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For Psychological Health  
& Traumatic Brain Injury

# The Well-being of Military Children: Augmenting Clinical Care with Web- and Mobile-based Tools

March 19, 2015, 1-2:30pm (ET)

## Presenters:

Kelly A. Blasko, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist, Mobile Web Program Lead  
National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2)  
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Greg Leskin, Ph.D.

Director, Military and Veteran Families Initiative  
National Center for Child Traumatic Stress  
UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute  
University of California, Los Angeles

## Moderator:

Robert Ciulla, Ph.D.

Director, Mobile Health Program  
National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2)  
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.



# Webinar Details

- Live closed captioning is available through Federal Relay Conference Captioning (see the “Closed Captioning” box)
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- Today's presentation and resources are available for download in the "Files" pod on the screen, or visit [http://www.dcoe.mil/Training/Monthly\\_Webinars.aspx](http://www.dcoe.mil/Training/Monthly_Webinars.aspx)

The screenshot shows the Adobe Connect interface for a DCoE TBI Webinar. The main content area displays the following information:

**Today's webinar:**  
**State of the Science: Clinical, Metabolic and Pathologic Effects of Multiple Concussions**  
January 16, 2014, 1-2:30 p.m. (EST)  
Moderator: Donald Marion, M.D., M.Sc.  
Clinical Affairs Senior Advisor  
Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center  
Silver Spring, Md.

The interface includes several side panels:

- Q & A:** A panel for questions and answers.
- Files for Download:** A panel listing files for download, including "Back to School Guide for Academics.doc" (1 MB), "Neuroimaging Following mTBI Clinical" (353 KB), "Neuroendocrine Dysfunction Screens" (266 KB), and "Division Associated with mTBI Referral" (303 KB). A red circle highlights this panel.
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- The authority for training of contractors is at the discretion of the chief contracting official.
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- All who registered **prior** to the deadline on **Thursday, March 19, 2015**, at 3 p.m. (ET) and meet the eligibility requirements stated above are eligible to receive a certificate of attendance or CE credit.

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- After the webinar, visit <http://continuingeducation.dcri.duke.edu> to complete the online CE evaluation and post-test, and download your CE certificate/certificate of attendance.
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- The Q&A pod is monitored during the webinar; questions will be forwarded to presenters for response during the Q&A session.
- Participants may chat with one another during the webinar using the chat pod.
- The chat function will remain open 10 minutes after the conclusion of the webinar.

# Webinar Overview

Research on the psychological health of military children indicates that frequent transitions such as moving, family member separations and the cumulative effects of multiple deployments can cause psychological distress, which impacts the well-being of parents and children. Although military children are generally resilient, many are coping with increased levels of anxiety, stress, depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation and behavioral problems.

Age-appropriate psychoeducation web-based programs for children have been found to assist with teaching coping strategies and as a result of online community peer support improve their behavioral health. Discussion will include a review of the Military Kids Connect® website, a technology-based resource for military preschoolers to teens, which may serve to augment clinical care practices and to improve how health care providers interact with military children.

Webinar participants will learn to:

- Describe the dynamics of separation on the military family system.
- Examine the use of web-based and mobile apps as resources in clinical settings serving military children.
- Integrate the use of the Military Kids Connect® website as a social media tool to improve understanding of the influence of the military culture on military children.



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# The Well-being of Military Children: Augmenting Clinical Care with Web- and Mobile-based Tools

**Kelly A. Blasko, Ph.D.**

Clinical Psychologist, Mobile Web Program Lead  
National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2)  
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.



# Kelly A. Blasko, Ph.D.

- Dr. Kelly Blasko is a counseling psychologist leading the mobile web program for the National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2).
- She earned her M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy at Appalachian State University and her Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the Pennsylvania State University.
- She is internationally recognized for her work in using technology to improve the well-being of youth including the development of the award-winning Military Kids Connect® website and the Sesame Workshop The Big Moving Adventure mobile application.



Photo courtesy of: Jenn June

# Disclosures

- The views expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter, Dr. Blasko, and do not reflect the official policy of the Department of the U.S. Army or U.S. Department of Defense.
- Dr. Blasko has no relevant financial relationships to disclose.
- Dr. Blasko does not intend to discuss the off-label/investigative (unapproved) use of commercial products or devices.

# Overview

- Background
- Influences on Military Children
- Children & Technology
- Website & Mobile Apps for Military Children
- Application: Military Kids Connect<sup>®</sup>

# Impetus for My Work

I want to provide military children with every opportunity to flourish as they face the unique challenges of military life.

