

Get The ORFP Advantage!

The California National Guard's Operation Ready Families Program offers a variety of programs to assist the guardmember and their family before, during and after deployment:

- Operation "We Care" Meetings
- Special Benevolence Offers
- Volunteer Education Courses
- Marriage Enrichment Seminars
- Youth Camp

We also offer educational articles on:

- Managing Combat Stress
- Understanding Military Benefits
- Coming Home

...And Much More!

Visit our website!

www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies

Mission First! Family Always!

Operation Ready Families Program
Family Assistance Network
California National Guard
9800 Goethe Road; PO Box 269101
Sacramento, CA 95826-90101

Operation Ready Families Program
Family Assistance Network
California National Guard

Children in a Life of Deployment



Inside...

When should I tell my children?
Tips on telling your children
Key things to keep in mind
Effects of separation in children

Children in a Life of Deployment

When should I tell my children?

When Define notice is given that the military member will be deployed.

Tips on telling your children:

- Be sure to examine your own feelings before telling your children.
- Be positive when telling your children
- Understand that each child's reactions to the news may be different
- Have both parents together if possible
- Discuss the event in appropriate terms
- Be truthful, keep it honest, straight forward, and factual - "inform but don't alarm"
- Discuss expectation of life during deployment
- Share your feelings
- Address fears or concerns about possible injury (only if the child asked - be sure to keep it age appropriate)

Key things to keep in mind

- All children need to feel safe
- Acknowledge and normalize the children's feelings
- Provide extra support and reassurance
- Involve children in planning how the family will cope
- Maintain a healthy routine
- Give each child a individual time
- Make plans for communicating
- Watch using the phrase Man or Mommy of the house" (This can put unintended stress on the child)

Effects of Separation in Children

Infants 6 to 13 months

- The child may have changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- They may want to be held more
- They may seem fussier and they may feel anxieties or distress of the caregiver

Ways to help:

- Provide a calm and unchanging environment.
- Keep quality of care and caregivers as consistent as possible
- Time permitting, long walks, music, warm baths and other calming activities. Interact with your child as much as possible

Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- The child regresses in walking or potty training
- They may emotionally withdraw, refuse to eat, start throwing tantrums, and have difficulty sleeping
- They may not want to associate with others and may whine and cling more than usual

Ways to help:

- Provide a predictable routine, lots of extra attention, plan projects and activities to keep their minds busy and motivated

Preschoolers 3 to 5 years

- The child may whine and cling more than usual
- They regress in potty training
- The child may have unexplained crying or tearfulness
- They may become aggressive and demanding or worry about the safety of everyone
- They may fear new people or situations and may be afraid to sleep alone

Way to help:

- Explain the reason for the parents absence and reassure them that it is not their fault
- Simplify daily schedules and pay attention to their basic needs and their desire for attention

- Plan fun homecoming activities

School Age Children 5 to 11 years

- Children at this age may complain often and loudly
- They may complain of headaches, stomachaches, or more frequent urination
- There may be a change in school performance
- They may place significance on missed family events (i.e. Birthdays, Holidays, Sports, and Church events)
- They may express sadness and grief

Ways to help:

- Provide opportunities to express emotions
- Have comfort objects (pillow, teddy bear, or item that belongs to service member)
- Keep involved in activities that focus energies and allow discussion with peers
- Encourage them to talk with someone they can trust

Adolescent and Young Adult 12 to 18 years

- These children may act out, show low self-esteem, have misdirected anger, distance themselves from others, have school problems, loss of interest in hobbies and activities, or have loss of appetite
- Know that alcohol and drug problems may start as early as 12 years old

Ways to help:

- Keep lines of communication open
- Provide setting where discussion is natural
- Give them more responsibilities and hold them responsible
- Allow them quality time with their peers
- Talk with your child's school or teachers prior to the deployment

Resources

See the Youth page of the Operation Ready Families Program website at:

www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies/Youth/

For more info