

From the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA*

More About Support for Students -- especially those with family or friends deployed in the war

With deployments of National Guard units alongside regular military forces, many K–12 schools will serve students coping with a loved one’s deployment. School staff can provide timely, practical supports.

Why This Conflict Can Heighten Stress

- 24/7 news cycles and graphic updates that can amplify fear and uncertainty.
- Online misinformation and rumors that spread quickly among peers.
- Social tensions in school (stereotyping, peer conflict, or xenophobia) related to the war.
- Irregular or limited communication with deployed loved ones.
- Ambiguity about duration of deployment and potential changes in mission.

Here are Common Signs of Stress to Watch For

- Withdrawal, increased isolation, or loss of interest in activities.
- Irritability, hypervigilance, sudden emotional outbursts, or tearfulness.
- Drop in academic performance or incomplete work.
- Physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches) with no medical explanation.
- Difficulty concentrating or sustaining attention.
- Persistent worry about a loved one’s safety, especially after news alerts.
- Role reversal -- taking on adult responsibilities at home that increase fatigue or stress.

Previously we highlighted some concrete actions schools can take

See

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/3-2-26.pdf>

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/3-5-2026.pdf>

Here are a few more resources:

- Educators Guide to Deployment (Heroes Welcome, Alabama) — <https://www.heroeswelcome.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Educator-Guide-to-Deployment.pdf>
- Children Coping with Deployment (U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, PTSD: National Center) — https://www.ptsd.va.gov/family/support_child_deployment.asp
- Deployment Resources for Families (Military OneSource) — <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment/pre-deployment/deployment-resources-for-families/>
- Sesame Street for Military Families — <https://sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org/>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) — <https://www.nctsn.org/>

And again, see

- Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) —

<https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery>

- Blue Star Families — <https://bluestarfam.org/>

The following may be helpful for staff discussions:

Preparing for Deployment (Military Family Advisory Network) — <https://www.militaryfamily.org/info-resources/deployment/>

A study of military children revealed higher levels of stress and anxiety during a parent’s deployment; younger children may not understand where a parent has gone or when they’ll return, while older youth often assume extra responsibilities at home.

How Schools Can Better Support Military Children and Families (EdSurge, 2024) — <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2024-06-26-how-schools-can-better-support-military-children-and-families>

Schools are uniquely positioned to provide stability, identify needs, and connect students to resources; empathy-building activities such as writing letters to deployed service members can help, though no one-size-fits-all solution exists.

Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): Supporting Military Kids During Deployment — <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2022-12/toughtopicmilitarykids.pdf>

During the emotional cycle of deployment, students’ lives are disrupted, stability is reduced, and separation anxiety and stress can increase—heightened understanding and support at school are essential.

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