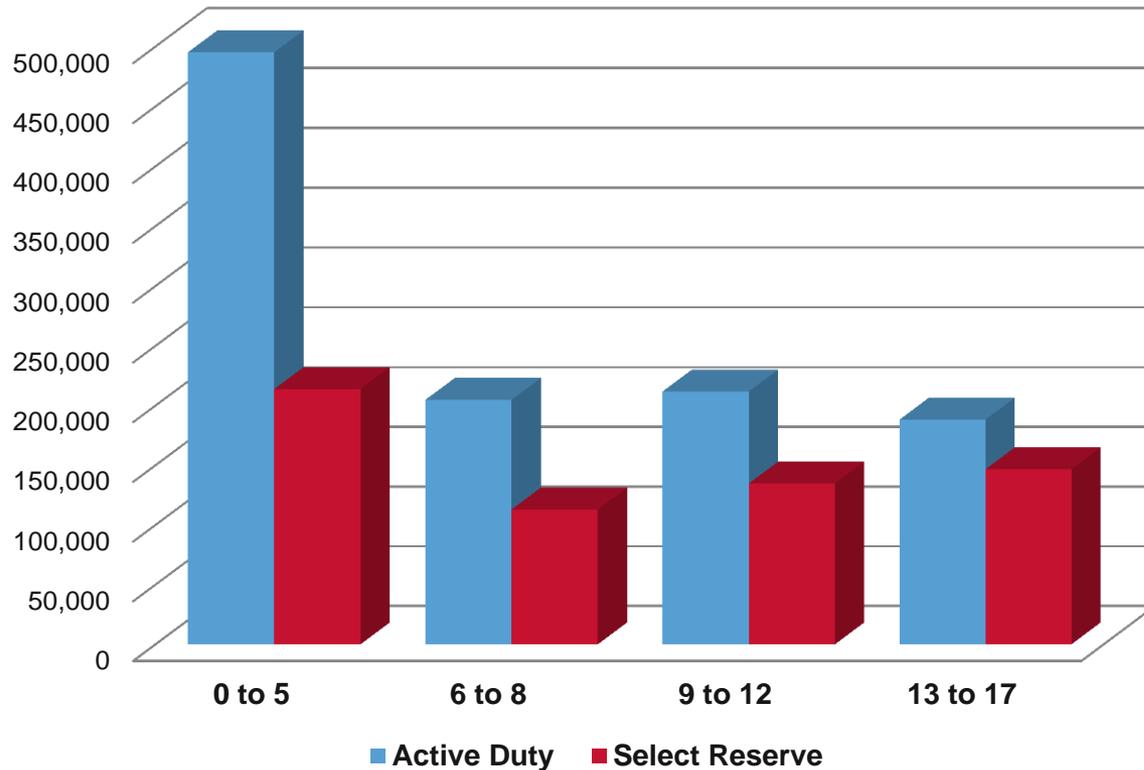


Photo courtesy of: istockphoto.com

# Polling Question #1

- Have you worked with military children in your practice?  
Yes or No

# Military Children By Age



# Background

- 2011 Presidential Study Directive - *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*

