

RFI Category and Number: Impact on Military Mothers Reintegrating into Family/Home Life After Deployment, RFI 7

In 2019, the Committee identified challenges, impacts, and issues military mothers experience returning from deployment as they reintegrate to family and work life, and subsequently recommended that the Secretary of Defense commission a foundational research study to identify and assess these potentially unique impacts on military mothers and identify measures to help ease their transition back to “normal” family and home life. The Committee seeks information on the progress of research and initiatives to address these reintegration concerns.

The Committee requests a written response from the USD(P&R) via Military Personnel Policy (MPP) and Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) and both the Active and Reserve Components of the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force (Air & Space)), Coast Guard, and the National Guard Bureau on the following:

RFI Question:

a. What research or studies have been undertaken or is ongoing to identify the issues unique to returning mothers and reintegration? Provide links to or copies to findings and reports. What actions have been taken to address issues identified by the research or studies, if applicable?

Response: No research studies sponsored. CNIC is supporting a pilot and research evaluation of a new Home Visitation Curriculum in the New Parents Support Program that was created by Penn State specifically for the DoD. CNIC will transition the curriculum to the full enterprise at the conclusion of the pilot. The “Parental Absence in Military Family Life” chapter in the Take Root Home Visitation curriculum helps give parents a perspective on what deployment or parental absence is like “through a young child’s eyes,” as well as ways to help prepare for deployment, stay connected during deployment, and reconnect after deployment. See attached examples of the content/resources that the home visitors would use with parents during a session and that parents keep.

b. Section 555 of the FY21 NDAA directed the Secretary of Defense to develop policy that, among other issues, outlined “[r] responses to the effects specific to covered members who reintegrate into home life after deployment.” What policy, initiatives, or resources have been developed to assist returning military mothers with the challenges they face on return from deployment. Provide copies of relevant policies, training, and other documents,

Response: The Navy does not have policies or programs that specifically target the reintegration of deployed mothers or women. The Navy’s Family Readiness System (FRS)

governed by OPNAVINST 1754.1C, mandates that all installations offer services before, during, and after deployment to promote positive adjustment to deployment, family separation and family reunion. This includes reintegration assistance/resources to assist with the readjustment to family life and for coping with lingering effects of deployment related stresses.

This policy is designed to specifically address deployment related stress, post-deployment related stress, parent-child issues, and other situational stressors associated with deployment and family separation. Additional information can be found in RFI 7.d.

c. What are the issues and challenges that have been identified, including the restoration of the parent-child bond, and resumption of prior family roles and responsibilities?

Response: Navy's Office of Women's Policy has not identified specific issues and challenges to military mothers through Navy specific Health of the Force surveys or programs. In response to various studies and publications stating that women have challenges balancing multiple roles and responsibilities from societal expectations of motherhood while deployed, BUMED's Female Force Readiness Advisory Community released the "Supporting Service Women After Deployment" resources for Service members and command leadership.

d. What policies and procedures does each Service have to support reintegration? Are there any programs specific to mothers and being a woman?

Response: The Navy does not have policies or programs that specifically target the reintegration of deployed mothers or women. The Navy's Family Readiness System (FRS) governed by OPNAVINST 1754.1C, mandates that all installations offer services before, during, and after deployment to promote positive adjustment to deployment, family separation and family reunion. This includes reintegration assistance/resources to assist with the readjustment to family life and for coping with lingering effects of deployment related stresses.

This policy is designed to specifically address deployment related stress, post-deployment related stress, parent-child issues, and other situational stressors associated with deployment and family separation. Key support services include:

- Support for mobilizations, activations, and deployments lasting longer than 30 days and those happening as a unit or individually.
- Educate Service members and their families about deployment-related challenges and the services available to them to help them cope.
- Ensure ongoing outreach, communication, activities and events with the Service members and their family members throughout all phases of the deployment to promote prevention and early identification of family problems.
- Provide Reconnection Workshops that focus on individual/small group discussion that enhances the likelihood of positive reconnections among family members.

- As requested by Commanders or Service members, provide assistance in developing family care plans.

e. Are there any resources or programs geared to military mothers prior to deployment to help them plan for and more successfully reintegrate post [1] deployment? If so, describe these efforts and provide links to policies, programs, etc.

