

Special Focus Moments

Military Family Life

Military families have a lot in common with civilian families. There are common family development experiences, such as the birth of a child, a teenager earning his or her driver's license, and caring for an adult relative. Military and civilian families often live side-by-side in communities and share schools, religious affiliations, and social connections.

Yet, there are some hallmark features of military family life that do not have a clear counterpart in the civilian population. These include being part of a community that places service to others before self, operates within a clear chain of command, and expects multiple family relocations during time of service. While all families experience separations and injuries, these challenges are accepted as a *typical* risk of duty.

Home visitors may work with families during separations or after an injury as trusted allies who can make the family's resilience visible to them as they adapt and grow, foster the maintenance of strong connections, and highlight families' strengths in *Everyday Moments* and decisions. In this section, you will find Chapters and *Family Pages* that will support you in conversations with military families as you provide support and a sense of steadiness as parents and their young children cope with parental absence and injury.

Parental Absence

Sharing care and parent engagement during a time of military parent absence can be challenging to expectant families and families who have very young children. A military parental absence can become even more challenging when other stressors, such as health or employment needs of the at-home parent, rocky spousal relationships, or

children's health crises, are also present. Additional family-based stressors might include separations and reunions. Separations and reunions naturally stir up deep feelings in everyone. This can be true even for everyday goodbyes. What can be tricky about these feelings is that they are deep, and they may not seem to go together. This is natural and to be expected – even if it can feel confusing. In this chapter, parents are offered insights and strategies for working together to keep family connections strong as they work to support themselves and their young child(ren).

Parenting After Injury

Injuries are a part of everyday life. A pinched finger, a bloody knee, even a broken leg or arm are examples. In addition, military families may experience service-related injuries. These can be physical and/or psychological, visible and/or invisible, mild or severe, short-term or long-term, and accidental or intentional. Injuries impact every family member – from the youngest to the oldest. Dealing with an injury may cause a temporary wobble until family members regain their balance, or an injury may mean lifelong changes. In this chapter, parents are invited to consider that their relationships, strengths, and resiliency are still present and can be drawn upon as they meet challenges and discover new strengths and possibilities as their family returns to everyday life or moves forward in their *new normal*.