



**CENTER FOR
DEPLOYMENT PSYCHOLOGY**
Preparing Professionals to Support Warriors and Families



The Unique Challenges of Military Families

Center for Deployment Psychology
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences



Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.



Learning Objectives

1. Discuss factors that impact marriage, divorce, and relationships in military families.
2. Recognize stressors and risk factors for military families throughout the stages of the deployment cycle.
3. Recognize mechanisms of resilience and protective factors for military families throughout the stages of the deployment cycle.
4. Identify relevant themes for therapy with military families through the stages of the deployment cycle.



Agenda

- The Definition of the Military Family
- Military Marriages
- Military Family Life
- The Impact of the Deployment Cycle on Military Families
- Resources



5



The Definition of the Military Family

*“When one person joins the military
the whole family serves.”*

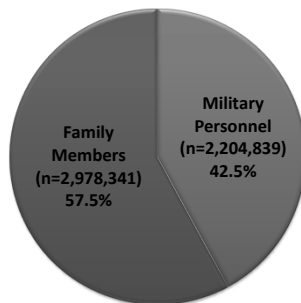


6



Family Demographics

Total Force Military Personnel & Family Members



2013 Demographics Profile of the Military Community (2014)

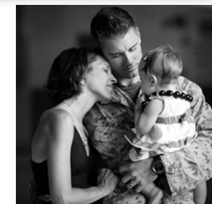


7



Military Families

- Dependents
 - Spouses **
 - Children
 - Stepchildren
- Non-Dependents
 - Parents *
 - Siblings *
 - Extended family
 - Unmarried partners
 - Adult children



8



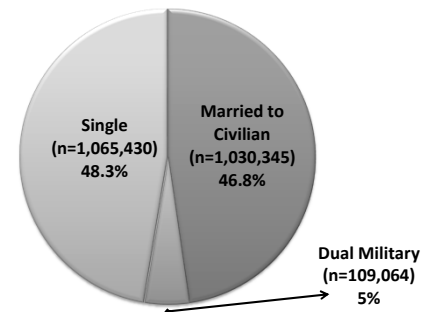
Military Marriages

"If the Army wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one."



Marital Status

Total Force Marital Status



2013 Demographics Profile of the Military Community (2014)



Military Marriages

Unique attributes of military marriages:

- When the military calls, the Service member must go
- Separation is standard
- Reunification is also a normal occurrence
- Separation from family/friends is common

Devries et al. (2012)



Marriage and Divorce in the Military



Photo by AzureCitizen. Image courtesy of: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNU_Free_Documentation_License

- Young marriages
- Marriage/divorce rates
- Impact of deployment
- Marital quality
- Infidelity

Adler-Baeder et al. (2005) Hogan & Seifert (2010); Karney & Crown (2007); Karney et al. (2012); Negrusa et al. (2014); Riviere et al. (2012); Schumm et al. (2012); Snyder et al. (2012)





Increased Hazard of Divorce

- Greater cumulative time deployed
- Couples married before 9/11
- Effect of deployment greater for:
 - Female Service members
 - Service members in dual-military marriages



Negrusa et al. (2014)



13



Marital Quality

Examined 2003-2009 trends in marital functioning indicators:

- Marital quality declined
- Reports of past-year infidelity increased
- Reports of separation/divorce intent increased
- *No increases observed* in marital dissolution rates



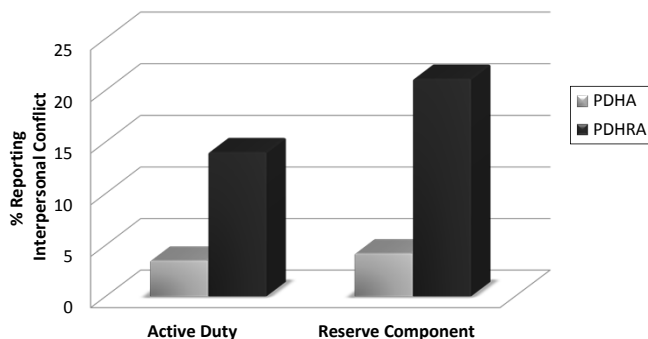
Riviere et al. (2012)



14



Impact of Deployment on Couples



Milliken et al. (2007)



15



Evidence-Based Couples Counseling in the DoD/VA

- Gottman Method Couples Therapy
 - <http://www.gottman.com>
- Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples (EFT)
 - <http://www.iceeft.com>
- Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (IBCT)
 - <http://ibct.psych.ucla.edu>
- Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy for PTSD (CBCT) *
 - <http://www.coupletherapyforptsd.com>



