Reading by Design
Outreach to Military Families
Public Library Outreach to and Programming for Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families

Libraries are an important resource for all Americans. They remain a critical source of information, entertainment, technology, and programs for all ages. Additionally, even in our segmented digital age, libraries serve as a significant source of connection for the community.

For military families, this is true in cities, towns, and rural areas as well as military installations around the world. As librarians, what can we do to serve families of those engaged in military service within our communities and on military installations worldwide?

**On military bases and installations,** libraries provide both traditional collections and valuable technology resources. Military spouses and children, far from home and new to a base, can find immediate community for the whole family at their installation's library.

**In urban, suburban, and rural communities,** public libraries have a vital role, both for families of deployed personnel, and for returning veterans. Beginning in late 2001, National Guard and Reserve units from communities across the United States have been activated and deployed overseas, with more than 300,000 soldiers called to action. More than half a million children have one or both parents serving in the Guard or Reserves. Many Reservists and National Guard members never expected to be away from home for more than one weekend a month. The impact of the “deployment cycle” (predeployment, deployment, and reunion) on these soldiers and their families is very stressful. Therefore, for military families during these times, a sense of connection, both with other military families and to the larger community, is vitally important. Your library can provide that sense of connection.

Those libraries that don’t have patrons with loved ones serving overseas can use some of the ideas in this section to educate their community about men and women serving in the military, not only as personnel far from home but also as veterans returning home. Military deployment and return, with the accompanying adjustments, affect individual communities as well as the nation as a whole.

Thus, the activities, bibliographies, and websites contained in this section are intended for use in all libraries. The displays and activities, while aimed at military personnel and their families, can and should be inviting and helpful for all library patrons. The sense of connection that is so vital to military families is also important to the civilian community in order to understand the significance of military service in today’s world.
Public Library Outreach to Military Families

Decorations and Displays

Displays of Handouts and Announcements
Set up tables to display handouts or allot space on a bulletin board or at checkout to post information about the availability of printouts of the bibliographic and resources lists, book clubs, or other activities for military families and the larger community.

Wall of Honor
Decorate bulletin boards, create a wall of honor, learn about patriotism, and become familiar with the places where family members of students are deployed.

Where in the World
Post a large map of the world near the entrance to your library. Invite patrons to put pins or yellow ribbons on the map to represent their friend or family member deployed overseas and in the United States. Include a bulletin board to post photos.

Where in the World Signpost
In the movie and television show M*A*S*H, a signpost stands in camp indicating the distance to various locations around the world (Seoul, Korea, and Toledo, Ohio, among them). Set up a similar signpost in your library, recruiting patrons to affix markers that show the distance to other locations of family members around the globe.

Activities

Crafts and Maker Activities
- Use ideas from the Pinterest page “Activities and Crafts for Veterans and Their Families” to host a craft event for families of active duty or veteran military personnel.
- e-NABLE Volunteer Opportunity
  http://enablingthefuture.org/
  Use the library’s 3D printer to make prosthetic hands for the e-NABLE project, which provides prosthetics for children in need.

Current Events Discussion Group for Young Adults
Bring middle and high school students together to discuss and understand events in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere where their parents and other relatives are serving. Use the free ten-minute daily news program CNN Student News and supplemental materials from CNN for discussions about the news. For more information, go to http://bit.ly/2y9aCV.

Establish Teachers Groups
Organize a group for educators to come together to share ideas about how to help children understand what is happening. Begin with reading and discussing the Educator’s Guide to the Military Child During Deployment, available at http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/homefront/index.html. Teachers can also be asked to speak to other groups about the geography, culture, and people in those parts of the world where soldiers have been deployed.
Form a Weekly Club for Young Adults
Form a weekly club for high schoolers to discuss and sharpen their thoughts about events in places where their family members are deployed. Use the free Learning Network of the New York Times as a resource, with its articles, quizzes, games, opinion and discussion questions, and other resources. For more information, go to http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com.

Hold Host a Day from Home Event
Ask a local business to donate disposable cameras to your library. Send out groups from the library to take pictures of sites in the community. Once the photos are developed, make a scrapbook with them. You can also have people use their cell phones to take pictures. Host an event at the library for community members to come in and write messages in the book and send it to the unit deployed from your area. Or ask a local copy shop to make copies to send to individuals. This would be a great activity during the holiday season.

Organize Reading Groups
Start reading groups for friends and family members of soldiers. Separate groups can be developed for spouses, children, entire families, and returning veterans. Suggestions and recommendations for programs are below (see page 4).

Regular Programs
Hold regular programs with elementary and middle school students whose family members have been deployed. Use activities outlined in Dealing with Deployment: A Small-Group Curriculum for Elementary and Middle School Students (by Ann Aydlett, American School Counselor Association, 2006).

Set Up Writing Groups
Start a letter writing group that meets regularly at your library to send cards, postcards, and letters to soldiers when they are away from home. This is an activity that can include everyone from your community, whether or not they have a family member or friend in the military. Invite children to draw pictures to send with the letters. Ask local businesses to supply products for “care packages.” The Internet has many sites that list items to send; here are a few to review:


Tell Me a Story Event
Host a Tell Me a Story event that’s intended to “empower our military children by using literature and their own stories in a way that fosters skills for resilience, strong peer and parent connections, a sense of pride and accomplishment, and a caring community.” Work with the Military Child Education Coalition, which will provide supplemental, training, and marketing materials. See http://www.militarychild.org/parents-and-students/programs/tell-me-a-story-tmas.
Public Library Outreach to Military Families

**Book Groups**

One way to bring returning veterans together is to form groups to discuss books. This section provides guidance about forming book groups.

Many veterans will be using libraries as a job search resource. Consider putting together a display table inviting them to participate in a book group of their own. Veterans who might be reluctant to join a support group may still appreciate an opportunity to get together with other people who have shared a similar experience.

Members learn from and about each other. “I was amazed by the knowledge of the people involved. I learn more about the people in the group from what they say about the book than I learn about the book.” The discussions are often stimulating and expose members to new ideas; some of the books they read are life changing, influential, or inspiring.

**Setting up and Running a Book Group**

- Someone really committed to having the group should get it started. This could be a member of the group or a professional, such as a librarian.
- The ideal size for a group is about eight people, or twelve at the most. It works if only six people attend, but if it is too large, people don’t have a chance to talk. Bigger isn’t always better.
- It is essential to have a permanent or rotating convener who makes sure the meeting happens. Otherwise the group could fall apart.
- It is helpful if the group members decide at the beginning the kinds of books they want to read. The group may create some written guidelines, which will probably change over time.
- The group needs to decide how it will select the books, which may be by vote of the members or selection by the host or someone the group designates. It is helpful if the group chooses books some months in advance.
- A discussion leader needs to be chosen for every meeting. That person prepares discussion questions, which may be handed out in advance, and guides the discussion for that book.
- A clear distinction needs to be made between time for socializing and for discussing the book.
- The convener or someone else needs to have clear responsibility for publicizing the group.

**Attracting Members**

- Start with a small core of people who are enthusiastic about having the group and who will recruit people they know.
- Encourage word-of-mouth referrals to the group.
- Give the group a name. This may help to attract members.
- Post announcements about the group in the library and on community bulletin boards.

**Some Possible Pitfalls**

- Sometimes a few people dominate the discussion, which frustrates the other members and may lead them to leave the group. Ground rules for how the group operates can be referenced at times like these.
- It’s hard to have a satisfying discussion if people haven’t read the book or read all of it.
Let the Group Be What It Needs to Be

- Sometimes a book group becomes an excuse for getting together, and the book is not even discussed. This is another way for a book group to be, though it’s important that the members discuss and agree that a social group is what they want.
- It is possible that a group may decide to take action about what they’re reading, going from benefiting members personally and socially to having a social impact. The books may become a call to action.

Resources for Starting and Running a Book Group

Books

Online Resources
Book Group Buzz
http://bookgroupbuzz.booklistonline.com
Note especially “Book Club Resources” on this ALA website.
Reading Group Choices
http://www.readinggroupchoices.com
Offers information on starting and running a book group. Suggests books and includes conversation starters. Lists links to other websites.
Reading Group Guides
http://www.readinggroupguides.com
“The online community for reading groups.” Includes a section of librarians’ interviews on their experiences with book groups. Gives information on starting and running a book group. Suggests books, with a section for veterans, and includes discussion questions.

Books to Get a Group Started

Books for Returning Veterans and Their Spouses or Partners
Family Book Group


Bibliography and Other Resources

Recent Books of Note

**Adult Nonfiction—Biography**


**Adult Nonfiction—Animals**


**Adult Nonfiction—Handbooks**


**Adult Nonfiction—Other**


**Children's Nonfiction**


—. *Tuesday Tucks Me In: The Loyal Bond Between a Soldier and His Service Dog*. Henry Holt, 2014.

**Adult Fiction**


Skalka, Patricia. *Death at Gills Rock: A Dave Cubiak Door County Mystery*. Terrace Books, a trade imprint of the University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.


**Teen and YA Fiction**


**Tween Fiction**


**Books for Veterans, Spouses, Partners, and Families**


Dumler, Elaine Gray. *I’m Already Home—Again: Keeping Your Family Close While on Assignment or Deployment*. Frankly Speaking, 2006.


Hoge, Charles W. *Once a Warrior—Always a Warrior: Navigating the Transition from Combat to Home—including Combat Stress, PTSD, and mTBI*. GPP Life, 2010.


Public Library Outreach to Military Families


Finding Employment After Deployment

There are many resources for job seekers. These books are directed toward veterans in particular.


**Books and Plays to Read with Children**


**Additional Titles**


Public Library Outreach to Military Families


Rusackas, Francesca. *I Love You All Day Long*.


**Military Dogs and Other Animals and Bringing Them Home from the War**


Kopelman, Jay and Melinda Roth. *From Baghdad with Love: A Marine, the War, and a Dog Named Lava.* Lyons Press, 2008.


Public Library Outreach to Military Families


Websites

**After Deployment: Wellness Resources for the Military Community**
http://www.afterdeployment.org

Resources especially for veterans and service members related to job performance, making the transition to civilian life, and how to recognize other issues you may be dealing with.

**The Armed Forces Legal Assistance**

The Armed Forces Legal Assistance (AFLA) website is a joint initiative of the Armed Forces legal assistance offices that aims to provide general legal information to the military community to enhance its readiness.

**Armed Forces Resources**
http://www.faflrt.ala.org/president/

Official blog for the Federal and Armed Forces Libraries Round Table.

**Army Well-Being: Sustaining the All-Volunteer Force**
http://www.armywell-being.org/skins/WBLO/home.aspx

**Books for Military Families**
www.militaryfamilybooks.com

**Defense Centers of Excellence**
http://www.dcoe.health.mil/

DCoE assesses, validates, oversees, and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Department of Defense meets the needs of the nation’s military communities, warriors, and families.

DCoE brings together a variety of interdisciplinary resources and centers of excellence that can help family members identify community and military resources to help better understand and cope with psychological health and traumatic brain injury concerns affecting them or the warriors they love at:


**Defense Threat Reduction Agency: Deployed Military Family Support**
http://www.dtra.mil/be/deployed/index.cfm

**Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library**
http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil/

**Deploymentkids.com**
www.deploymentkids.com

Contains activities to do with kids whose family members are deployed.
Joining Forces
http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces

Joining Forces “is a national initiative by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden that mobilizes all sectors of society to give our service members and their families the opportunities and support they have earned” (from website). It promotes ways for individuals to get involved, including activities that could be hosted by libraries.

Make the Connection: Shared Experiences and Support for Veterans
http://maketheconnection.net

A website of the US Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans returning home.

Mental Health America
http://www.mentalhealthanswers.org/page.asp?pageid=0|117|135&id=0|armed_forces_resources

Military101.com
http://www.military101.com/

Information on the resources available to those who serve and those who have served in the US Armed Forces.

The Military.com
http://www.military.com/NewContent/1,13190,Spouse,00.html

Spouse and Family Benefits & Resources: Know your benefits as the spouse or family member of a military service member or veteran—keep up with benefits and resources in the Insider’s Spouse and Family Benefits & Resources section, and find useful guides on deployment, careers, relocation, and more.

Military Child Education Coalition
http://www.militarychild.org/

Military-Connected Students and Public School Attendance Policies

The Military Family Research Institute
http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/

The Military Family Research Institute is one of the leading organizations in the nation with the mission of conducting research about, with, and for military families.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT
http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/

MilitaryHOMEFRONT is the Department of Defense website for official Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) program information, policy, and guidance designed to help troops and their families, leaders, and service providers.

Military Impacted Schools Association
http://www.militarystudent.org/

Military Youth on the Move

National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies
http://www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms/.

Lists the NACCRRA (National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies) accredited child care programs for each branch of the military.
Public Library Outreach to Military Families

National Child Traumatic Stress Network
http://nctsnet.org/nctsn/nav.do?pid=ctr_top_military

The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress—an NCTSN member site—and FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress)—a project cosponsored by the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress—perform research on, develop resources about, and provide assistance to military families.

National Mental Health Information Center
http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/ChildrensCampaign/

The National Military Family Association
http://www.militaryfamily.org/

The National Military Family Association fights for benefits and programs that strengthen and protect uniformed services families and reflects the nation’s respect for their service.

The National Military Family Association website also includes a toolkit for Military Teens at: http://www.militaryfamily.org/publications/deployment-family-research/toolkits.html

Reader’s Digest

Resources for military families compiled by Kathryn M. Tyranski from Reader’s Digest.

SchoolQuest.org, an Initiative of Military Child Education Coalition
http://www.schoolquest.org
http://www.schoolquest.org/state-education-resources/

A compilation of school requirements and resources for all 50 states, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and Washington, D.C.

http://www.schoolquest.org/library/

Full of resources to answer questions about educational transitions, college and workplace readiness, special needs, and many other subjects.

SesameWorkshop.org
http://www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/emotion/tlc

Videos for children about coping with deployments, homecomings, changes, and grieving.

SurvivingDeployment.com: Information and Resources for Military Families
http://www.survivingdeployment.com/

SurvivingDeployment.com is a site for and about military families written by military family members. Our mission is to inform and support military families during the difficult time of deployment. Contains articles and books on many topics, including homecoming. Many links to other websites.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs
http://www.mirecc.va.gov

Additional resources, bibliography, and websites can be found at:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Resources_OIF_Families_090319.pdf

U.S. Army Child, Youth & School Services
Publicity and Promotions

2017 DoD-MWR Libraries Summer Reading Program • www ila.org/dodsumread •

VA GI Bill
http://www.gibill.va.gov/

This website is the home for all educational benefits provided by VA with tools and resources to help veterans pursue college degrees, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, or non-college degree programs.

VA Kids
http://www.va.gov/kids/

VA Kids: Helping kids understand what it means to be a veteran.

Air Force: www.afcrossroads.com (click on family separation)
Army: www.goacs.org (click on family readiness)
Marine Corps: www.usmc-mccs.org (click on deployment information)
Reserves: www.defenselink.mil/ra/ (click on family readiness)

Department of Defense Education Activity
http://www.dodea.edu/home/

Department of Defense Educational Opportunities
www.militarystudent.org

National Children, Youth and Families at Risk Initiative
www.cyfernet.org

National Military Families Association
www.nmfa.org

National Guard & Reserve Websites
Air National Guard: www.ang.af.mil
Army National Guard: www.arng.army.mil
Army Reserve: www4.army.mil/USAR/home/index.php
Coast Guard Reserve: www.uscg.mil/hq/reserve/reshmpg.html
Marine Reserve: www.marforres.usmc.mil
National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve: www.esgr.org
National Guard Bureau Joint Services Support: http://www.jointservicesupport.org/
National Guard Family Program: http://www.jointservicessupport.org/fp/
Naval Reserve: www.navalreserve.com/ps
Reserve Affairs: www.defenselink.mil/ra
Companion Animals Websites
Useful websites about companion animals, including sites that provide dogs for veterans:

- Assistance Dogs International (ADI): http://www.assistancedogsinternational.org
- Assistance Dog United Campaign (ADUC): http://www.assistancedogunitedcampaign.org
- Canines for Service: www.caninesforservice.org
- Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers: http://www.ccpdt.org
- Companions for Heroes (C4H): http://www.companionsforheroes.org
- Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Americans: www.neads.org
- 4 Paws for Ability: http://www.4pawsforability.org
- Freedom Service Dogs of America (FSD): www.freedom servicedogs.org
- K9s for Warriors: www.k9sforwarriors.org
- National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors: http://www.nadoi.org
- Paws Assisting Veterans: www.paveusa.org
- Pet Partners (formerly the Delta Society): http://www.deltasociety.org
- Pets for Vets: http://www.pets-for-vets.com
- Nonprofit organization that trains shelter dogs and pairs them with veterans.
- Power Paws Assistance Dogs: www.azpowerpaws.org
- Service Dogs for America (Great Plains Assistance Dogs Foundation Inc.): www.servicedogsforamerica.com
- This Able Veteran (TAV): www.thisableveteran.org
- U.S. Vets Adopt Pets: www.usvetsadoptpets.org
- Vets Adopt Pets: www.vetsadoptpets.org

Resources by Interests, Topics, Age Groups
The following lists of resources have been sorted by interests and topics for ease of access to materials about specific activity or program topics. Each category includes a list of titles followed by pertinent websites.

Military Service


Armed Forces Resources
http://www.faflrt.ala.org/president/

Official blog for the Federal and Armed Forces Libraries Round Table

Army Well-Being: Sustaining the All-Volunteer Force
http://www.armywell-being.org/skins/WBLO/home.aspx
Military101.com
http://www.military101.com/
Source for information on the resources available to those who serve, and those who have served in the US Armed Forces.

VA Kids
http://www.va.gov/kids/
VA Kids: Helping kids understand what it means to be a veteran.

Military Marriage


Spouses, Partners


Family Adjustment


Dumler, Elaine Gray. *I’m Already Home—Again: Keeping Your Family Close While on Assignment or Deployment*. Frankly Speaking, 2006.


**Books for Military Families**

www.militaryfamilybooks.com

**Defense Threat Reduction Agency: Deployed Military Family Support**

http://www.dtra.mil/be/deployed/index.cfm

**Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library**

http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil/

**Deploymentkids.com**

www.deploymentkids.com

Contains activities to do with kids whose family members are deployed.

**Joining Forces**

http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces

Joining Forces “is a national initiative by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden that mobilizes all sectors of society to give our service members and their families the opportunities and support they have earned” (from website). It promotes ways for individuals to get involved, including activities that could be hosted by libraries.

**MilitaryHOMFRONT**

http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/

MilitaryHOMFRONT is the Department of Defense website for official Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) program information, policy and guidance designed to help troops and their families, leaders, and service providers. Whether you live the military lifestyle or support those who do, you’ll find what you need!

**The Military Family Research Institute**

http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/

The Military Family Research Institute is one of the leading organizations in the nation with the mission of conducting research about, with, and for military families.

**Military Youth on the Move**


**National Child Traumatic Stress Network**

http://nctsn.org/nctsn/nav.do?pid=ctr_top_military

The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress—an NCTSN member site—and FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress)—a project cosponsored by the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress—perform research on, develop resources about, and provide assistance to military families.

**The National Military Family Association**

http://www.militaryfamily.org/

The National Military Family Association fights for benefits and programs that strengthen and protect uniformed services families and reflect the nation’s respect for their service.
Publicity and Promotions

The National Military Family Association website also includes a toolkit for Military Teens at: http://www.militaryfamily.org/publications/deployment-family-research/toolkits.html

Reader’s Digest

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SesameWorkshop.org
http://www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/emotion/tlc

Videos for children about coping with deployments, homecomings, changes, and grieving.

SurvivingDeployment.com: Information and Resources for Military Families
http://www.survivingdeployment.com/

SurvivingDeployment.com is a site for and about military families written by military family members. Our mission is to inform and support military families during the difficult time of deployment. Contains articles and books on many topics, including homecoming. Many links to other websites.

Education of Military Children

Military Child Education Coalition
http://www.militarychild.org/

Military-Connected Students and Public School Attendance Policies

Military Impacted Schools Association
http://www.militarystudent.org/

National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies
http://www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms/.

Lists the NACCRRRA (National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies) accredited child care programs for each branch of the military.

SchoolQuest.org, an Initiative of Military Child Education Coalition
http://www.schoolquest.org
http://www.schoolquest.org/state-education-resources/

A compilation of school requirements and resources for all 50 states, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and Washington, D.C.

http://www.schoolquest.org/library/

Full of resources to answer questions about educational transitions, college and workplace readiness, special needs, and many other subjects.

U.S. Army Child, Youth & School Services

Deployed Women
Publicity and Promotions


Returning Veteran


After Deployment: Wellness Resources for the Military Community

http://www.afterdeployment.org

Resources especially for veterans and service members related to job performance, making the transition to civilian life, and how to recognize other issues you may be dealing with.

Make the Connection: Shared Experiences and Support for Veterans

http://maketheconnection.net

A website of the US Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans returning home.

Returning Wounded Veteran


Defense Centers of Excellence

http://www.dcoe.health.mil/

DCoE assesses, validates, oversees, and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Department of Defense meets the needs of the nation’s military communities, warriors, and families.

DCoE brings together a variety of interdisciplinary resources and centers of excellence that can help family members identify community and military resources.
to help better understand and cope with psychological health and traumatic brain injury concerns affecting them or the warriors they love at: http://www.dcoe.health.mil/forfamilies.aspx

**Mental Health America**
http://www.mentalhealthanswers.org/page.asp?pageid=0|117|135&cid=0|armed_forces_resources

**National Mental Health Information Center**
http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/ChildrensCampaign/

**Benefits**


A report of a government-wide review of federal and private sector resources that will lay the foundation for a coordinated approach to supporting military families.

**The Armed Forces Legal Assistance**

The Armed Forces Legal Assistance (AFLA) website is a joint initiative of the Armed Forces legal assistance offices that aims to provide general legal information to the military community to enhance its readiness.

**The Military.com**
http://www.military.com/NewContent/1,13190,Spouse,00.html

Spouse and Family Benefits & Resources: Know your benefits as the spouse or family member of a military service member or veteran—keep up with benefits and resources in the Insider’s Spouse and Family Benefits & Resources section, and find useful guides on deployment, careers, relocation, and more.

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs**
http://www.mirecc.va.gov

Additional resources, bibliography, and websites can be found at:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Resources_OIF_Families_090319.pdf

**VA GI Bill**
http://www.gibill.va.gov/

This website is the home for all educational benefits provided by VA with tools and resources to help veterans pursue college degrees, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, or non-college degree programs.
**Public Library Outreach to Military Families**

**Books for Children by Age Group**

**Kindergarten–Grade 2**


**Grades 3–5**


**Young Adult**


