



Talk, Listen, Connect
Helping Families During Military Deployment

FACT SHEET

In August, 2006 Sesame Workshop and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. with additional support from the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) and Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) launched a new project, ***Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families During Military Deployment***. This critically needed outreach tool was created to help military families and their young children cope with the challenges of a parent's deployment and to offer a sense of stability and build resiliency during times of separation and change. The project was designed to provide resources to help hundreds of thousands of military preschool children and their families. In the first two weeks after the launch, over 100,000 kits had been requested and the demand continues to date.

Need. Research shows that 483,514 children of active duty military members and 177,888 children of Reserve and Guard members are less than five years of age.* This vast and growing population of service members with young children currently face unique difficulties and challenges, including the stress and anxiety surrounding a parent's deployment or reunion after a period of absence, frequent relocation, and other complex issues. Moreover, access to resources that can help families and children cope with these situations is limited.

The Response. *Talk, Listen, Connect* is modeled on an acclaimed Sesame Workshop initiative, *You Can Ask!*, which was developed in response to September 11, 2001. *You Can Ask!* presents the familiar and beloved *Sesame Street* characters encouraging children to share their feelings and features strategies to help parents and caregivers foster communication.

In developing *Talk, Listen, Connect*, Sesame Workshop assembled an advisory board consisting of leading experts in child development, mental health, and programs servicing military families, who have lent their knowledge and support to inform and guide Sesame Workshop on all aspects of the initiative. The advisors helped to determine the needs and challenges facing young children in military families along with recommendations for age-appropriate and effective content for the project. In addition, Sesame Workshop conducted focus groups with members of military families with young children in order to strengthen and verify the key messages and information provided by the advisory board. An impact study will also be conducted to evaluate the project's overall effectiveness.

The Kit. *Talk, Listen, Connect* consists of bilingual (English/Spanish) materials including a DVD for children and adults starring the Muppets from *Sesame Street* and a magazine and poster for children, parents and caregivers

Distribution and On-Line Availability. Sesame Workshop produced and will distribute 385,000 of these kits, with the help of their partners. The kits will be distributed through the following outlets, provided by The Department of Defense through Military OneSource: Child Development Centers at each military installation, distribution centers for Active Duty personnel with children 3-5 years-old, National Association of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies, the National Guard, Coast Guard, Family Readiness Groups, the Reserves, NYSOMH in NY State and MCEC in Texas. In addition, individual families can request a kit through www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc.

The entire *Talk, Listen, Connect* kit is also available online at www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc, where streaming video is being provided by The Department of Defense Quality of Life Information Technology Center, so families everywhere can view the video and download the information. In addition to the kit, the website provides a clip of the song “Proud” sung by Elmo and his dad. This clip can be sent electronically to a loved one accompanied by a special text message.

**2003 Demographics Report, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy*