



**NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD  
FAMILY PROGRAMS  
330 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD  
LATHAM, NY 12110**



Re: Children of New York National Guard Service Members

To Whom It May Concern,

**YOU MAY HAVE AN AT-RISK CHILD IF HIS OR HER FAMILY IS EXPERIENCING A DEPLOYMENT.** It is almost certain that one or more students in your school will be affected at any given time. New York National Guard will continue to have Service Members deployed in overseas contingencies for several years. The effects of the past deployments will continue to be a factor in our Guard Families for quite some time.

National Guard and Reserve families often live far from military bases and associated support systems. *You are a significant and valuable resource in the lives of these students.* Deployment can cause prolonged stress because it results in changes in family structure and is beyond the child's control. Prolonged stress alters brain chemistry and function, resulting in problems with concentration, memory, behavior, and control of emotions.

Deployment is when an individual or military unit is moved within the US or overseas to accomplish a task or mission such as training exercises, humanitarian efforts, peacekeeping activities, or combat. There are five stages of deployment for a family. Please refer to the next page for information on the Stages of Deployment and how teachers and school support staff can support the military youth in their schools. I ask that you pass this along to as many staff as possible so all New York educators, guidance counselors and staff are aware of ways they can support our military families. I encourage you to research how many children of military members are enrolled in your school. To better assist those families, I urge you to learn more about military families, the challenges they face and the programs available to them.

The well being of our family members is a vital part of the mission of Family Programs. We are here to support, educate and encourage the family members of the New York National Guard. The Citizen Soldiers of New York are located in every community.

Information for our educators is available through Family Programs and the Child & Youth Program websites

Family Program Page: <http://dmna.ny.gov/family/>

Child and Youth Page: <http://dmna.ny.gov/family/yprogs.php>

Thank you in advance for the support and attention you give to our military children. Please feel free to contact the Child and Youth Program Coordinator(s), Kimberly Hierholzer [k.hierholzer.ny.cyss@gmail.com](mailto:k.hierholzer.ny.cyss@gmail.com) 518-786-4904 or Ashley Semerad [Ashley.n.semerad.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:Ashley.n.semerad.ctr@mail.mil) 518-786-4614 for further information and resources.

Sincerely,

John J. Willsey  
State Family Program Director  
New York National Guard

## **Stages of Deployment:**

**Pre-deployment—Family is notified that member will be deployed, several weeks to a year in advance.**

- General shock and disbelief; security, and safety of family feels shattered.
- May feel like soldier is already “psychologically deployed”.

**Deployment Phase—From the time the soldier leaves home through the first month of deployment.**

- Mixed emotions—may include feeling abandoned, angry, sad, numb, and relieved.

**Sustainment—From the first through next-to-last month of deployment.**

- Majority of families reach a “new normal” and resume life with renewed resiliency and hope.
- Level of adjustment varies from family to family, and from child to child; families with multiple pre-existing problems and/or troubled family members are at a higher risk for adjustment problems.

**Pre-Reunion—The month before soldier is scheduled to return home.**

- Mixed emotions—excitement, anticipation, and apprehension.
- Unrealistically high or low expectations.

**Reunion—Typically lasts 3 to 6 months, beginning when soldier returns home.**

- Initially reunion is experienced with euphoria and joy for many families.
- Family structure and roles will need to be renegotiated because all family members will have changed.
- Child’s response depends on age; may display significant anxiety for up to a year.

## **Tips for helping youth with a deployed family member:**

1. Rely on your wisdom and knowledge of childhood and youth development.
2. Include the “at home” parent or caregiver on any evidence of deployment stress.
3. Be approachable and sensitive; limit frightening or hurtful communication.
4. Children may express themselves inappropriately in an effort to cope with overwhelming emotions. They may become overactive and disruptive, or quiet and withdrawn.
5. Acknowledge that feeling sad, angry, and hurt is normal when someone we care about leaves.
6. Reinforce ways to express negative emotions without hurting self or others.
7. Reassure students that everyone adjusts to change at a different pace.

## **Additional resources:**

Educator Update: Advocating For Military Children:

<http://www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/Assets/pdf/Educator-Update-with-DMR-v3.pdf>

Free tutoring for military families:

<http://www.tutor.com/MILITARY>

Discussion of tough topics & helping children cope:

<https://militarykidsconnect.org/parents>

Free SAT/ACT test prep programs:

[http://www.eknowledge.com/affiliate\\_welcome.asp?coupon=2941CE7118](http://www.eknowledge.com/affiliate_welcome.asp?coupon=2941CE7118)

Scholarships for military youth:

<http://www.militaryscholar.org>