Deployment is a challenging time for any family, but transitions related to deployment may be particularly stressful for single, divorced, and blended families. We know that military children and military families are resilient and resourceful during times of stress. We also know that consistent routines and regular communication with the deployed parent are important for your pre-teen and teen. Although it may be difficult to communicate with your extended family or partner or spouse’s family, it is important to think about what your pre-teen and teen needs during this stressful time. Though your pre-teen and teen is better able to adapt to change than younger children, keeping the routines and the people in your teen’s life as normal as possible will help your child cope during deployment. Your pre-teen and teen may want to hang out with his or her half- or step siblings. This also allows your pre-teen and teen to connect with other family members who may be feeling similar emotions about deployment and helps maintain the bond with siblings.

Engaging Resources Available to You and Your Family

Some military families experience difficulty with negotiating communication and new roles in single, divorced, and blended families during deployment. It is essential for you to be able to engage resources that can help you communicate with your extended and blended family so your pre-teen and teen can communicate easily with the deployment service member. Are there any mutual friends in your family that could help your child feel connected to the deployed service member? Is there anyone in your neighborhood or at your pre-teen and teen’s school that can help you communicate with members of your extended or blended family? Think of these people as your built-in support system: Your extended or blended family may be more open to negotiating with a mutual friend or family member. Don’t get locked into a battle with your ex-spouse or ex-partner.

**Your Pre-teen and Teen:**
- May be intensely curious and is growing in mental abilities
- Is sensitive to criticism and correction
- May be experiencing growth spurts
- Can absorb and analyze information

**Parent Tips:**
- Brainstorm family members who are trusted by everyone in your extended or blended family. Can they act as a link?
- Your child’s school may help your teen send letters or photos from there.
- Encourage your pre-teen and teen to communicate with the deployed service member in his or her own, special way. Communicate with the other adults in your pre-teen or teen’s life that could support you and your pre-teen and teen in maintaining connection to the deployed service member.
Talking to Extended Family Members about Deployment

Talking to extended family members about deployment can be frustrating. Your family or your ex-spouse or ex-partner’s family may want more information about the deployed service member and your pre-teen and teen than you are ready to give them. It may help to think about communication with your extended family as “baby steps”. A little bit of communication can go a long way, and it will take time before you and your extended family members can get into a routine about communication. Even though it may seem like a long time from now, it is important to start thinking about what it will be like when the deployed service member returns from deployment. Keeping your extended family members “in the loop” about your pre-teen and teen and communicating with them about deployment may make the transition after deployment easier for you, your pre-teen and teen, and the deployed service member.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ADAPT is officially open for business! If you live in Minnesota, are a parent of a 5-12 year old and have been deployed (or your spouse/partner has been deployed) since 2001, we want to hear from you!

To learn more about the ADAPT project, go to www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt. For more information, you can call us at 612-624-4830 or e-mail us at adapt@umn.edu.

“Like” us on Facebook!

Contact Information:
Dept of Family Social Science
University of Minnesota
Rm. 290 McNH
1985 Buford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108
ADAPT@umn.edu
612-624-4830

Upcoming Topics Vol 5 (August):

Children with Special Needs

- How to talk to your child with special needs about deployment
- Using social stories with your child with special needs

http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt