

Outreach Tips-Military Families and Their Unique Culture

Your parent center uses culturally-appropriate outreach on a regular basis to engage parents and youth in underserved communities. Military life creates a unique culture for service members and their families—a culture just as distinct as that of an ethnic or linguistic community. We hope this resource with **tips from military family members** helps you in your outreach and services to military families.

Military Family Life

Married active-duty service members make up more than half of the armed forces, with approximately 36 percent of those families having children. About 4 percent of active-duty service members are single parents. For both service members and their families military life provides a great sense of community.

Family members can connect with other military families because of similar experiences. Because active duty service members and their families live where the military sends them, they turn to one another. They may live on-installation or in a neighborhood with lots of military families for the sense of community. Families help one another with emotional support during their service members' deployments, and with chores, child care, and the logistics of daily life.

Military families have opportunities to experience living in a wide variety of places around the world, and children can learn new languages, make friends from other backgrounds, and develop responsibility, adaptability, and a strong sense of identity. Most military families thrive in this environment, and in spite of stressors, take pride in their contribution to our nation's safety and defense.

This life comes with serious commitments. The military determines what the service member wears, when it's worn, how physically fit they are, what job they will do, and where and for how long they do it. It's a common military expression that when a service member joins the military, "Uncle Sam owns you". In fact, the service member is on call, even if not on duty, 24/7. Note each service's values below—they all emphasize service and duty over personal interests.

In spite of this, when service members are at home, upholding their mission is secondary to their family commitment. Deployed service members use a full range of technology to stay in touch with their families and participate in their lives as much as possible.

Military Values

Army: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage

Navy and Marine Corps: Honor, Courage and Commitment

Air Force: Integrity, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do

Coast Guard: Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty

Families Serve Too

What the military requires and expects of its service members extends to their families. Another common military saying is "Families serve too". What does this mean for military spouses and children?



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Because anything in a service member's life may impact their job performance (and possibly risk the mission and lives), commanders at any level in the chain of command have a great deal of responsibility for the members of their unit, at work and at home. Commanders rely on family members to support not only their own Sailor, Soldier, Airman, Marine or Coast Guardsman but their service member's unit as well. For instance, a sergeant's spouse may make a point of knowing the names of service members under his or her spouse's command and also something about their families, may reach out when a family is struggling with finances or a child's illness, and learns about military family support programs in case his or her spouse's unit members needs more than neighborly assistance.

In turn, the military puts a great deal of effort into supporting families with benefits and programs, including child care, child and youth recreational programs, health care, and liaisons with local schools. Their reasoning is that when a service member knows their family is supported, they can accomplish their mission with fewer worries about what's happening at home.

Many military families tend to turn to military supports rather than civilian programs in their states or local communities. They may not know what's available and if they have recently moved to a location may have no basis for deciding if a local civilian service or program will be helpful for them. At the same time, many military family members would like to expand their personal communities with connections in their neighborhoods, their child's school, and in local organizations. They know how valuable it is to have that sense of community and are eager to explore different ways to get to know people. *This desire to reach out into the community offers a number of ways for parent centers to reach out to military family members.*

Outreach Tips

These tips are from military family members!

- **Ask military families you are currently helping** (or have helped in the past) for ideas about connecting with other military families. Word of mouth is an excellent way to get in touch with the military family community.
- [Find volunteers for your parent center in the military community.](#) They can help you spread the word!
- **Veteran's events and organizations** attract active duty families as participants and volunteers-your parent center may be able to have a table at a resource fair, or the organization's local chapter may be willing to hang a poster or rack card.
- **Join or attend meetings of partnership groups that connect community organizations, businesses, and the veteran, active duty and reserve communities.** You may find them through local chapters of veterans organizations or through chambers of commerce in communities near installations. Attending these meetings is a great way to build wide connections in the military community.
- **Add military-specific language to your website.** Military families often use "military" as a search term when looking for local resources. Since military families often have legal permanent residence in another state, language like this may help them understand that they qualify for parent center help:

"XYZ Parent Center is the federally-funded Parent Training and Information Center for your area. We serve families in A, B, and C counties, including families of military service members at *****installations."

- **Post military family-friendly information on your social media platforms.**

For example, when publicizing a training near an installation, you might include wording like “We warmly invite interested families from Fort *** to our trainings”.

- **Military Treatment Facility and Pharmacy waiting areas:** this might be considered a long shot, but military family members tell us that military parents spend lots of time at these places! Because you are a resource for parents, you may be able to post event flyers, rack cards and other information in these locations. Many if not most of these sites are off-installation. Contact [the Branch](#) for locations and more information.

National Guard Points of Contact:

Family Assistance Coordinators and Family Assistance Specialists

Every state has a team of Family Assistance Coordinators and Specialists. Coordinators (FACs) are usually located at a state’s National Guard headquarters or at a large or centrally-located installation. They are the overall point of contact for National Guardsmen and families in that state. They can disseminate parent center information, news, and contacts to all National Guard families in the state and help you to arrange trainings at an installation.

Family Assistance Specialists (FASes) work with families either in a designated region, by specific National Guard units, or by issues with which they help families-it is different from state to state. The FAC can also suggest which FAS may be a handy contact for you.

[Reach National Guard Families directly:](#) The Joint Services Support Website has a FAC/FAS and Service Provider locator where your parent center can list their information to reach National Guard families!

[Locate an FAC with our interactive MAPs.](#)

On-installation programs that can help with outreach:

These programs offer possibilities for building connections and relationships and may help by hosting a training, letting you post flyers, adding parent center events and information to their newsletters, and sharing ideas for family involvement.

Most frequent parent center installation points of contact:

- [Exceptional Family Member Family Support Program \(EFMP\)](#)
- [School Liaison Officer \(SLO\)](#)

Other installation programs:

- [New Parent Support Program](#)
- [Military Family Life Counselors or Child and Youth Behavioral Counselors](#)
- **Child Development Centers (CDCs):** on or near-installation military-run daycare and afterschool programs. Get contact numbers for the CDCs through the Military and Family Support Centers or directly via an installation’s website or contact [the Branch](#) for assistance.
- **Chaplain’s office:** Chaplains, who serve all service members and their families regardless of their faith or denomination, are often willing to give service members and their families information about civilian

resources. Get contact information from an installation's family support center (below), find on an installation's website, or contact [the Branch](#) for assistance.

Military and Family Support Centers house many of an installation's family support programs, including EFMP Family Support and School Support Services. They may also be called:

- Armed Forces Community Centers
- Army Community Services
- Marine Corps Community Services
- Navy Fleet and Family Support Center
- Airman and Family Readiness Centers

Contact information for the centers may be available through the [MAPS](#) on [branchta.org](#), an installation's website, or contact [the Branch](#) for assistance.

More information on outreach to military families:

[Meet Your New Super-Volunteers: Military Families!](#)

[Tips for Accessing Military Installations: For Individual Assistance and Trainings](#)

[Social Media Helps Military Families](#)

[Contact an Ombudsman!](#)