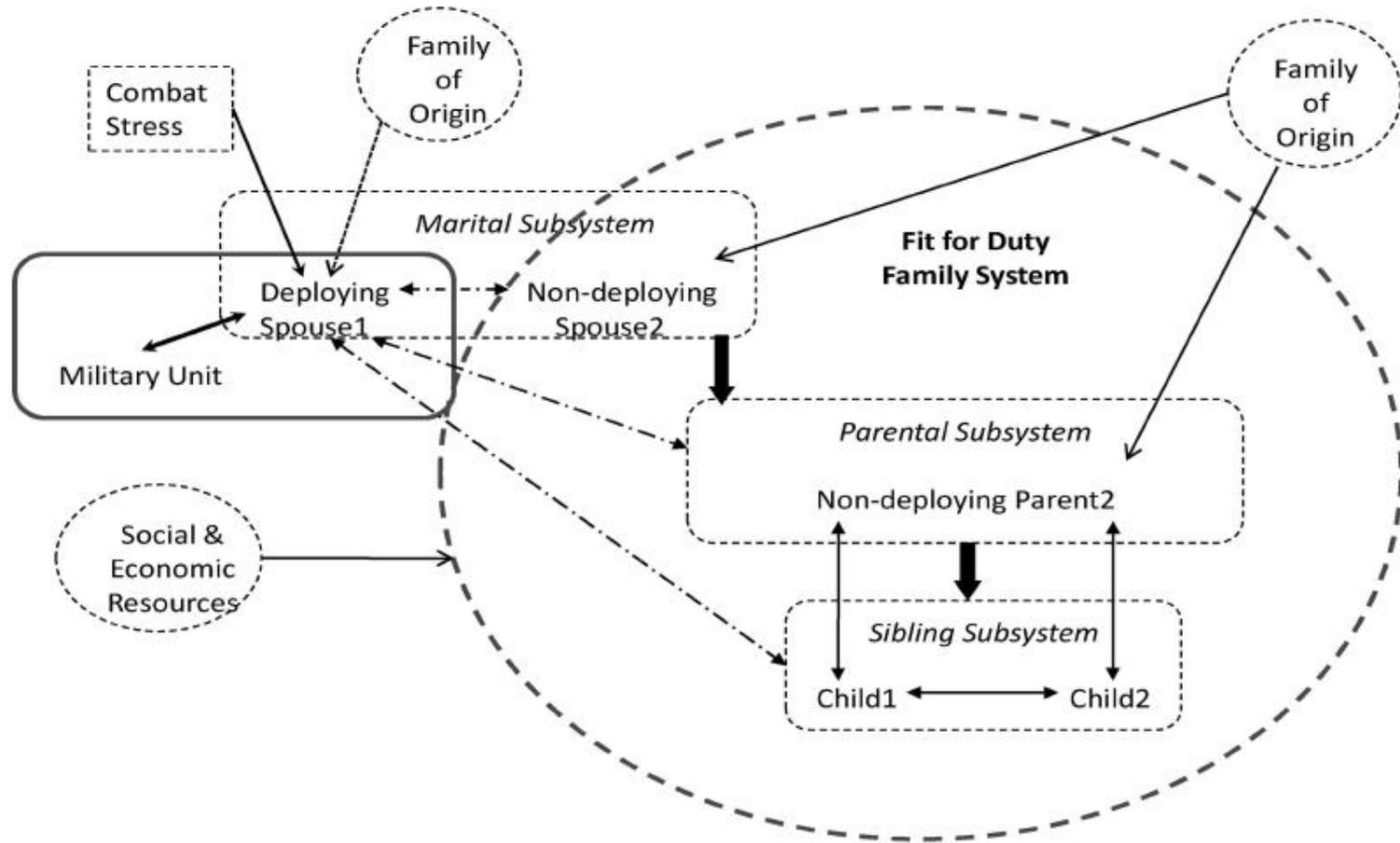


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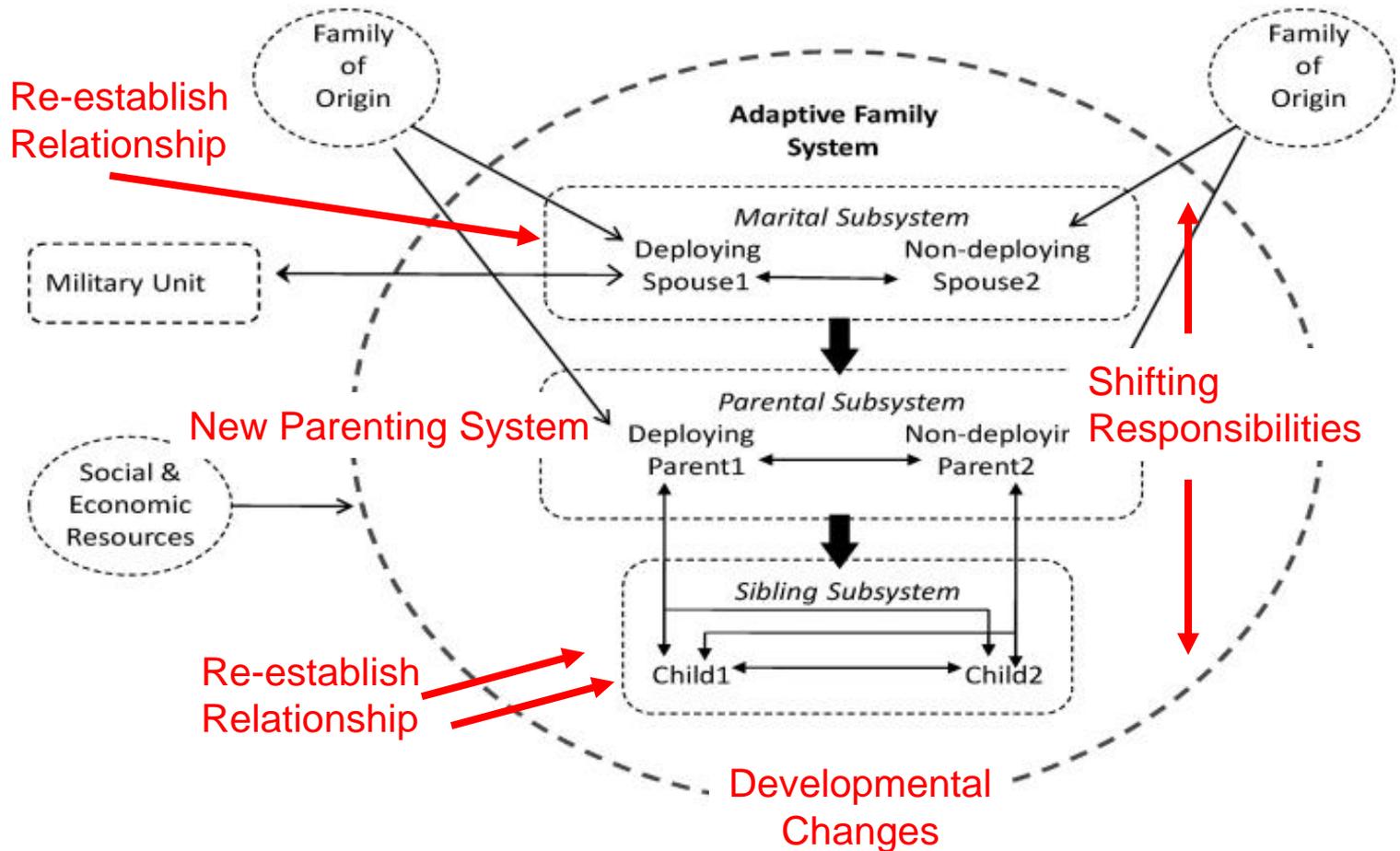