16

CDP

Military Families

“Military families are families with unique challenges.”

hjf 17

CDP

Parental Status

Total Force Parental Status

Category	Count (n)	Percentage
Military Personnel without Children	1,263,913	57.3%
Military Personnel with Children	940,926	42.7%

2013 Demographics Profile of the Military Community (2014)

hjf 18

CDP

“Greedy Institutions”

Both the military and families demand:

- Commitment
- Loyalty
- Time
- Energy

Blaisure et al. (2012); Segal (1986)

hjf 19

CDP

Family Stressors

Normative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occur for most families • Expected
Normative Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occur for most military families • Expected
Catastrophic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not occur to most families • Unexpected

Blaisure et al. (2012)

hjf 20



Normative Stressors of Military Family Life

- Frequent relocations (PCS)
- Spouse employment opportunities
- Separations
- Deployments
- Risk of injury or death



Image courtesy of: <http://www.do4live.mil/index.php/2011/06/how-to-ease-the-summertime-move/>

Blaisure et al. (2012); Lim & Schulker (2010)



21



If you knew you had to move your entire household every 2-3 years, how would you live your life differently than you do now?

Blaisure et al. (2012), p. 57



22



2014 Blue Star Families Survey

Top Stressors Associated with the Military

- 69% = Deployments
- 51% = Isolation from family & friends

Military Spouse Employment

- 84% (employed) = military lifestyle negatively impacted pursuit of career
- 53% (unemployed) = would like to be employed outside the home

Blue Star Families (2014)



23



Normative Military Stressors for Children

- Relocation
- Education
- Child Care
- Deployments



Blaisure et al. (2012)



24



Resiliency in Military Children

- Sense of belonging/community
- Adaptable
- Tolerant of diversity
- Responsible/independent
- Respect for authority



Easterbrooks et al. (2013); Hall (2012); Park (2011)



25



Blended Families

- Children of different developmental ages and stages
- Higher risk of emotional / behavioral problems
- Torn between biological parents
- Two households
- Issues of isolation



Adler-Baeder et al. (2005); Hall (2008)



26



LGB Families

- 20 September 2011 = Repeal of DADT
- 26 June 2013 = Repeal of Section 3 of DOMA



- Prejudice/ Discrimination
- Identity Concealment
- Relocation Issues
- Social Support

Ender et al. (2012); Herek (2009); Oswald & Sternberg (2014)



27



Keys to Family Resilience

Family Belief Systems

Making meaning of adversity

Positive outlook

Transcendence & spirituality

Family Organizational Patterns

Flexibility

Connectedness

Social & economic resources

Family Communication Processes

Clarity

Open emotional expression

Collaborative problem solving

Walsh (2006)



28

CDP
Resilience-Building Skills

- Mind-Body Skills
- Cognitive-Behavioral Skills
- Communication Skills

hjf 29
 Bowles et al. (2012)

CDP
Mechanisms of Resilience in Military Families

- Psychoeducation & developmental guidance
- Shared family narratives
- Open & effective communication
- Family resiliency (coping) skills
- Effective & coordinated parent leadership

hjf 30
 Saltzman et al. (2014)

CDP
Resiliency Training for Military Families

- FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress)
 - <http://www.focusproject.org>
 - <http://www.focusworld.org>
- HomeFront Strong
 - <http://m-span.org/programs-for-military-families/homefront-strong>

hjf 31

CDP
FOCUS: Families OverComing Under Stress

- Training in core resilience skills
 - Emotion regulation
 - Communication
 - Problem solving
 - Goal-setting
 - Managing deployment reminders
- FOCUS World (online resiliency training)
- FOCUS On the Go! (mobile app)

Image courtesy of: <http://www.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/12/medical-monday-project-focus/>

hjf 32
<http://www.focusproject.org>

CDP

FOCUS World

F·O·C·U·S Home How It Works Program Benefits About Us Resources Contact FOCUS World Blog Login

FOCUS World (www.focusworld.org) is an interactive, online educational tool that helps military families become stronger in the face of challenges by providing both parents and kids a fun place to learn and practice important skills, such as:

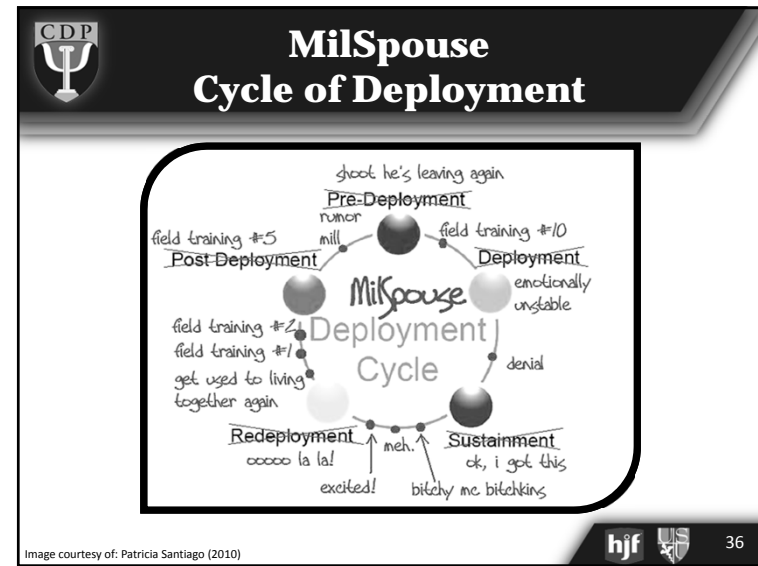
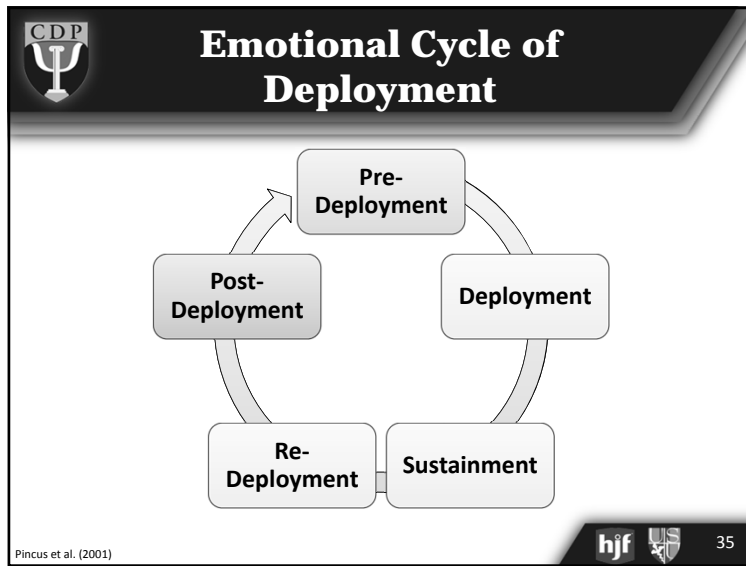
<http://www.focusworld.org>

