

Section C-2 Special Interest Topics

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact your Family Readiness Program representative or legal officer, as appropriate, to secure the most current information.

Parent Education Information

Parenting is a challenging role for every mother and father. Whether you have one child or several, you may sometimes question your parenting skills. We all very much want to do everything we can to nurture our children and to help them grow into healthy, well educated, adults with character and a proper attitude. As children mature, they continue to test our ability to guide and protect them. Beyond the natural challenge posed by raising children, external forces such as drugs, promiscuity, and violence all threaten our children and increase the complexity of parenthood. As difficult as parenting can be under the best of conditions, events such as family separations can increase the stress of parenting dramatically and have a direct impact on the happiness and welfare of our children.

Military life may increase the difficulty of parenting. Military related factors may make your role as a parent more difficult include:

- You may live far from your extended family and relatives who would otherwise be there for support and advice on raising children.
- Military duty demands may cause prolonged and frequent family separations that place you in the role of a sole parent and disrupt the balance of your child's home life.
- Reunion with your military member at the end of a training or deployment separation may cause another adjustment period that disrupts family roles.
- Military duties may send your spouse to assignments around the world – perhaps to dangerous locations. This is frightening for a family, especially to children.
- The combined demands of a civilian job and military duties limit the amount of time your spouse can devote to the family. Your children's welfare may be affected and you may have to bear more parental responsibilities.

Raising a child, especially a child in a Guard or Reserve family, is a daunting task. Fortunately, you are not alone. Your extended military unit family is made up of other parents. They can serve as an invaluable source of advice and assistance. Often, other parents in the military unit family may be older and more experienced. They have “been there before” and can help you get through the most difficult times, such as family separations.

Your military unit also has extensive resources to help you through the toughest of times. Your Family Readiness Group (FRG) is a good place to start. The FRG will be able to provide you information on military and community resources. In the Resources Section of this Toolkit (C-3), you will find other sources of information. Finally, don't forget your local community. Check the phone book for local government offices and independent social agencies that may be able to offer assistance.

While there is a wide range of sources for assistance and information that can get you through troubled times, the job of parenting is not well suited to a reactive approach. The time to learn how to manage the difficult situation is not when you are entering a new phase in your child's life or attempting to deal with a major family event such as a deployment. The stakes involved in parenting are high. Your performance as a parent will have a direct impact on your children's future as well as their present welfare. Fortunately, there are a number of books and courses you can utilize to build and expand your parenting skills. Check with your FRG to see if Parent Effectiveness Training or similar training courses are available through your unit chaplain or other military/community resources. Check with your religious organization to see if they offer such training. Use the phonebook to find community resources, including adult education programs. You'll find that these training programs can not only make you a better parent, but can also help you to reduce the stress and uncertainty that affects every parent.

Finally, learn from the unique opportunity that your military association brings you. The services are comprised of a cross section of Americans including families from other religions, races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds. Being in the military provides the opportunity to meet and work with new people, expand your friendships beyond your community, and to experience and value the differences in others. You are a role model for your children. As they observe you enjoying the cultural diversity and opportunities within the military lifestyle, they will grow stronger themselves in their acceptance and support of people of other cultures. Take advantage of your opportunities, broaden your experiences, and make new friends. Strong bonds are developed between military families as they share the separations, crises, mission, and reunions together. Military family life can be rewarding, exciting, and the source of close supportive friendships.

Your children deserve the best you can give – take the time and the effort to be the best parent you can.