The Deployment Cycle and Its Impact on Service Members and Their Families

Center for Deployment Psychology
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe the demographic characteristics of Service members and their families.
2. List the three phases of the deployment cycle and the events common to each phase.
3. Identify stressors commonly confronted by Service members and their families before, during, and after deployment.
4. Discuss challenges that Service members face in achieving successful post-deployment reintegration.

U.S. Veterans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 Veteran Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War (8/90 – 8/01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War (9/01 – present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wartime veterans*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacetime veterans*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistics from 2009, U.S. Census Bureau (2011)

Types of Service/Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Service and Deployments</th>
<th>Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wartime</td>
<td>Fort/Post/Base in any state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacetime</td>
<td>Korea/Japan/South Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-combat zone in combat era</td>
<td>Balkans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters (Hurricanes, Floods, etc.)</td>
<td>Alaska/Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical facility</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort/Post/Base/Camp</td>
<td>Spain/UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship/Submarine</td>
<td>Germany/Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOOTW (Military Operations Other Than War)</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others?</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wear and Tear

- OEF
- OIF
- OND
- OFS
Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)
Afghanistan [October 7, 2001 - December 28, 2014]

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)
Iraq [March 20, 2003 - August 31, 2010]

Operation New Dawn (OND)
Iraq [September 1, 2010 - December 18, 2011]

Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS)
Afghanistan [January 1, 2015 - present]

Demographics Handout
Department of Defense
2013 Demographics
Profile of the Military Community

www.militaryonesource.mil
www.census.gov

Active Component vs. Selected Reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Component</th>
<th>Selected Reserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Full-time&quot; military</td>
<td>&quot;Part-time&quot; military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On call 24/7/365</td>
<td>1 weekend month/2 weeks per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Army</td>
<td>National Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Air Force</td>
<td>— Army NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Navy</td>
<td>— Air NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Marine Corps</td>
<td>Reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Coast Guard</td>
<td>— Army — Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 1.4 Million</td>
<td>— Navy — Marine Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Coast Guard</td>
<td>— Coast Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 1.1 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Branch Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013 Military Personnel by DoD Component and Coast Guard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total 2.25 million 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Active Duty 528,000 23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army National Guard 358,000 15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Reserve 198,000 8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Active Duty 320,000 14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Reserve 62,000 2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps Active Duty 196,000 8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps Reserve 40,000 1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force Active Duty 327,000 14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air National Guard 106,000 4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force Reserve 71,000 3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Active Duty 40,000 1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Reserve 8,000 0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure 13: 2013 Demographics Profile of the Military Community (2014))

### Pre-Deployment

“Physically present and psychologically absent”

(Faboz et al. 2008)

### Pre-Deployment Stress in Military Families

(Figure 16: Pre-Deployment Stress in Military Families)
### Pre-Deployment Preparation for Military Families

- **Preparedness**
  - Practical preparation
    - Power of attorney/will/financial plan
    - Location of important papers
    - Emergency contact procedures
    - Child care arrangements

  ...but deployment pay can offset negative aspects of deployments

### Pre-Deployment Preparation for Military Families

- **Emotional preparation**
  - Prepare to cope with unexpected problems
  - Trust service member will be protected
  - Prepare for absence of partner/parent
  - Support mission

### Pre-Deployment Stressors for Military Families

- **Lack of preparation time**
  - Unit preparation vs. family preparation
  - Last-minute tasks

- **Shifting expectations**
  - Length of upcoming deployment
    - Open-ended deployments
  - Deployment date

### Pre-Deployment Stressors for Military Families

**Military Families**
- Clarifying changes in family dynamics
- Anticipation of threats to service member
- Perception of mission purpose
- Lack of information
- Potential rumors
- Striving for intimacy
- Service members often value deployments

**Military Children**
- Preparing for extended separations from a primary caretaker
- Altered family roles and responsibility
- Increased stress on non-military parent/caretakers
- Community level stress/loss
Deployment

Pre-deployment
Notification
Preparation
Training

Deployment

Departure
Sustainment
Combat and conflict

Return from Deployment
Reunion
Reintegration

“Psychologically present and physically absent”

Deployment Phases for Military Families

In first month ...
- Adjusting to new responsibilities
- Roller coaster of mixed emotions
- Disrupted routines
- “Hole” where Service member used to be

Faber et al (2008)

Deployment Stress in Military Families

Logan (1987)
Deployment Phases for Military Families

After first month through penultimate month ...

- Resiliency develops
- Increased confidence
- New routines established
- New sources of support
- Newfound independence

Factors Associated with Greater Youth or Caregiver Difficulties

1. Poor caregiver emotional well-being
2. More cumulative months of deployment
3. National Guard or Reserve status
4. Youth-caregiver communication problems

Communication

- Technology is easier and quicker
  - Phone, email, IM, FAX, VTC, DVD, Facebook, Skype
- Email and IM most frequently used
- Telephone preferred but less available
Communication

**Value of frequent communication:**
- Alleviates negative stress and challenges of separation
- Service members’ motivation during missions is correlated with the well-being of their families

**Challenges of frequent communication:**
- Exacerbates homesickness
- Distracts from mission, particularly when news from home is negative or unpleasant
- Frustration that spouse’s complaints seem trivial compared to problems encountered during deployment

As Goes the Parent, So Goes the Child

- Child adjustment problems linked to parental distress
  - Depression and PTSD in parents were predictive of child depression/child internalizing and externalizing behaviors
  - Longer parental deployments associated with increased risk for child depression/externalizing symptoms
  - Children can have a high level of anxiety even after the deployed parent has returned

Externalizing Symptoms by Gender and Parent Deployment Status

![Bar chart showing externalizing symptoms by gender and deployment status](chart.png)

Impact of Deployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Most at Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Older teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time deployed</td>
<td>More cumulative months of deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver emotional well-being</td>
<td>Poorer emotional well-being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miller et al. (2011); Chandra et al. (2011)

Chandra et al. (2011); Cohoon (2010)
Challenges During Deployment

As cited by both caregivers and youth:
• Maintaining the household
• Confronting life without the deployed Service member
• Lack of community understanding of what life was like for them during the deployment

Deployment Stress in Service Members

Chandra et al. (2011)

Tough Realities About Combat

• Fear in combat is common
• Unit members will be injured and killed
• There will be communication/info breakdowns
• Leadership failures will be perceived
• Combat impacts every soldier mentally and emotionally
• Combat has lasting mental health (MH) effects
• Soldiers are afraid to admit that they have a MH problem
• Deployments place a tremendous strain upon families
• Combat environment is harsh and demanding
• Combat poses moral/ethical challenges

Challenges for OIF and OEF

• No clearly defined “front line” or rear areas
• Highly ambiguous environment
• Complex and changing missions
• Long deployments
• Repeated deployments
• Environment is very harsh

WRAIR Land Combat Study Team (2006); Hosek et al (2006)
Deployment Challenges for Service Members

Physical
- Heat and cold
- Dehydration and wetness
- Lack of comforts
- Sleep deprivation
- Dirt and mud
- Noise and blasts
- Fumes and smells
- Long work hours
- Illness or injury

Cognitive
- Boredom/monotony
- Unclear/changing role or mission
- Unclear/changing ROEs
- Experiences that defy beliefs
- Too little or too much information
- Loyalty conflicts

Emotional
- Fear of failure/loss
- Shame and guilt
- Helplessness
- Horror
- Anxiety
- Killing
- Feeling devalued
- Excitement, thrills
- Satisfaction

Spiritual

Figley et al (2007)
Deployment Challenges for Service Members

**Social**
- Separation from loved ones
- Lack of privacy
- Public opinion and media
- Turning to their peers for support

**Spiritual**
- Change in faith
- Inability to forgive
- Loss of trust

Women’s Roles in OIF/OEF

- Roles
  - Combat vs. non-combat
  - Medics/Mental Health
  - Convoy transportation
  - Pilots
  - Mechanics
  - Administrative
  - Intelligence
  - Security Forces/Military Police

Female Deployment Stressors

- Genitourinary health issues
- Body armor fit issues
- Feelings of both isolation (few females) and yet always being around someone (Battle Buddy system)
- Separation from family/children
- Sexual assault/harassment

References:
- Figley et al. (2007)
- U.S. Marine Corps
- U.S. Navy
- Street et al. (2009); Zoroya (2012); Vogt et al. (2005); Joint Economics Committee (2007)
Stressors in the Deployment Cycle

Service Members

Pre-deployment
- Notification
- Preparation
- Training

Deployment
- Departure
- Sustainment
- Combat and conflict

Return from Deployment
- Reunion
- Reintegration

“Physically present and psychologically absent”

Faber et al. (2008)

Typical Course of Reintegration

Family Reintegration

Family has...
- New routines
- New responsibilities
- More independence and confidence
- Made many sacrifices
- Worried, felt lonely
- Gone through milestones that were missed

Service member’s return can...
- Interrupt routine
- Disrupt space
- Throw off decision-making
- Cause family to walk on tiptoes
- Not make everything perfect
- Not replace the sacrifices and missed milestones

