HOW to HELP

MILITARY FAMILIES AS A FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

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Did you know?

- As of 2008, there were 41,288 active duty service men and women and 15,597 Reservists and National Guard who reside in Kentucky. Many are also parents to children.
- At present, about 370,000 veterans reside in the state of Kentucky.
- Currently, there are approximately 800 – 1,200 homeless veterans in Kentucky

INTRODUCTION

While the United States is involved in military missions around the world, families of deployed military members serve silently at home. The contributions and sacrifices of military families are significant. Community and faith-based organizations can provide important social support to these families, especially during times of crisis. These organizations enable families to successfully face the challenges and opportunities of deployment, and are valuable support networks for thousands of military families.

When military members step up for their country, it is important to have someone step up for the family left at home. Often it is the faith communities who walk beside the family to support the spouse, parents and children of the service member during deployment. These communities can provide sources of comfort to military families by bringing support and understanding into their lives.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Learn about local military families in your faith community. Focus on who are they, where they live and what their needs are.
- Identify members within your faith community who are veterans. Create a mentoring or buddy program to connect them with those who are currently serving.
- Identify ways other faith-based organizations support military members and their families and use those ideas as a starting point for your organization.
- Start support groups for military spouses, parents of single military members, and children and teens. Each group has unique needs and views on having a loved one in the military.
- Work with local military sponsored family readiness or support groups to offer child care activities or space for meetings or trainings.
- Make contact with local unit chaplains or military personnel officers to offer assistance and learn about local military families' needs. You may be able to "adopt" single military members or units who don't have local support. This connects them with the community even though they are thousands of miles away.
- Work with the Military Family Programs in your region to see what assistance is needed.
- When welcoming families into your faith community, be mindful of views expressed about the military and war. Military members and their families make tremendous sacrifices on behalf of the entire country, regardless of the political landscape.
- Become familiar with local resources for veterans. Refer military members and their families to these resources when appropriate.
- Offer support groups for returning and past veterans.
- Create a system to check in on the families in your faith community who are experiencing a deployment.

DEMOGRAPHICS (2008)

	KY Military Personnel	Army	Navy/Marine	Air Force
Active Duty	41,288	40,679	316	293
Reserve /National Guard	15,597	12,402	1,621	1,574

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For More Information

- Ministering to Families Affected by Deployment: Deployment Resources for America's Clergy, www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/iraq/deployedfamilies.pdf

- Strong Bonds, www.strongbonds.org

- Soldier's Heart, www.soldiersheart.net

- Warriors Journey Home Ministry, www.FCCTallmadge.org/warriorsjourney.htm

For more information in Kentucky

- *The Official Homepage of Fort Knox, Kentucky, www.knox.army.mil*
- *Fort Knox Family and Morale Welfare and Recreation, www.knoxmwr.com*
- *The Official Homepage of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, www.campbell.army.mil*
- *Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, www.veterans.ky.gov*
- *Kentucky National Guard, www.kentuckyguard.com*
- *Kentucky Department of Military Affairs, www.dma.ky.gov/default.htm*
- *Kentucky American Legion, www.kylegion.org*
- *Lexington VA Med Center, www.lexington.va.gov*
- *Brain Injury Association of Kentucky, www.biak.us/military*
- *University of Kentucky Veterans Resource Center, www.uky.edu/veterans*

Additional Resources

Working with and supporting military families carries a unique set of challenges. While military culture promotes independence and an "I can do it" attitude, asking for help may be considered a weakness by some military members and their families. Providing sensitive and compassionate care helps military families cope with the daily and sometimes traumatic stressors that a combat tour may bring. Many resources are available to assist faith-based communities in gaining information and insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by military families.

Faith-based organizations exemplify the meaning of community involvement and spirit. Providing support systems as military families experience a deployment is crucial. As a result of deployment, each family member has experiences separate from one another and it often takes time to readjust. Having members of the faith community knowledgeable in the family's experience enables a more holistic approach to supporting them.

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