Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

2026 MAY CCSS Operation Ready Families: Strong Families, Strong Force

2026 MAY CCSS S04: Clinical Care Considerations for Military Children and Families: Unique Stressors and Developmental Impacts of a Parent's Service

Resource List

Beyond Just Resilience: The Important Role of Work-Family Resources for Military Service Members (2021) examines the delicate relationship between an active-duty member's ability to bounce back from stressors and the resulting flow-on effects into family conflict and enrichment. It highlights for MHS providers how closely linked a service member's occupational climate is to the structural stability of the child's home environment. Understanding this dynamic enable pediatrician to better screen for familial and environmental stress during clinical encounters. Recognizing these occupational impacts empowers MHS providers to connect at-risk families with appropriate installation-based support services, fostering a holistic, family-centered approach to child wellness.

Ms Experiences of Children Growing up With a Parent who has Military-Related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Qualitative Systematic Review (2022) captures the research related to the intense stressors that increase the risk of PTSD, often manifesting in symptoms that directly affect the stability of the family unit. Research demonstrates that parental PTSD leads to measurable emotional and developmental impacts on children, making it critical for pediatric healthcare providers to recognize these specific dynamics. By understanding this context, providers can better interpret behavioral symptoms, deliver effective trauma-informed care, and facilitate necessary early interventions. This knowledge empowers clinicians to bridge the gap between military service and pediatric wellness through targeted support and specialized resource allocation.

Stress, Risk, and Resilience in Military Children (2019) remains the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's (NASEM) foundational blueprint for the current care of military youth. Chapter 5 specifically outlines the neurobiology of toxic stress in military children and establishes that effective, consistent caregiving acts as a crucial buffer during difficult military life transitions. Utilizing this blueprint, MHS pediatricians can implement evidence-based screening tools to identify early physiological signs of toxic stress. Furthermore, it equips providers with the data necessary to educate parents on effective caregiving techniques that build resilience during deployments, temporary duty (TDY) assignments, or Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves.

The HHS Supports Military Families (2025) by hosting a specific "Military Family Resource Area and Knowledge Bank." The knowledge bank provides Military Health System (MHS) pediatricians with evidence-based toolkits to support children dealing with trauma stemming from parental deployment, injury, or loss. Access to these specialized resources allows pediatric providers to integrate trauma-informed care directly into routine check-ups at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). By understanding specific military-related stressors, providers can offer targeted interventions, recognize early warning signs of behavioral distress, and ultimately improve long-term mental health outcomes for military dependents.

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References

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