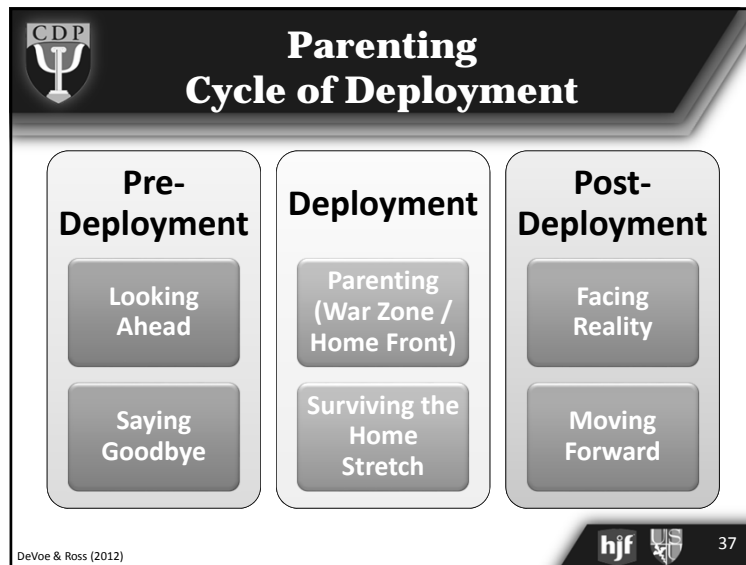
hjf 33

CDP

The Deployment Cycle & Its Impact on Family Members

hjf 34

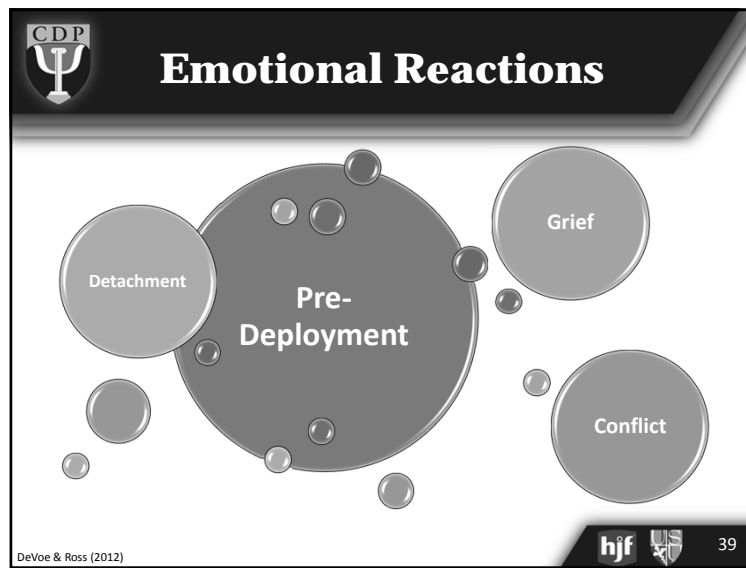




Pre-Deployment Stage

“A holding pattern during which life cannot yet begin.”

DeVoe & Ross (2012) hjf US 38



-
- Parenting**
- Looking Ahead
 - How/when to communicate with children about impending departure
 - Handling feelings & responding to children
 - Saying Goodbye
 - Importance of saying goodbye face-to-face
- Pre-Deployment
- DeVoe & Ross (2012) hjf US 40



Helping Families

- Facilitate communication
 - Sharing of feelings
 - Discussion of expectations
- Foster connection
- Teach positive coping skills
- Emphasize the importance of support
- Help couples address practical issues
- Discuss parenting issues

Pre-Deployment

Pavlicin (2003); Pincus et al. (2001)



41



Helping Children

- Encourage quality time with each child
- Emphasize honesty
- Help parents provide reassurance
- Foster connection
- Create communication plan
- Facilitate conversations with schools/teachers



Dod photo by P02 Stephanie Tigre/Released

Pre-Deployment

Military OneSource (2013); Pavlicin (2003)



42



Themes for Therapy

- Affective Education
- Exploring Roles
- Exploring Unresolved Conflicts
- Expectations of Fidelity



Pre-Deployment

Laser & Stephens (2012)



43



Deployment Stage

“Repeat after me ... I can do this.”



44



Emotional Reactions

- Deployment
 - Disorientation, mixed emotions
 - Relief that anticipation is over
- Sustainment
 - Self-growth, independence
 - Less angry, but lonelier
- Re-Deployment (Anticipation of Return)
 - Excitement, apprehension

Deployment

DeVoe & Ross (2012); Pincus et al. (2001)



45



Parenting

- Parenting from the Home Front
 - Increased responsibilities = increased stress
- Parenting from a War Zone
 - Relinquishment of daily involvement
 - Adaptation of new strategies
- Surviving the Home Stretch
 - How will children respond to reunion?

Deployment

DeVoe & Ross (2012)



46



Deployment Protective Factors

- Family readiness
- Active coping styles
- “Making meaning” of the deployment
- Strong community of social support
- Acceptance of military lifestyle
- Optimism
- Self-reliance
- Ability to adopt flexible gender roles

Hammer et al. (2006); Patterson & McCubbin (1984); Rosen et al. (1993); Walsh (2006); Weins & Boss (2006)



47



Family Risk Factors During Deployment

- Rigid coping style
- History of family dysfunction/behavioral health problems
- Families experiencing first military separation
- New to duty location
- Young families
- Pregnant spouses
- Single parent families
- Dual military families
- Families with foreign spouses
- Blended families
- Selected Reserve

Blount et al. (1992); Darwin (2012); Hall (2008); Huffman & Payne (2006); Kelley (2006); Weins & Boss (2006); Wolpert et al. (2000)



48



Impact of Deployment on Children

- Emotional / Behavioral Difficulties
- Cumulative Months of Deployment
- Child Maltreatment



US Army photo by PFC Jessica M. Kuhn. Image courtesy of: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>

Deployment

Chandra et al. (2011); Flake et al. (2009); Gibbs et al. (2007); Lester et al. (2010); Rentz et al. (2007)



49



Parental Deployment & Adolescent Mental Health

Reporting of any familial deployment (parent or sibling) was associated with increased odds of experiencing:

- Sadness/hopelessness
- Depressive symptoms
- Suicidal ideation



Cederbaum et al. (2013)