Response: OPNAVINST 1754.1C, Navy Family Readiness System, along with DoD policy, mandates that deployment support is a core function of our Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC). The FFSC has trained staff to help Service members plan, prepare for deployment, and provide strategies to reintegrate successfully post deployment. Key programs and efforts include:

- Information and Referral Services. Provides information and referrals for available programs, services, volunteer opportunities, and resources available in both military and civilian communities.
- Education and Training Opportunities. Offers information, educational, and preventive programs on a continuing basis making maximum use of community services, including New Parent Support Program services for all eligible parents with children from birth through 3 years of age.
- Counseling and Consultation. Provides non-medical individual and family counseling/consultation services that includes one-on-one or small group consultation.

f. DACOWITS' 2019 focus group participants expressed that post-deployment reintegration/assistance efforts were male-centric and lacked resources to assist the unique challenges returning military mothers faced. What efforts have been made to address this important subset of re-integration assistance?

Response: No policy changes have been made. BUMED's Female Force Readiness Advisory Community released the "Supporting Service Women After Deployment" resource for Service members.

g. What kind of mentorship and support are specifically provided to deploying mothers?

Response: NA

h. What efforts have the Women's Initiatives Teams (WIT) initiated, if any, and how are the Services supporting those recommendations?

Response: NA

i. What type of mental health screening/care is provided?

Response: Following a deployment, members of the Navy and Marine Corps complete a Post Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) between 30 days before and 30 days after return from deployment, a Post Deployment Re-Assessment (PDHRA) between 90-180 days after returning from deployment and a Deployed Mental Health Assessment between 181-545 days and 546-910 days after returning from deployment. These assessments all provide an opportunity for mental health screening and access to mental health care.

- The PDHA includes the following to screen for mental health concerns:
 - Questions for Service members to address:
 - During this deployment, did you receive care for combat stress or a mental health problem/concern?
 - What prescription or over-the-counter medications (including herbals/supplements) for sleep, pain, combat stress, or a mental health problem are you CURRENTLY taking?
 - In their completion of the assessment, the health care provider can indicate if further assessment and evaluation of mental health symptoms and/or a referral to mental health specialty care is required.
- The PDHRA includes the following to screen for mental health concerns:
 - Questions for Service members to address:
 - Since you returned from deployment, how many times have you gone to a health care provider for a medical, dental, or mental health problem/concern?

In the PAST YEAR, did you receive care for any mental health condition or concern such as, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorder, alcohol abuse, or substance abuse?

- What prescription or over-the-counter medications (including herbals/supplements) for sleep, pain, combat stress, or a mental health problem are you CURRENTLY taking?
- Would you like to schedule a visit with a chaplain, mental health care provider, or a community support counselor?
- In their completion of the re-assessment, the health care provider can indicate if further assessment and evaluation of mental health symptoms and/or a referral to mental health specialty care is required.
- The Deployed Mental Health Assessment includes 10 questions for Service members to address, including questions on major life stresses, history of mental health care, medications for mental health conditions, alcohol use, emotional state, memory, sleep, appetite, and their interest in scheduling an appointment with a health care provider, mental health provider, chaplain, or other support resource.
 - In their completion of the assessment, the health care provider can indicate if further assessment and evaluation of mental health symptoms and/or a referral to mental health specialty care is required. In addition, the health care provider can indicate if the Service member poses a risk to themselves or others.

j. What kind of follow-up is provided and at what intervals?

Response: Follow up intervals are described above. If the need for further mental health evaluation is needed, the member can be referred to the appropriate care and will be followed and interval appropriate for their individual care needs.

k. Is leadership training provided to military leaders about the challenges and difficulties of reintegration that military mothers may encounter the range of impacts of those challenges, in order to increase knowledge and understanding? Provide links to or copies of such training.

Response: Naval Leadership and Ethics Center does not have any formal courses to specifically address this topic. But the topic of military mother reintegration has been used as a discussion item during all levels of NLEC training, to include courses centered around Building Great Commands, Culture of Inclusion, Dealing with Grief, and Ethical Decision Makings.

BUMED's Female Force Readiness Advisory Community released the "Supporting Service Women After Deployment" resources for command leadership to better support the reintegration of military mothers.

l. What second and third order effects of reintegration difficulties have been identified (e.g., on military readiness, work productivity, psychological and physical health, attrition rates)?

Response: N/A

m. Do exit surveys have questions related to whether reintegration/post-deployment challenges are a reason for separation?

Response: There are no questions related to reintegration/post-deployment as reasons for separation from the Navy.

Hours Expended Answering this RFI: 10

POC or office responsible: OPNAV N174B