple Deployments on Army Adolescents*, 19-20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁵⁰ Shelley M. MacDermid Wadsworth, "Family Risk and Resilience in the Context of War and Terrorism," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, no. 3 (June 2010): 552.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Impact of Deployment of Member of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children*, 9.

⁵² U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Impact of Deployment of Member of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children*, 23.

⁵³ Flake, et al., "The Psychosocial Effects of Deployment on Military Children," 276.

⁵⁴ Cale Palmer, "A Theory of Risk and Resilience Factors in Military Families," *Military Psychology* 20, no. 3 (June 2008): 205-206.

⁵⁵ Chandra, et al., *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families*, 41-48.

⁵⁶ Kristin N. Mmari, et al., "Exploring the Role of Social Connectedness Among Military Youth: Perceptions from Youth, Parents, and School Personnel," *Child Youth Care Forum* 39, (May 2010): 363.

⁵⁷ Chandra, et al., *Views from the Homefront: The Experiences of Youth and Spouses from Military Families*, 51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁵⁹ Wong and Gerras, *The Effects of Multiple Deployments on Army Adolescents*, 36.

⁶⁰ Dr. June Michel, Chief, School Support Services, Installation Management Command G-9, telephone interview by author, September 9, 2010. Information provided included conclusions and recommendations from a working group that included staff from Installation Management Command G-9 and Fairfax County Public Schools located in Northern Virginia. The working group was established in August 2009 to develop a proposal for a partnership that would design an instructional program to foster resilience. The proposal was never finalized.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Manon D. Andres and Rene Moelker, "There and Back Again: How Parental Experiences Affect Children's Adjustment in the Course of Military Deployments," *Armed Forces & Society* 37, no 3 (July 2001):438.

⁶³ Ginsburg and Jablow, *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings*, 330.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on the Impact of Deployment of Member of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children*, 23.