50



2014 Blue Star Families Survey

Top 5 **Positive** Impacts of Deployment on Children

- Adaptability
- Increased Independence
- Personal Growth
- Increased Resilience
- Increased Pride

Top 5 **Negative** Impacts of Deployment on Children

- Separation Anxiety
- Worry
- Irritability
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Difficulty Concentrating

Blue Star Families (2014)



51



Signs of Distress in Children

Age	Behaviors	Moods
Infants	Change in eating/sleeping	Listlessness
Toddlers	Crying, tantrums	Irritability, sadness
Pre-Schoolers	Clinginess, potty accidents	Irritability, sadness
School Age Children	Body aches, whining, problems at school	Irritability, sadness
Adolescents	Isolation, drug use	Anger, apathy

Deployment

Military OneSource (2012); Pincus, et al. (2001)



52



Helping Families

- Facilitate setting personal goals
- Encourage creation of a support network
- Teach stress management techniques
- Highlight the importance of self-care



Deployment

Pavlicin (2003)



53



Helping Children

- Encourage consistency & routine
- Highlight the importance of support from other adults
- Help parents model self-care
- Facilitate good communication
- Emphasize the importance of fun
- Remind parents to let kids be kids

Deployment

Hall (2008); Pavlicin (2003)

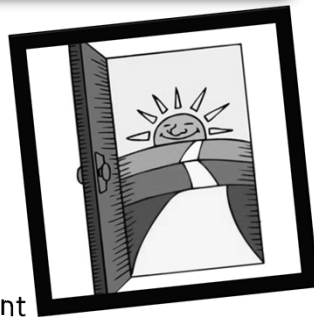


54



Themes for Therapy

- Deployment:
Stress Reduction
- Sustainment:
Resilience & Growth
- Re-Deployment:
Expectation Management



Deployment

Laser & Stephens (2012)



55



Post-Deployment Stage

*"Hello, Stranger.
Let's cohabit and raise these kids."*

Sanderlin (2012)



56

CDP

Emotional Reactions

Reunion

➔

Reintegration

- Elation
- Relief
- Frustration

- Tension
- Resentment
- Comfort

Post- Deployment

Logan (1987); Pincus, et al. (2001)

hjf 57

CDP

Parenting

- Facing Reality
 - Reconnect & rebuild parent-child relationships
 - Role negotiation / co-parenting challenges
- Moving Forward
 - Re-establish family equilibrium
 - Develop new parenting routines
 - Incorporate legacy of deployment

Post- Deployment


DeVoe & Ross (2012)

hjf 58

CDP

The Impact of Mental Health Issues

- Depression, PTSD
- Caregiver Burden
- “As goes the parent, so goes the child”



Blaisure et al. (2012); Blow et al. (2013); Flake et al. (2009); Goff et al. (2007); Lester et al. (2010); Saltzman, et al. (2014); Sayers et al. (2009); Tanielian et al. (2013)

hjf 59

CDP

Facilitating Successful Reunions

Service Member's Expectations	Partner's Expectations	Therapist's Role (how to help)
Isolate vs. great sex 24/7	Fairy-tale reunion	Set realistic expectations
Immediate return to “old ways”	New routines	Remind that adjustment takes time
Separated from family	Earned a break	Stress that both made sacrifices
No one understands	Drill with questions	Teach communication skills

Military OneSource (2012); Pavlicin (2003)

hjf 60



Successful Reunions with Children

Things to remember:

- Children react differently to homecoming depending on their age & relationship with deployed parent
- Children are often loyal to the parent that stays behind
- Children may feel anxious about the Service member leaving again
- Children will wonder if rules at home will change

Post- Deployment

Pavlicin (2003); Pincus et al. (2001)



61



Child Development and Reunion & Reintegration

Children respond differently to homecomings and parental reintegration depending on their age and developmental stage.



Infants/Toddlers (Ages 0-3)

Infancy is a time of rapid growth and development (both physically and cognitively). Attachment is the major developmental milestone during this stage.

