



# ***HELPING CHILDREN DEAL WITH DEPLOYMENT***

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**COSC**  
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## *Recognizing a Need*

- 550,000 school-age active duty children
- Mobilization of the National Guard and Reserve has introduced more than 52,000 school age children to the world of active duty military service
- Nearly 85% attend public schools – not DoD schools
- 155,000 children affected by a deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan at any given time



The "Operation Purple" logo features a stylized purple star with a blue and red swoosh above it. Below the star, the words "OperationPurple" are written in a bold, purple, italicized sans-serif font. Underneath, the text "A program of the National Military Family Association" is written in a smaller, purple, italicized sans-serif font.

## *OperationPurple*

*A program of the National Military Family Association*

- In 2004, NMFA developed FREE summer camps for military children from all uniformed services with the generosity of the SEARS American Dream Foundation
- Goal was to create a program to send military children to an accredited camp together as a group for fun and skill building activities
- Committed to creating opportunities for friendships to last a lifetime.
- Providing support for dealing with the difficulties of deployment.



# *Operation Purple®*

**GOAL:** To give military children tools to help deal with the stresses that result from a parent's deployment, through an exciting and memorable camp experience in a "purple" environment.



*All OPC's are required to include  
the following elements:*

1. Formal Introduction to *Operation Purple* Camp Week
2. Teambuilding Activities
3. Service Project
4. Military Themed Fun
5. Military Guest Speaker
6. Communication
7. Top Ten Lists
8. Outdoor Education
9. T-Shirt Signing



## ***COUNSELOR CONSULTANT VISITS:***

- Mental-health consultants are provided to each camp location.
- Provided from the generosity of DoD - MFLC Program and TriWest Healthcare Alliance

# Operation Purple 2008



“I am writing to thank you so much for sponsoring OPC this summer...they have not stopped talking about all the fun they had last week...you have made a BIG difference in our lives and many other military families lives!”

- Sponsoring 100 weeks of camp at 62 locations in 37 states and territories
- 2008: 10,000 military children to OP camps!!
- Incredible Sponsors:
  - The Sierra Club
  - The MSDF



# **Understanding the Impact of Deployment on Children and Families: Findings from a Pilot Study of Operation Purple Camp Participants**

**Anita Chandra, Rachel M. Burns, Terri Tanielian,  
Lisa H. Jaycox, Molly M. Scott**

**Prepared for the National Military Family Association  
by the Rand Center for Military Health Policy  
Research**



- **Background**

- Separation from service members and the significant stressors experienced during deployment may affect the lives of family members
- OIF/OEF characterized by multiple and extended deployments
- There is little information regarding the extent to which children and families are affected, or what is the impact on child mental health and behavioral outcomes

- **Objectives**

- To describe the functioning and well-being of children of deployed military personnel over time (baseline and 3 months follow-up), from the perspectives of the child and home caregiver
- To compare potential differences in the effects of deployment on functioning and well-being of children by service component (Active versus Reserve) and deployment status
- To describe the reasons for attendance and benefits of Operation Purple Camps from the view of the child and the caregiver



- **Sample**
- Children attending 5 Operation Purple Camps (sponsored by NMFA) during August 2007 and their primary caregiver
- Baseline n=192, follow-up completed sample (both caregiver and child) n=110
- **Design**
- Self administered written surveys with child and caregiver
- Baseline and 3 months follow-up
- Written end-of-camp satisfaction surveys with children



- **Respondent Characteristics (n=192)**
- 39% Reserve component (Guard or reserve)
- 45.1% Army
- Mean child age=10.4 years; mean caregiver age=37.9 years
- Child=51.4% boys, 48.6% girls; Caregivers=81% female (mothers)
- 75% of families had a deployed or recently deployed parent; 15% preparing for deployment (at baseline)
- Avg. # OIF/OEF deployments= 2.8 (3.4 Active duty vs. 1.9 Reserve)



# ***Key Findings***



## **Children functioning well, though emotional difficulties potentially greater than general population**

- Younger children and girls reported more anxiety.
- Caregivers of boys reported more difficulties with their child's attention and emotional health
- Active component caregivers reported more child emotional difficulties than Reserve component caregivers ( $p < .05$ ); Reserve caregivers reported that their children had more skills in interacting with others (prosocial skills) than active component ( $p < .01$ )



## Child report on deployment experience varies by component

Statement	Active (n=118)	Reserve (n=74)
I worry (will worry) about my military parent while he/she is deployed	53.3	47.1
I worry (will worry) about the person (parent) who takes care of me while my parent is deployed	38.2	26.5
My military parent talked to me about deployment	30.3	22.1
I had/have trouble with schoolwork when my parent is deployed	19.1	11.9
I spend/spent a lot of time with other military kids while my parent is/was away	26.7	14.7
While my military parent was away, my parent at home acted the same as always	40.0	33.8
Teachers understand what is it like for me to be a military kid	34.8	26.9
Kids who don't have families in the military understand what it is like for me to be a military kid	20.2	14.9



## Caregivers reported concerns about child behavior and home routine as a result of deployment

- More reserve component caregivers reported at least some stress from having too many responsibilities (77% vs. 67%,  $p < .05$ ) and from not enough time to do what they wanted (88% vs. 79%,  $p < .05$ ) compared with active component caregivers.



# *Conclusions*

- **Children and home caregivers are having difficulties in dealing with deployment**
- **Programs such as Operation Purple Camp are critical in helping families confront challenges**
- **Additional Research is necessary**
  - **Family Relationships affected by reintegration**
  - **What further support is necessary for caregivers**
  - **Mental Health needs assessment of children and caregivers**
- **NMFA has contracted the RAND Corporation to conduct an 18 mos longitudinal study that will build on findings from the pilot that began in July 2008**

*The Military Family's Contribution is  
Immeasurable...it's the Least We Can Do!*



While servicemembers are asked to do extraordinary things, military families serve on the homefront and provide extraordinary support!

Let's all make sure they hear:

**WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!!**