Adapted from a briefing by CDL Kevin Gardes (May, 2008)
Typical Course of Reintegration

Child...
- Is used to depending on other parent or caretaker
- May have made new friends
- May have developed new interests
- May have achieved milestones or rites of passage

Post-Deployment Stressors

- Unmet or unrealistic expectations
- Post-homecoming let-down
- Changed roles/responsibilities
- New independence of spouse
- Tug on loyalties
- Extended family
- Unresolved marital issues haven’t vanished

Challenges During Reintegration

- Readjusting to the deployed parent’s presence
- Fitting the deployed parent into the home routine
- Difficulties rebalancing childcare responsibilities while ensuring the deployed parent had time to adjust to home life (caregiver)
- Understanding the deployed parent again, particularly if the parent experienced mood changes (youth)

Service Member Reintegration

Chandra et al. (2011)
Reintegration Challenges for Female Veterans

- Readjustment to family primary caregiver role
- Post-deployment healthcare services
- “Veteran woman” identity

BATTLEMIND Skills

**WHILE DEPLOYED**
- Buddies (cohesion) vs. Withdrawal
- Accountability vs. Controlling
- Targeted Aggression vs. Inappropriate Aggression
- Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance
- Lethally Armed vs. “Locked and Loaded” at Home
- Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment
- Mission OPSEC vs. Secretiveness
- Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt
- Non-Defensive Driving vs. Aggressive Driving
- Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict

**HOME**
-

Post-Deployment Challenges for Reserve Component

- Return to civilian life
- Job may no longer be available
- Can have reduction in income
- Transition of health care/ loss of health coverage
- Loss of unit/military support system for the family
- Lack of follow-up/observation by unit commanders to assess needs

Reintegration

5 critical challenges service members need to master

- Overcome alienation
- Move from simplicity to complexity
- Replace war with another form of high
- Move beyond war and find meaning in life
- Come to peace with self, God, and others
Reintegration

**Overcome alienation**
- From family, friends
- From coworkers
- From community

**Move from simplicity to complexity**
- From self to others
- From survival to thriving
- From others thinking for you to responsibility
- From no choices to overwhelming choices

**Replace war with another high**
- War is an adventure
- Nothing in civilian life matches the intensity
- Speed kills: So do drugs, alcohol, etc...
- How do SMs learn to accept life as it is?

**Move beyond war**
- Find meaning and purpose outside of combat
- We were someone before war and will be someone after war
- Will we be stuck in Iraq/Afghanistan, etc., forever?
Reintegration

Make peace with self, God, and others

- SMs may have done, or not done things that violated their moral code
- SMs may have participated in the killing of other humans
- SMs may ask, “Is there absolution or do I live with guilt, (real, false, survivors) forever?”

Online Learning

The following online courses are located on the CDP website at:
http://www.deploymentpsych.org/content/online-courses

NOTE: All of these courses can be taken for free or for CE Credits for a fee

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Epidemiology of PTSD in Veterans: Working with Service Members and Veterans with PTSD (1.5 CE Credits)
- Provider Resiliency and Self-Care: An Ethical Issue (1 CE Credit)
- Military Cultural Competence (1.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 1 (2.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 2 (1.75 CE Credits)
- The Fundamentals of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (1.5 CE Credits)
- Identification, Prevention, & Treatment of Suicidal Behavior in Service Members & Veterans (2.25 CE Credits)
- Depression in Service Members and Veterans (1.25 CE Credits)

All of these courses and several others are contained in the Serving Our Veterans Behavioral Health Certificate program, which also includes 20+ hours of Continuing Education Credits for $350.

CDP Website:
Deploymentpsych.org

Features include:

- Descriptions and schedules of upcoming training events
- Blog updated daily with a range of relevant content
- Articles by subject matter experts related to deployment psychology, including PTSD, mTBI, depression, and insomnia
- Other resources and information for behavioral health providers
- Links to CDP’s Facebook page and Twitter feed

Provider Support

CDP’s “Provider Portal” is exclusively for individuals trained by the CDP in evidence-based psychotherapies (e.g., CPT, PE, and CBT-I)

Features include:

- Consultation message boards
- Hosted consultation calls
- Printable fact sheets, manuals, handouts, and other materials
- FAQs and one-on-one interaction with answers from SMEs
- Videos, webinars, and other multimedia training aids

Participants in CDP’s evidence-based training will automatically receive an email instructing them how to activate their user name and access the “Provider Portal” section at Deploymentpsych.org.
How to Contact Us

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