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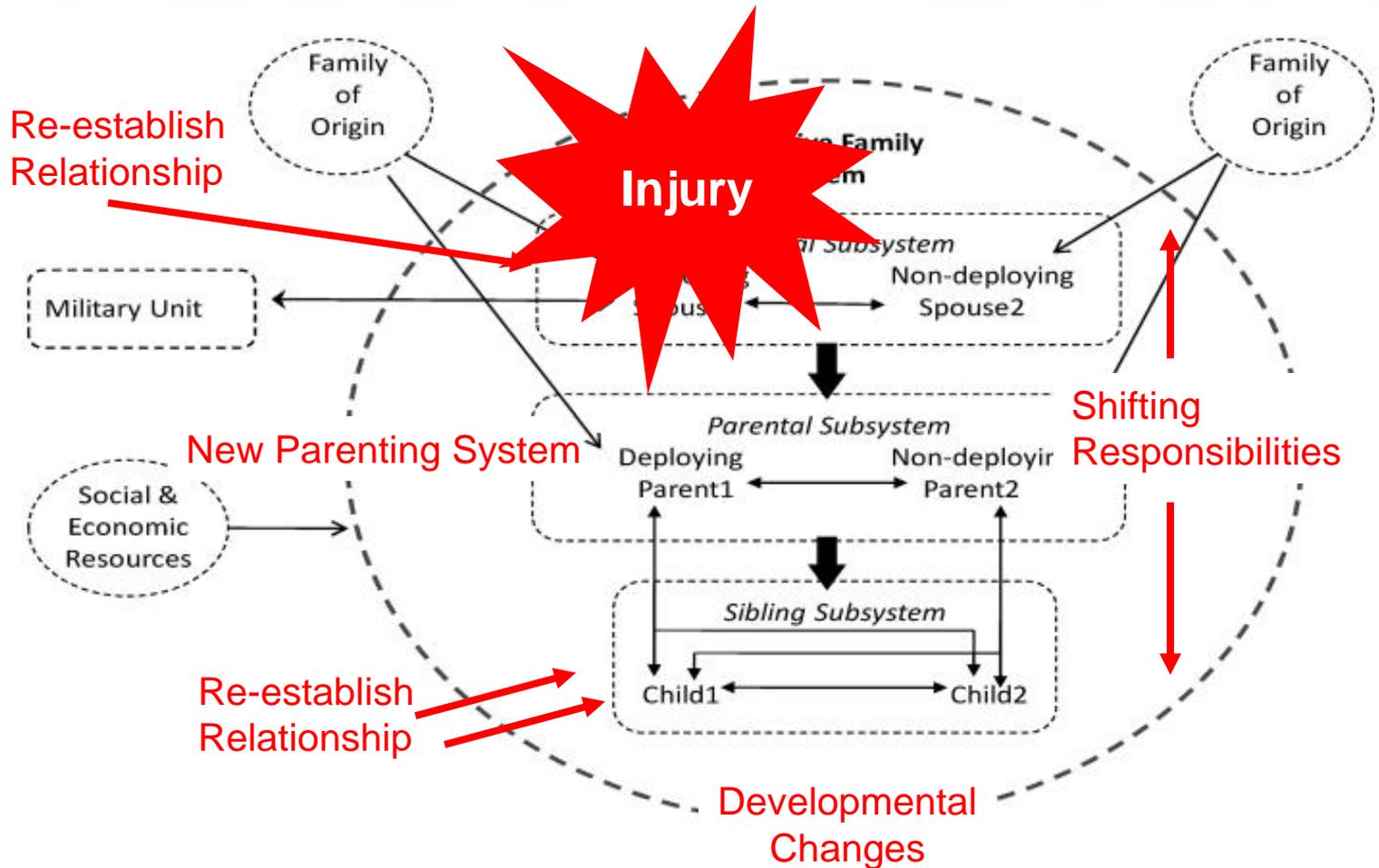
# Military Family Systems Deployment



# Military Family Systems Reintegration



# Military Family Systems Reintegration



# Risk Factors

- Parental distress (at-home civilian, caregiver and active duty)
- Cumulative length of parental combat–related deployments during the child’s lifetime
- Psychological and physical injury of parent
- Relocations

# Military Children Are Digital Natives



Photo courtesy of: istockphoto.com

- “Native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet”  
(Prensky, 2001, p.1)
- Anybody born after 1980
- New cohorts of digital natives
  - Increased usage of mobile technologies and social networking

# Children – Safety & Security

- Major parent concerns
  - Sexual predation on minors by adults
  - Bullying and harassment by peers
  - Harmful, problematic and illegal content
- Child Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA)
- DoD-specific concerns
  - Operation Security
  - Cyberthreat

# Behavioral Health & Technology

- Internet-based programs have been found effective in improving the behavioral health of children at-large
- Web-based peer support utilizing online forums and chat rooms has been found to help children cope with parental cancer and with asthma

(Calear & Christensen, 2010; Giesbers, Verdonck-de Leeuw, van Zuuren, Kleverlaan, & van der Linden, 2010; Siemer, Fogel, & Van Voorhees, 2011; Stewart, Letourneau, Masuda, Anderson, & McGhan, 2013)

# Behavioral Health & Social Media

- Youth use Facebook to maintain and build relationships with their peers who are geographically dispersed and is a useful tool for receiving social support.

# Environmental Scan

- Found
  - Many military parent-facing technology resources available
  - Use of technology to improve parent-child communication
- Missing
  - Limited child-facing, military-specific web resources
  - No military youth online community

# Polling Question #2

- How many have recommended a website to a child as part of their clinical work?  
Yes or No

# DoD “Kid-Facing” Websites



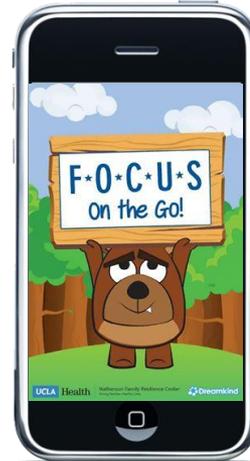
# Polling Question #3

- How many have recommended a mobile app to a child as part of their clinical work?  
Yes or No

# DoD “Kid-Facing” Mobile Apps



Teaches military children to identify feelings so they can more easily express their feelings.



Games to practice family skills, such as identifying emotions, solving problems, and improving communication



Helps your child learn Sesame’s “Breathe, Think, Do” strategy for problem-solving



Prepares military preschoolers for the common occurrence of military moves.

# Mission



Improve the quality of life for military youth (ages 6-17) as they face the psychological challenges unique to military life.

# Military Children Support System

Parent(s)/Family Members



Educators



Providers



Friends/Peers

Military  
Community  
At-Large

# Five Tracks



# Key Objectives

- Provide prevention services for military children
- Create engaging psychoeducational activities or tools
- Facilitate peer-to-peer support between military youth
- Develop and design content to be age-appropriate
- Represent materials as military-specific
- Ensure safety and security of military children

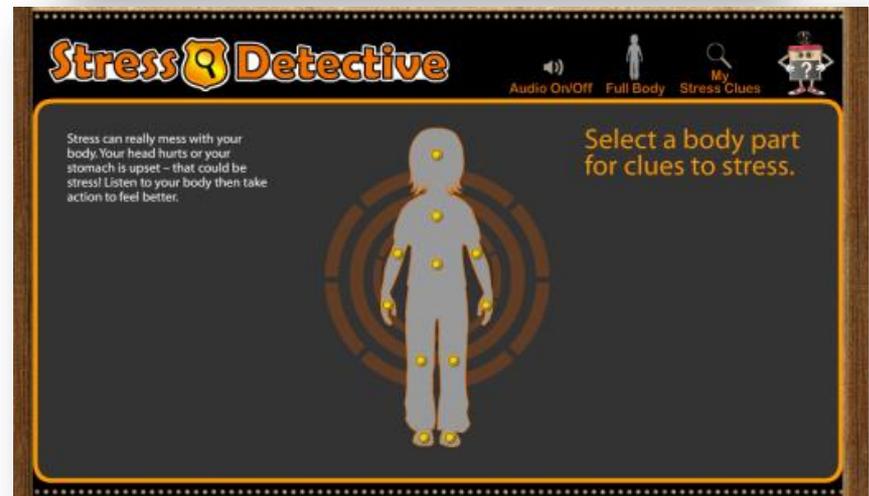
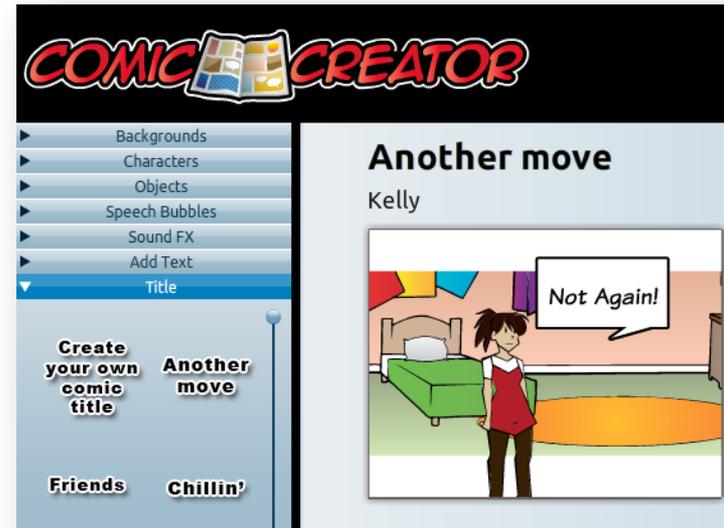
# Underlying Principles

- Use of peer-to-peer support
  - Sense of connectedness with military peers
  - Social learning
  - Social comparison
  - Online community, role models
- Emphasis on stress reduction
  - Recognizing stress
    - Stress psychoeducation,
    - Body awareness
  - Normalizing experiences
  - Setting expectations
  - Self-expression

# Activities Landing Page



# Coping Tools



# Connect: Peer-to-Peer Support



## Baseball or the Band?

A young boy decides how to support his older sister's struggle to balance family time with her boyfriend while their dad is deployed.

Choose an Ending

## What Would You Do?



Under Pressure  
and  
Over-Scheduled



The Cyberbullies

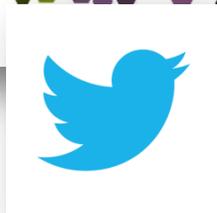


Confront Anna



Let Anna Go

# Connect: Social Media



- Daily FB, Twitter posts to increase engagement
- Weekly blog
- New videos
  - Reserve teens personal stories
  - Teen tours
  - Moving microdocs
  - Moving Animated Graphic novels

# Deployment Cycle



## Family Perspectives



## 4 Real



# Tough Topics



Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)



Physical Injury

**Sensitive Information.** This content deals with difficult topics. Please view this material with a trusted adult or talk with them after viewing.



Meet Josh



Not Quite Right



Now I Know



Figuring It Out

## Differences: Before & After



Dad Is Not Himself



Dad Was A Little Disconnected



Dad's Personality Was Changing



Mixed Emotions About Homecoming

# Tough Topics Parents/Educator Tracks

## Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious medical condition that impacts the entire family. Learn how to talk with kids and how help them cope with a parent who has PTSD.



## Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)

Invisible injuries, like concussions or traumatic brain injury (TBI), impact the whole family. Hear expert advice and real children's stories about coping with a parent's mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI).



## Physical Injury

Seeing a parent with a physical injury from combat can be tough. Learn how to help children cope with this tough situation.



## Grief & Loss

Find advice for helping your child cope with the loss of a parent. Hear from children who have dealt with the death of their military parent.



Dr. Keith Lemmon, a military pediatrician, discusses common physical reactions to stress.



# Educators: Military Culture

**WELCOME, EDUCATORS!**

**About MKC**  
Welcome Educators! Explore the military culture and learn about the life of military youth coping with a parent's deployment here at Military Kids Connect.

**LESSON PLANS**

- Elementary School**  
Select from ready-to-go lesson plans based on website content.
- Middle School**  
Learn ways to integrate content on military life with various school subjects.
- High School**  
Find lessons on core curriculum subjects, character education and world cultures.

**HELPING STUDENTS COPE**

- Ideas to Help Students Cope**  
Find strategies to help children of all ages cope with the challenges of a deployment.
- Military Youth Coping with Separation**  
Listen to real kids share their thoughts and feelings about deployment.
- Tough Topics**  
PTSD, physical injury, traumatic brain injury (TBI), grief and loss - help kids learn how to cope with these tough situations.

**MILITARY CULTURE**

- Working with Military Students**  
Hear experienced educators talk about their work with military youth.
- Military Life 101**  
Learn about the structure, culture and life of the military and military students.

**HAVE A LOOK AROUND**

- Kids
- Tweens
- Teens
- Parents

Resource Guide

# Coming Soon

## Interactive Infographic

### WHAT'S IT MEAN TO HAVE PTSD?

Like most medical conditions, **PTSD HAS SYMPTOMS** that can make life difficult

There are four types of symptoms that people with PTSD develop:

- AVOIDING**  
PEOPLE, PLACES AND/OR THINGS THAT REMIND THEM OF THE TRAUMA.
- RELIVING**  
THE TRAUMATIC EVENT THROUGH UNWANTED MEMORIES.
- BEING HYPERVIGILANT**  
OR ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DANGER.
- HAVING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS**  
OR FEELINGS..

CLICK HERE

You will likely notice behaviors of your parent that are different from before. Listen to what other military kids have noticed about their parents' behavior. And learn how it relates to the 4 different types of reactions.

## Coping Cards

### Welcome to the Coping Card Stopwatch

PTSD Coping Cards  
MTBI Coping Cards

CLICK HERE TO GET STARTED!

55 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

WAKE UP  
GET DRESSING  
WALK TO THE BUS STOP  
GET ON THE BUS  
ARRIVE AT SCHOOL  
GO TO CLASS  
LUNCH  
GO TO CLASS  
GO HOME  
GET DRESSING  
WALK TO THE BUS STOP  
GET ON THE BUS  
ARRIVE HOME  
WASH YOUR FACE  
HAVE SOME FUN  
GO TO BED

Menu View HELP

SIGN IN

WWYD

DEPLOYMENT DAILY

INFO-GRAPHIC

COPING CARDS

STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

TOUGH TOPICS

GAMES

MILITARY TEENS CONNECT

TOGETHER, EVERYWHERE.

Lorem ipsum

Lorem ipsum



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# The Well-being of Military Children: Augmenting Clinical Care with Web- and Mobile-based Tools

**Greg Leskin, Ph.D.**

Director, Military and Veteran Families Initiative  
National Center for Child Traumatic Stress  
UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute  
University of California, Los Angeles



# Greg Leskin, Ph.D.

- Dr. Leskin is the Program Director for Military and Veteran Families Program for University of California, Los Angeles/Duke University's National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.
- He earned his M.A. in Clinical Psychology from University of California, Berkeley, and his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from California School of Professional Psychology in Los Angeles, and completed a NIMH post-doctoral fellowship at the National Center for PTSD at the Boston VA.
- Dr. Leskin is the primary developer of multiple national, state, and local initiatives to provide supportive services for service members, veterans, and their families for the military and VA. He has written, consulted, and lectured extensively on topics, including assessment and treatment for combat-related PTSD, impact of deployment on families and children, and promoting psychological resilience.



