

The Importance of the First Three Years

Period of extraordinary growth

Babies are born “wired” to learn

Development is continuous

**For very young children, physical, cognitive, language
and social/emotional development are “inextricably
linked”**

Babies learn in the context of relationships

EARLY EXPERIENCES MATTER!

(Parlakian & Seibel, 2002)

Focusing on Military and Guard/Reserve Families

- The largest percent of children of Active Duty members are between birth and five years of age, constituting over 42% of minor dependents. There are over 350,000 children ages 0-3 of Active Duty members.
- There are almost 134,000 children ages 0–3 of Selected Reserve members. Of the total number of children of Selected Reserve, 29% are between the ages of 0 and 5

(Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family Policy, 2012)



Photo By: Cpl. Nicholas S. Ranum

Military Family Strengths

- **flexibility**
- **Adaptability**
- **Resourceful and well-resourced**
- **Intergenerational coping skills**
- **Family legacy**



Photo: Kiwi Street Studios

What families have been experiencing (cont'd)

“...the only certainty about the deployment of a service member during war in an era of terrorism is uncertainty from beginning to end.”

(Huebner et al., 2007, p. 113)

What families have been experiencing

- **Repeated and extended deployments**
- **Physical injury**
(icasualties.org, 2012)
- **Psychological injury**
(Hoge, Terhakopian, Castro, Messer, & Engel, 2007; Schell & Marshall, 2008)
- **Traumatic brain injury**
(Tanielian et al., 2008)
- **Chronic pain**
(Girona, Clark, Massengale, & Walker, 2006)
- **Downsizing**
- **Higher rates of suicide**



Photo: Kiwi Street Studios

Serving as a secure base

What we ask of parents

- Predictability
- Emotional attunement
- Sensitivity
- Contingent responsiveness
- Co-regulation
- Mutuality

Serving as a secure base

What we ask of parents

- Consistency
- Emotional attunement
- Sensitivity
- Contingent responsiveness
- Co-regulation
- Mutuality

PTSD symptomatology

- Sleep problems
- Hypervigilance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability or outbursts
- Hallucinations/flash-backs
- Exaggerated startle response
- Feelings of detachment/estrangement
- Restricted range of affect

(American Psychiatric Association, 2000)

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TBI symptomatology

- Disorganization
- Impulsivity
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Vision problems
- Depression

(Ducharme & Davidson, 2004)

- Service member parent's PTSD symptoms predicted child depression, internalizing behaviors, and externalizing behaviors
- Service member parent's depression served as robust predictor of child's internalizing behaviors
(Lester et al., 2010)
- Nat'l Guard soldier parent's PTSD had direct and indirect effects on self-reported parenting behaviors, including impaired parenting
(Gewirtz, Polusney, Khaylis, Erbes, & DeGarmo, 2010)

Focusing on Veteran families

- An estimated 250,000 service members transition out of service and into civilian life each year.
(Small Business Administration, 2012)
- Varying states of healing
- We know that the face of the Veteran is changing

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- Varying states of healing
- We know that the face of the Veteran is changing

And we know that *young* veterans may have *young* children.



Emerging data from Illinois

Nearly one of out of five new veterans has one or more children under the age of 5 in their household.

(Carrow, Rynell, & Terpstra, 2012)



Photo by Kiwi Street Studios

Emerging data from Illinois

Nearly one out of five new veterans has one or more children under the age of 5 in their household.

(Carrow, Rynell, & Terpstra, 2012)

For female veterans, that number increases to nearly one out of four.

(Carrow et al., 2012)



Photo by Kiwi Street Studios



Photo by Kiwi Street Studios

Emerging data from Illinois (cont'd)

Approximately one quarter of new veterans with children are single

(Carrow et al., 2012)



Photo by Kiwi Street Studios

Emerging data from Illinois (cont'd)

Approximately one quarter of new veterans with children are single

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Photo by Kiwi Street Studios

Nearly half of female new veterans with children are single parents

(Carrow et al., 2012)



Photo by Kiwi Street Studios

Overlay of stressors for Veterans and Guard/Reserve families

- **Unemployment and underemployment**
(U.S. Department of Labor, 2012)
- **About 1 in 5 women seen at VHA endorse MST when screened**
(DVA, 2010)
- **Loss of military-specific support systems**
 - Esprit de corps
 - Installation resources
 - Social support
 - Benefits
 - Cultural identity
 - Relative financial security
 - housing

Overlay of stressors for Veterans and Guard/Reserve families

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Overlay of stressors for Veterans and Guard/Reserve families



- Veteran men 2x as likely to become homeless than non-veteran men.
- Veteran women 3x more likely to become homeless than non-veteran women.
- For females, risk for homelessness was highest in the 18-29 age group, with risk decreasing as age increased

(DVA, 2011)

Coming Together Around Military Families



ZERO TO THREE Website Resources



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http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families/sparrow.html

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ZERO TO THREE
National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

EARLY EXPERIENCES MATTER

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Duty to Care – You Make a Difference (E-Learning Course)
CTAMF E-newsletter
MOS Materials

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SPARROW
By Dorinda Silver Williams, LCSW-C
Illustrated by Brenda Gilliam

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ZERO TO THREE author, Dorinda Silver Williams, LCSW-C, has developed a third

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http://www.zerotothree.org/maltreatment/

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Resources

Military OneSource www.militaryonesource.com

800 342-9647

National Military Family Association

<http://www.militaryfamily.org>

**Childcare and Youth Training and Technical Assistance
Program (CYTTAP)** <http://extension.psu.edu/cyttap>

Families OverComing Under Stress

<http://www.focusproject.org>

Sesame Workshop

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/what-we-do/our-initiatives/military-families.html>

National Center for PTSD <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

Veterans Crisis Line **1-800-273-8255**

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