- Homecoming Reactions**
- "Stranger Reaction"
 - Increased sensitivity
 - Crying, clinginess, disrupted schedule
 - Delayed milestones
 - Temper tantrums
 - Nightmares
 - Regression in skills

- Fostering Reintegration**
- Realistic expectations
 - Direct contact
 - Consistency
 - Opportunities for connection
 - Take things slowly
 - Expect regression

Post- Deployment



62



Themes for Therapy

- Revisiting Family Roles
- Opening Communication
- Creating Opportunities for Appreciation and Caring



Post- Deployment

Laser & Stephens (2012); Image by: Scott Maxwell, <http://thegoldguys.blogspot.com>.
Image courtesy of: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/legalcode>



63



Resources



64



Military OneSource

- Confidential services available via telephone & online
- Comprehensive information on every aspect of military life:
 - Deployment
 - Reunion
 - Relationships
 - Grief
 - Spouse employment & education
 - Parenting & childhood



<http://www.militaryonesource.mil>



65



Military Kids Connect

- Online community for military children (ages 6-17)
- Access to age-appropriate resources to support children dealing with the challenges of military life
- Additional resources for parents & teachers



<http://www.militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil>



66



Military Kids Connect



<http://www.militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil>



67



Sesame Street Toolkit: Talk, Listen, Connect

- DVDs: Deployment, Homecomings, Grieving
- Website: Military Families Near & Far
- Mobile Apps:
 - Sesame Street for Military Families
 - The Big Moving Adventure



<http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/tlc>



68

CDP



2013 Demographics
PROFILE OF THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

**Department of Defense
2013 Demographics Profile of
the Military Community**


<http://www.militaryonesource.mil>
Click on "Reports and Surveys"

hjf  69

CDP

Online Resources


Please see
**Military Families
Online Resources
Handout**
for additional military
family resources.

CDP **Military Family Online Resources** 

Military Family Resources:
 Military One Source: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>
 Military Family Research Institute: <http://www.mfr.iupui.edu>
 After Deployment: <http://www.afdeployment.com>
 Real Warriors: <http://www.realwarriors.net>
 Yellow Ribbon Program: <http://www.yellowribbon.mil>
 Military Partners & Families Coalition: <http://www.milpfc.org>

Military Child Resources:
 Military Kids Connect: <http://militarykidsconnect.dod.mil>
 Talk, Listen, Connect: <http://www.usarmymilconnect.org/parents/topicsandactivities/activities/>
 Zero to Three: <http://www.zerotothree.org/>
 Military Child Education Coalition: <http://www.militarychild.org/>
 Military Youth Coping with Separation Video: <http://bit.ly/3u3d967>

Evidence-Based Couples Counseling in the DoD/VIA:
 Gottman Method Couples Therapy:
<http://www.gottman.com>
<http://2017.army.mil>


hjf  70


CDP

CDP Website: Deploymentpsych.org

Features include:

- Descriptions and schedules of upcoming training events
- Blog updated daily with a range of relevant content
- Articles by subject matter experts related to deployment psychology, including PTSD, mTBI, depression, and insomnia
- Other resources and information for behavioral health providers
- Links to CDP's Facebook page and Twitter feed



hjf  71

CDP


Online Learning

The following online courses are located on the CDP website at:
<http://www.deploymentpsych.org/content/online-courses>

NOTE: All of these courses can be taken for free or for CE Credits for a fee

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Epidemiology of PTSD in Veterans: Working with Service Members and Veterans with PTSD (1.5 CE Credits)
- Provider Resiliency and Self-Care: An Ethical Issue (1 CE Credit)
- Military Cultural Competence (1.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 1 (2.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 2 (1.75 CE Credits)
- The Fundamentals of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (1.5 CE Credits)
- Identification, Prevention, & Treatment of Suicidal Behavior in Service Members & Veterans (2.25 CE Credits)
- Depression in Service Members and Veterans (1.25 CE Credits)

All of these courses and several others are contained in the Serving Our Veterans Behavioral Health Certificate program, which also includes 20+ hours of Continuing Education Credits for \$350.

hjf  72



Provider Support

CDP's "Provider Portal" is exclusively for individuals trained by the CDP in evidence-based psychotherapies (e.g., CPT, PE, and CBT-I)

Features include:

- Consultation message boards
- Hosted consultation calls
- Printable fact sheets, manuals, handouts, and other materials
- FAQs and one-on-one interaction with answers from SMEs
- Videos, webinars, and other multimedia training aids

Participants in CDP's evidence-based training will automatically receive an email instructing them how to activate their user name and access the "Provider Portal" section at Deploymentpsych.org.



73



How to Contact Us

Center for Deployment Psychology
 Department of Medical & Clinical Psychology
 Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
 4301 Jones Bridge Road, Executive Office: Bldg. 11300-602
 Bethesda, MD 20813-4768

Email: General@DeploymentPsych.org

Website: DeploymentPsych.org

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/DeploymentPsych>

Twitter: @DeploymentPsych



74