Photo courtesy of:  
UCLA/Duke University  
National Center for Child  
Traumatic Stress

# Disclosures

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- Dr. Leskin does not intend to discuss the off-label/investigative (unapproved) use of commercial products or devices.

# Outcome Evaluation of MKC Tough Topics

- Rationale: Evaluation of safety and effectiveness of a web-based secondary prevention approach with military children with an active-duty parent on the topic of PTSD following wartime deployment.
- Area of interest to study:
  - Comprehension of written and visual language
  - Use of technology as teaching methodology
  - Positive, non-stigmatizing, non-pathologizing
  - Examine potential adverse responses
  - Theory Driven (scientific justification)
  - Developmentally appropriate
  - Varied teaching methods (video, interactive, didactic)

# Underlying Theoretical Rationale

- Ecological Framework: Military child is embedded within multiple interdependent micro and macro systems that is unique due to policies, history, and mission of military.
- Developmental Framework: Military child's growth is shaped by their experience within these systems.
- Resiliency Framework: military families share interest to maintain successful adaptation in context of challenging and sometimes traumatic circumstances.
- Research suggesting length of deployment, parental distress and parental mental health may negatively impact child mental health.

# Goals and Aims

- Online learning is an effective and appropriate means for providing accurate information to children to support their resiliency and flexible adaptation.
- Aim of web-based material is to increase protective factors for the military child through provision of accurate information, psycho-education about trauma and PTSD, peer-based modeling, linking the psycho-education to problem-solving approaches.

# Methodology

- Provide opportunities for military children to view Military Kids Connect<sup>®</sup> web-based materials developed for “Tough Topics” section (PTS) using mobile technology.
- Assess children and teen’s responses and preferences to variety of Military Kids Connect<sup>®</sup> modules related military culture and parental PTS.

# Resource List: Websites

## T2 Websites for Adults and Parents

National Center for Telehealth and Technology  
(T2)

<http://t2health.dcoe.mil>

Parenting for Service Members and Veterans

<http://militaryparenting.dcoe.mil>

After Deployment

<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil>

Moving Forward\*\*

(<http://startmovingforward.dcoe.mil>)

## DoD Websites for Kids & Teens

FOCUS World

<http://www.focusproject.org/focus-world-intro>

Military Youth on the Move

[http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=MYO  
M:HOME2:0](http://apps.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=MYO<br/>M:HOME2:0)

## T2 Websites for Kids & Teens

Military Kids Connect®

<https://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil/>

Military Kids Connect Facebook

[www.Facebook.com/MilitaryKidsConnect](http://www.Facebook.com/MilitaryKidsConnect)

Military Kids Connect Google+

<https://plus.google.com/101238043837275925214/posts>

Military Kids Connect You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MilitaryKidsConnect>

Military Families Near and Far

[www.familiesnearandfar.org](http://www.familiesnearandfar.org)

# Resource List: Mobile Apps

## Wellness for Kids (iOS & Android)

- At Ease Military Kids Connect Game (Android only)
- The Big Moving Adventure
- Breathe Think Do
- Feel Electric!
- Global Gab Military Kids Connect Game
- Operation Care Package Military Kids Connect Game
- Sesame Street for Military Families

## Wellness Apps for Teens & Adults (iOS & Android)

- Breathe2Relax
- Positive Activity Jackpot
- T2 Mood Tracker
- Virtual Hope Box

## Wellness Apps for Adults (iOS & Android)

- ACT Coach (iOS only)
- Breathe2Relax
- CBT-I Coach: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia
- Concussion Coach (iOS only\*)
- CPT Coach (iOS only\*)
- LifeArmor
- Mindfulness Coach (iOS only)
- Positive Activity Jackpot
- PE Coach
- PTSD Coach
- Stay Quit Coach (iOS only\*)
- Tactical Breather
- T2 Mood Tracker
- Parenting2GO (iOS only)
- Moving Forward (iOS only)
- Virtual Hope Box

\* *Android pending VA release*

# Summary

During this webinar, participants learned to:

- Describe the dynamics of separation on the military family system.
- Examine the use of web-based and mobile apps as resources in clinical settings serving military children.
- Integrate the use of the Military Kids Connect<sup>®</sup> website as a social media tool to improve understanding of the influence of the military culture on military children

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Kelly A. Blasko, Ph.D.  
[kelly.a.blasko2.civ@mail.mil](mailto:kelly.a.blasko2.civ@mail.mil)

Greg Leskin, Ph.D.  
[gleskin@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:gleskin@mednet.ucla.edu)

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