

U.S. Military Deployment: When a Family Member Leaves

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During the service period of a military officer or an enlisted member, there may be times when they are given a temporary military assignment which requires that they must leave their families at home. This is called military deployment. Military deployment is necessary because some military assignments are in places in which it is not appropriate for families to accompany their loved ones.

Military deployment is an upsetting situation for everyone involved, especially if the military assignment is in a hostile environment. There are three things to remember: communicate, plan ahead and seek help if you need it.

Communicate

It isn't easy for the enlisted service members or their families. Separation can be a trying time for all. The service member is completely separated from their families. Children are separated from their fathers, mothers, grandparents, siblings or other members from their immediate family. Wives and husbands have to deal with being alone from their spouse or children. Couples with children have to raise their children alone for a period of time. Each person has to take on new responsibilities. They need to do things that they hadn't had to do before deployment.

It is important for families to discuss how they are feeling about all of the changes that are taking place or going to take place. By discussing what everyone in the family is afraid or unsure of, you can help the transition occur much more smoothly.

Spend as much time with the family as possible before the deployment begins. This is especially important if there are children involved. They might not understand what is happening and do not express what they are feeling. Help them to understand and give them the special attention that they will need to get them through deployment with as little problems as possible.

Plan Ahead

If you know ahead of time that you or someone in your family will be deployed, you should sit down and discuss important matters before deployment begins. These important matters include: bills, expenses, transportation, income, direct deposit, chores, emergencies, legal matters, safety and security. Because military deployment is so upsetting, these matters can be overlooked and may cause problems later on during the deployment.

Make sure that everyone has the phone number as to where the military service member can be reached in case of an emergency.

Seek Help

During the deployment, it is very important to keep your spirits high. This affects both yourself and your loved ones. It will also help pass the deployment time away. There are many ways for families and service members to help each other get through deployment. Family members and service members can write and call each other. Phone should be considered a “treat” since they will usually be quite expensive. They can also send pictures to show how someone has changed or how the kids have grown. Some people also send tape recordings or videos to each other.

While the service member is away, the family members should look for help if they need it. They have many members of the family support group that is especially set up for these types of situations. Members of the family support group include: chaplains, other military spouses and volunteers.

Military deployment is hard on everyone, but by following these three steps, you can make deployment much easier and the time will pass by much quicker for both the service member and his or her family.