

Deployment Handbook



For Striking 3/9 Families



Deployment Documents

The foundation of a successful deployment may seem to be built on paper! It is important to review, update and organize a number of important documents before deployment. These documents include the following:

Wills

A will is a legal expression or declaration of an individual's wishes upon his or her death. For couples with children it is important to include who you would want to care for your children should something happen to both you and your spouse. To ensure your estate is distributed the way you want, you should have a current will and your loved ones should know its location. Your local Marine Legal Services Office will assist you in making a will at no cost.



Power of Attorney

Powers of Attorney can be very useful when conducting personal business. They can also be very dangerous documents as they allow someone to act in your behalf. You may need different types of Powers of Attorney for different tasks. For example, you may need a special Power of Attorney to file your taxes or for you to buy or sell a big-ticket item such as a vehicle or condo. The document, "General Power of Attorney," can be used in a variety of situations. It is important to know in advance what type of Power of Attorney will be accepted by an institution with which you want to do business. Not all will accept a General Power of Attorney. Your local Marine Legal Services Office can discuss options and draw up a Power of Attorney at no charge.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)

Active duty service members are eligible to be insured under SGLI up to a maximum of \$400,000 in increments of \$50,000. Before deployment, verify who is designated as beneficiary and make changes as necessary. A will does not impact the beneficiary of life insurance. To make changes, Election Form (VA Form SGLV-8286) must be completed. For more information on Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, visit the Department of Veterans Group Life Insurance information page at www.insurance.va.gov/sglisite/default.htm.

Additional Term-Life insurance for families where there are children is strongly recommended. The cost for a policy without a war clause typically runs under thirty dollars a month and provides \$500,000 of coverage.

Emergency Data Form

The Record of Emergency Data Form is more commonly referred to as the “RED” of a Marine’s Service Record. It lists who should be contacted if a service member becomes ill, is injured, killed or missing. For the coming deployment, this form should be updated by the Marine or sailor at the installation personnel administration center (IPAC, or NPAC for Navy).

If a spouse unexpectedly decides to return home once the deployment begins, the Family Readiness Officer should be notified with the new location.

Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS)

DEERS is a worldwide, computerized database of uniformed services members (sponsors), their family members, and others who are eligible for military benefits including TRICARE. DEERS registration is the key to establishing and maintaining TRICARE benefits eligibility. DEERS is DOD’s family-member data base and the primary way to keep track of a Marines’ entitlements. For further information go to <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/deerswebsite/home.do>.

Other Important Documents

If you don’t already have one, it is a good idea to invest in a small, fireproof safe or rent a safety-deposit box to store your family’s important documents. Many of these documents are hard to replace. Even though you don’t need them often, when you do need them, they are critical. Do you know where each of the following documents are located?

- Birth certificates.
- Marriage license.
- Divorce decrees.
- Death certificates.
- Medical records for each family member.
- Dental records for each family member.
- Veterinarian records for each pet.
- Adoption papers.
- Citizenship/naturalization papers.
- Passports/visas.
- Insurance policies (life, health, home, vehicle, flood).
- Real estate documents (lease, deed, first and second mortgages).
- Car title, registration and inspection.
- Most recent leave and earnings statement (LES).
- Social security number of each family member.
- Current address and phone number of immediate family members of both spouses.



Finances

Discussing the family budget, banking, taxes and other important financial decisions may not seem very exciting, especially just prior to a deployment. However, organizing your financial affairs and establishing a spending plan, can ensure that financial issues will be minimized during deployment.

Entitlements

Service members may be entitled to additional financial Incentives during a deployment. Most assignment-related entitlements start at the mobilization processing site. Some of These include:

- Hostile Fire Pay/Imminent Danger Pay.
- Combat Zone Tax Exclusion.
- Savings Deposit Program (SDP). Allows service members deployed to combat zones to earn 10 percent interest on deposits earned in theater up to \$10,000.
- Tax-free pay for enlisted/warrant officers. Officers get tax-free pay-up to allowable limit. Note: Social Security and Medicare are collected.
- Hardship Duty Pay.
- Family Separation Allowance.
- Meal deduction
 - No meal deduction for entire assignment.



Tax-free Savings Incentive

The tax-free savings advantage can be significant during a deployment. The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings plan for civilians who are employed by the United States Government and members of the uniformed services. The (TSP) allows Service members to contribute 100 percent of their pay and bonuses, tax-exempt, up to an IRS limit of \$45,000. This provides a great opportunity to prepare for retirement. For further information, go to <http://www.tsp.gov>.

The Savings Deposit Program (SDP)

The Savings Deposit Program (SDP) is available to those serving in designated combat zones. Military members deployed in combat zones, qualified hazardous duty areas, or certain contingency operations may be eligible to deposit all or part of their un-allotted pay into a DoD savings account up to \$10,000 during a single deployment. Interest accrues at an annual rate of 10% and compounds quarterly. Interest accrued on earnings that are deposited in the SDP is taxable. The account will stop accruing interest 90 days after a member returns from the combat zone. To learn more about SDP, visit the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) at www.dfas.mil.

Spending Plan

Setting up a spending plan is one of the smartest things you can do prior to a deployment or any time. A spending plan allows you to see where your money is going and to make adjustments as needed to meet your financial goals. If you have a spouse or partner, it is a good idea to do a plan together so you both understand and agree to how finances will be handled during the deployment.

A spending plan, or budget, can be as simple as documenting income and expenses, or much more elaborate. When setting up or updating your spending plan prior to deployment, look at possible changes to income:

- Will there be any additional income for family separation allowance, combat duty pay, etc.?
- Is there a chance for a promotion during deployment?
- Will a reenlistment bonus be received during deployment?
- Will you lose income due to loss of a second job or your spouse not working, or gain income because your spouse moves in with family during deployment?
- Will some pay be tax exempt?

Before deployment ensure:

- Pay distribution is set up appropriately. Are direct deposits, any allotments or automatic check drafts established?
- How ongoing bills will be paid, and by whom.
- If in a relationship and using a joint checking account, you have discussed how you will manage the account.
- That you have overdraft protection for your checking accounts — just in case.
- You are prepared for recurring, but not monthly expenses, such as tuition payments, car and home insurance.
- The expectations for using credit during deployment are determined.

Financial challenges

- Do you have money saved in case of financial emergency? A pre-authorization form with Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society can be signed before deployment if savings are minimal.
- Who are authorized users of the Defense Finance and Accounting System My Pay account?

Taxes

- Will you be deployed during tax season? If you file jointly you'll need to get a Special Power of Attorney for filing taxes or depositing a refund.
- Do you need an extension of the filing deadline?
- Do you need to file state income tax returns?
Contact the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov for more information.



Financial goals

Many find deployments provide a good opportunity to save money. What are your financial goals? Are you saving for emergencies, a new car, a house, a vacation? Are you enrolled in the Thrift Savings Plan? If you have credit card balances, are you working to pay them off?

Contact your local Command Financial Specialist, Fleet and Family Support Center, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, credit union or Military OneSource if you would like to develop a spending plan to help achieve your financial goals.

Service Members' Civil Relief Act

The Service Members' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) is a law that protects service members on active duty. Major provisions include:

■ **Termination of residential leases.** Allows individuals to break a lease when they go on active duty if the lease was entered into before going on active duty. Additionally, the act allows a service member to terminate a residential lease entered into while in the military if the member receives permanent change of station orders to deploy for a period of not less than 90 days.

■ **Automobile leases.** If a member enters into an automobile lease before going on active duty, the member may request termination of the lease when going on active duty. However, for this to apply, the member must be on active duty for at least 180 continuous days. Military members making a permanent change of station (PCS) move, or who deploy for 180 days or longer, may terminate such leases.

■ **Evictions from leased housing.** Service members may seek protection from eviction under SCRA. The rented/leased property must be occupied by the service member or his/her dependents and the rent cannot exceed a certain amount that is adjusted each year. The service member or dependent who has received notice of an eviction must submit a request to the court for protection under the SCRA. If the court finds that the service member's military duties have materially affected his ability to pay his rent, the judge may order a stay or postponement of the eviction proceeding for up to three months or make any other "just" order.

■ **Installment contracts.** The SCRA gives certain protections against repossessions for installment contracts. If the contract was entered into before going on active duty and at least one payment was made before that time, the creditor cannot repossess



the property while the member is on active duty; nor can they terminate the contract for breach without a court order.

■ **Six percent interest rate.** If a service member's military obligation has affected his/her ability to pay on financial obligations such as credit cards, loans, mortgages, etc., the service member can have the interest rate capped at 6 percent for the duration of the service member's military obligation. Qualifying debts are debts that were incurred by the service member, or jointly by the service member and their spouse, before coming on active duty. Debts entered into after going on active duty are not protected.

■ **Court proceedings.** If a service member is a defendant in a civil court proceeding, the court may grant a 90-day delay in the proceedings. The provision applies to civil lawsuits, suits for paternity, child-custody suits, bankruptcy debtor/creditor meetings, and administrative proceedings.

■ **Enforcement of obligations, liabilities, and taxes.** A service member or dependent may, at any time during military service, or within six months thereafter, apply to a court for relief of any obligation or liability incurred by the service member or dependent prior to active duty, or in respect to any tax or assessment whether falling during or prior to the service member's active military service. The court may grant stays of enforcement during which time no fine or penalty can accrue.

Additionally, the SCRA prevents service members from a form of double taxation that can occur when they have a spouse who works and is taxed in a state other than the state in which they maintain their permanent legal residence. The law prevents states from using the income earned by a service member in determining the spouse's tax rate when they do not maintain their permanent legal residence in that state.



Communication

Communication can be challenging during a deployment because your Marine may not be near a telephone or a computer. And at times, mail service can take weeks. Don't let this deter you. Any Marine will tell you there is not a better day-brightener than hearing from loved ones back home.

No news is often good news. It means your Marine is hard at work. Know that if your loved one is ever seriously injured or missing from duty, a uniformed Navy/Marine representative with ID will contact you in person to inform you. Beware of scams claiming your Marine is injured and asking you for personal information over the phone or by e-mail.

OPSEC

Operation Security, or OPSEC, keeps potential adversaries from discovering sensitive information about the Department of Defense. As the name suggests, it protects US operations that are planned, those in progress and those completed. Success depends on secrecy and surprise, so the military can accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies want this information and they see Marines and their families as potential information sources. Types of sensitive information include:

- Unit mission or the number of personnel assigned.
- Locations and times of deployments.
- Unit morale or personnel problems.
- Security procedures.
- Troop movement.
- Military intentions, capabilities or operations.

Respect OPSEC. Don't:

- Talk about sensitive information in public settings such as the club, commissary, Navy Exchange or in the community
- Talk about sensitive information over the telephone.
- Post pictures or info about troop movements on Web sites.
- Include sensitive information in e-mails or attachments.
- Write about sensitive information in newsletters or blogs.
- Neglect to shred papers with information on operations.
- Try to talk around classified information. It is extremely difficult to outsmart experienced intelligence analysts.

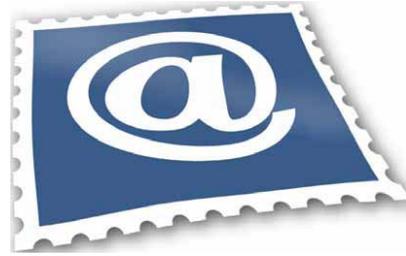


E-mail

Quick and easy, e-mail is great for staying in touch.

Discuss e-mail expectations prior to deploying:

- Will e-mail be readily available?
- If so, how often will you send e-mails?
- What address will you use?
- What is the availability of instant messaging?
- What affect will the time differences have on e-mail response?



E-mail is not an ideal form of communication when you're angry or upset. If you really have a need to get your feelings off your chest, go ahead and write the e-mail, but save it for 24 hours and reread before you send. It's usually best to communicate strong feelings over the phone when you can't do it in person. Also, remember that e-mails are not confidential and may be seen by others. Be careful what you write.

Letters

Letters, while taking longer to receive, are a more personal way to communicate. Many couples save their "love letters" from a deployment. Not many save e-mails. It's a good idea to number letters as they don't always arrive in the order they are written.

Exchange your mailing address with everyone you would like to communicate with during deployment. Create a "mail kit" with cards, interesting stationary, pens, stickers, stamps, etc. to make letter writing easy and enjoyable.

Letters don't have to be long. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. Write letters about your daily existence, your plans for the future, and your thoughts and feelings to help maintain your emotional connection and make it easier to reunite at homecoming.

Care Packages

Who doesn't like to receive a present in the mail? Care packages are presents from home, but that doesn't mean a deployed Marine cannot send a package to loved ones back home! While most items marines need are provided to them, items that make their life more comfortable are not. Moms, grandmothers, church groups and friends often enjoy sending care packages to service members as they welcome the opportunity to show support.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) offers free packing materials to families of military members deployed overseas. Call (800) 610-8734 Press "1" (for English) Press "1" Again (for priority supplies). They do not provide free postage.

A flat-rate box with a military discount for those mailing to APO and FPO addresses is also available. According to the USPS, regardless of how much they weigh, the boxes cost \$12.95 to mail for the general public, and \$10.75 if mailed to an APO or FPO address. The boxes themselves are free. More information is available at www.usps.com/supportingourtroops.

Care Packages

Out of creative ideas for care packages? Try me of these “theme” pack ideas:

Call home (or at least write) Pack

- Note paper and colorful pens
- Phone cards
- Address labels
- Address book
- Pre-addressed special occasion cards
- Love letters from your courting days

Beach Party Pack

- Flip-flops
- Sunglasses
- “Blow-Up” beach toys
- Sunscreen
- Bathing suit
- Beach towel



Night-At-The-Movies Pack

- DVDs
- Popcorn
- Movie candy
- Nachos supplies
- Homemade poster

Second Childhood Pack

- Yoyo
- Old Maid cards/Go Fish cards
- Silly Putty
- Silly String
- Marbles
- Balloons
- “Kid Meal” toys



“Whine” & Cheese Pack

- Tape of your/kids whining
- Assortment of cheeses
- Assortment of sausages
- Assortment of crackers



Good Sport Pack

- Sports magazines
- Popcorn and peanuts
- Pennants
- Favorite team T-shirt or cap
- Video of your children’s games
- Autograph from a favorite star

Our Morning Coffee Pack

- Favorite coffee blend
- All the goodies to add... creamer, sugar, flavors, etc.
- A great mug
- “Tasty Cake” coffee cakes
- Biscotti
- A picture of you in PJs
- A picture of kids at breakfast table

Coming Home Pack

- Picture of your new outfit
- Your favorite perfume or cologne
- A map of how to get home from the airport
- A banner
- A picture of the welcome home decorations
- A menu

Telephone Calls

Telephone calls can bring the greatest emotional highs as well as lows. It's wonderful to hear your loved one's voice and talk in the "here-and-now", but sadness can briefly overwhelm you when you hang up and realize how much you will miss your loved one. Make the most of your telephone conversations:

- Keep a written list of things you want to talk about.
- Try to stay positive and upbeat. At least try to end each call on a positive note.
- Talk about your daily activities to make it easier to reconnect at homecoming.
- Suggest to older children that they keep a list of things to tell their parent when they call.
- If you share bad news, make sure someone is available to provide emotional support to your loved one.
- Talk about plans for homecoming and future activities.
- Discuss problems and solutions, but don't spend the entire call talking about them.
- Keep in mind that it may be difficult to have a completely private phone call.
- Tell your loved one you love them and appreciate their sacrifices.



Pictures and Video Recordings

While letters and e-mails are nice, there is nothing better than seeing your loved ones. If your loved one has access to a DVD player, make recordings of daily life and ask them to do the same for you. Realize that privacy is at a premium so be discreet when sending videos and pictures.

Send pictures of yourself, family members, colleagues, your work environment, any new items you purchase or the new furniture arrangement. If you have children or are an expectant parent, pictures are even more important as children grow and change quickly. Also, have the kids sing a song or do a funny skit. It's not so much what you say, but the fact that you cared enough to put effort into brightening your loved one's day that will be remembered.



Before deployment, record your Marine reading books to the kids. The Chaplain has a video camera to record United Through Reading videos during the deployment. However, recording them before he leaves gives the kids a connection with Dad from day one.

Emotional Ups and Downs of Deployment

Marines have been deploying and their loved ones have awaited their return over the centuries, but that doesn't mean deployments are easy. It's not just daily life that you must handle on your own, but the roller coaster of emotions. Much research has been done to understand the common feelings Marines and their families experience when separated from each other due to a military assignment. You may experience similar feelings or your reactions may be very different. There is no such thing as a "right" or "wrong" feeling. If you find your feelings are hindering your daily activities, don't hesitate to contact one of the resource options for assistance. Typical reactions include the following:

Anticipation of Loss

Anticipating loss occurs before deployment. It's a time of tension and confusing emotions. You may be angry and resentful of the hours required to get ready for departure. You may or may not talk about your fears and concerns. Service members feel guilty that they are leaving their families. Family members may feel abandoned. Arguments and bickering are common. Although irritating, it can be a way for you to distance yourself emotionally in preparation for the separation.

Detachment and Withdrawal

The day or two before deployment can be difficult. You stop sharing thoughts and feelings with others. This is a natural response as separation is imminent. Although physically together, you are separating emotionally. This can be especially difficult if it is seen as rejection rather than as a reaction to trying circumstances. Often non-deploying spouses think, "If you have to go, go." And Marines think, "Let's get on with it!"

Emotional Disorganization

Once the deployment begins, you may feel an initial sense of relief followed by guilt. You may feel disorganized, depressed, or restless. Old routines have been disrupted and new ones not yet established. Give yourself a few weeks, and you'll begin to feel more in control.

Recovery

At some point during the deployment, new routines are established. You feel more comfortable with the reorganization of roles and responsibilities. New sources of support and a new sense of independence and freedom are developed.

Ten Tips for Deployment Success

Focusing on the mission, your relationships, and yourself can be a real challenge. Successful Marines and their families:

- 1. Communicate** —You may have unrealistic expectations about how much your Marine will be able to talk with you during the deployment. Talk about all options of communicating with each other—from Skype to classic snail mail.
- 2. Ask for help** — There are numerous free resources available to military families for counseling and other support. Do not hesitate to seek out counselors and neighbors when you are having trouble.
- 3. Prepare** — Successful Marine families prepare for deployments. Do not let car registrations expire, update REDs, SGLI, wills and Powers of Attorney. Know how to pay the bills, cut the grass and turn off the water.
- 4. Personal Growth**—Go on a Personal Growth Retreat through CREDO or purchase a resource at the local bookstore that emphasizes establishing a personal vision for your life. What do you hope your life will look like five years from now? Ten years?
- 5. Beware of the news** and online casualty reports. It can be helpful to learn what is going on in the world. However, if it creates stress for you, turn it off.
- 6. Set goals** —What will you accomplish during deployment? – increase proficiency in your job, take a class, read more, or get in to shape.
- 7. Have fun** — Don't put life "on hold" during a deployment. Make time for "good clean fun" and do things you enjoy. Celebrate personal successes as well as successes of friends and family.
- 8. Get involved** — Connect with other wives through the 3/9 Small Groups program. Get involved in a local church. Invite family members to come stay a week or two. Stay busy. Focus on helping others as a way to deal with deployment loneliness.
- 9. Establish a schedule and stick with it**—Stay disciplined. A clean house and strong exercise program will lift your spirits!
- 10. Guard your marriage**—You may feel emotionally needy at times during the deployment. Old boyfriends may seek you out on social networks. Remember, the deployment will come to an end. You will want to be able to welcome your husband home with no regrets.



Children and Deployment

Tell your children about the upcoming deployment. Don't assume they are aware and understand that a parent is deploying. Reassure them that they will be cared for while mom or dad is away. Encourage them to ask any questions they might have. Allow children to miss their parent and to feel sad about their absence. Encourage communication with your children and allow them to express any feelings they may have. Children are often confused, angry, worried and insecure. It is important to maintain your child's daily routine and be consistent in discipline. Most Marine kids are resilient and will bounce back. If your child is struggling, don't hesitate to contact your child's school counselor, the school liaison officer, the Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain or Military OneSource for assistance. The following chart provides some tips on what to expect from your child:

Age:

What to Expect:

Ways to help:

Infants & Toddlers



-They may seem fussier, clingy, may eat less and have trouble sleeping.

Have your spouse/child's caregiver:

- Record video/audio taped stories.
- Post pictures of deployed parent.
- Provide extra hugs and cuddles.
- Maintain routine.
- Take care of themselves to be better able to care for children.

Preschoolers

-May feel *their* behavior caused their parent to leave.
-May become more fearful or irritable.
-May regress in potty training, thumb sucking, etc.
-May have trouble sleeping.

Have your spouse/child's caregiver:

- Record video/audio taped stories.
- Create a waterproof photo album or picture book of deployed parent and child doing things together.
- Provide extra hugs and cuddles.
- Maintain routine.
- Move your child back to their bed a few weeks before your expected return. Don't get too concerned if your child wants to sleep in mom and dad's bed while you're gone. It often provides a sense of security.

School-aged

-May see a decline in school performance.
-More irritable or moody.
-May worry about deployed parents' safety.



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- Have a family discussion before deployment.
 - Involve teachers, church, neighbors. Enroll in Big Brother/Sister Program.
 - Communicate regularly.
 - Reassure them about safety training/drills/equipment.
 - Play games via e-mail and regular mail.

Have your spouse/child's caregiver:

- Schedule fun activities.
- Help child compile care packages to send to deployed parent.
- Limit viewing of TV news about the war.
- Assist your child in sending care packages, letters and cards to their parent and others serving.

Teens

-May be ambivalent.
-May be moody/withdrawn
-May test rules.

Have your spouse/child's caregiver:

- Post pictures of deployed parent.
- Maintain routine.
- Take care of themselves to be better able to care for children.
- Communicate regularly.
- Don't expect teen to take on your household responsibilities.
- Ask spouse/caretaker to maintain rules, curfews and discipline

Deployment Activities for kids

Paper Chain

- This chain is made with strips of construction paper glued into cylinder shapes and linked together.
- Children tear off a “link” for each day (or one for each week) until Homecoming Day when the last “link” is left. This assists children in marking the passing of time.
- The paper chain can also be used as a journal. As each “link” is removed, the children can write something that happened that day (or week) to be mailed to the deployed parent or shared upon their return.
- Or, each day/week, a link can be added to build a chain, including an activity done during that day/week, written on the link. When the Marine returns, they can read what was accomplished during the deployment.



Command Ball Cap, T-shirt, Jacket, etc.

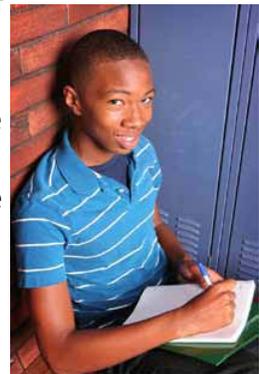
- These items can be given to children to wear while separated from the deployed parent.
- School-aged children wear them as a sign of pride in the deployed parent and as a way to feel closer to that parent.

Deployment “Grab-Bag”

- Fill any type of bag with scraps of paper that have activities written on them, such as go to the zoo, whisper all day, read a book, take a walk, etc.
- Draw an item from the bag and do the activity with your child.
- Send a picture of you and your child doing the activity to the deployed parent.

Deployment Journal

- This can be any type of notebook, scrapbook, diary, etc., used by the child or parent to write letters, thoughts, or to share feelings with one another.
- Adding memorabilia such as a baseball game ticket, ballet program, postcard, etc., along with journaling thoughts or feelings at the time, can make the event come alive. Remembering these events and special occasions help make the deployed parent feel more involved.
- This is especially useful if mail is going to be very slow or if there will be no mail (such as some submarine deployments).



Calendar Pages

- This can be a purchased calendar, one created on a computer, or hand-drawn pages.
- Mark off the passing days of a deployment.
- Use the calendar as a journal to write in daily activities.
- Each page can be mailed or reviewed at the end of the deployment.

Post Card Mobile

- The deployed parent will send the child post cards to be colored.
- These can be cut out of a coloring book or drawn by a parent.
- They can show a holiday theme or anything of special significance to the parent and child.
- When the child receives the picture, he/she colors it, gets help enclosing it in clear plastic (contact paper works great!), and punches a small hole in it.
- Thread a ribbon or string through the hole and attach it to pipe cleaners or popsicle sticks to make into the shape of a mobile to be hung in the child's room or somewhere the child will see it frequently.
- If the mail will be unreliable, the pictures can all be completed by the deploying parent and left with the parent/caregiver at home with the instructions of when to give each picture.

Decorated Pillowcase

- A pair of old pillowcases can be used for the project. The deploying parent will decorate one for each child and the child/children will decorate one for the deploying parent.
- The spouse can decorate the reverse side.
- Be sure to use Permanent markers so the pillowcase can be washed.



Map

- This is used by the child during the Deployment to “follow” their parent throughout the world.
- Give the child markers and stickers to keep track of the unit.

Star Connection

- Parents and children can work together to decorate a construction paper star for each of them before the deployment.
- Spend time together looking at the stars in the night sky and talking about being able to look at the same stars while they are separated.
- They can then hang their decorated star somewhere they will see it often to remind themselves of one another.

Flower Petals

- This helps children track time during a deployment.
- Parent spends time with their child decorating a popsicle stick to look like a flower stem.
- Cut out “petals” from construction paper, which the parent takes with them on deployment.
- The parent writes a small message on a petal and sends it to the child.
- As the child receives the petals, they glue them to the stem. When the flower is completed, it is time for homecoming.



These are just a sample of the many activities and ideas that are available to help make deployments and separation easier for children. Contact your local Fleet and Family Services Center for additional ideas.

Emergency Preparedness

While dealing with an emergency is challenging when you are with family, it is even more of a challenge when you're alone.

Disaster Preparedness

It may seem like an oxymoron, but being prepared for possible emergencies can provide some peace of mind.

- Make sure you have insurance for your property. If you rent or live in military housing get renters' insurance.
- Have a designated person to contact out of state so that you and loved ones can each call that person and "check-in". This is especially important if communication is limited and you are physically separated.
- Have an emergency plan that includes evacuation routes and supplies.

When preparing for a possible emergency situation, it's best to think first about the basics of survival:

- Fresh water.
- Food.
- Clean air.
- Warmth.

Put together the following items and store in an easily accessible location:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days.
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food).
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Family documents such as insurance policies and bank account records in a water proof container.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Prescription medications and glasses.
- Infant formula and diapers.
- Pet food.
- Cash.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.
- Change of clothing.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.
- Paper products – cups, plates and plastic utensils.

When the Unthinkable Happens . . .

Service Member Casualties

If a service member is killed, primary next of kin will be notified by a uniformed service member and typically, a chaplain. Notifications are made in person. Primary next of kin are those individuals identified by the service member on Emergency Data Form or “RED” of a service member’s personnel record. That is why it is so important to ensure the information on the “RED” is always current. If a family member is going out of the area for an extended time period during the deployment (such as at Christmas) it is a good idea to alert the command Family Readiness Officer and provide temporary contact information. The family of the deceased are assigned a Casualty Assistance Care Officer (CACO) who will assist the family through beyond the funeral. The first day, the CACO will notify the family of the bad news. The following day, he will provide the next of kin assistance, including counseling concerning benefits and entitlements, help with completion of claim forms for monetary benefits or privileges and resolve any problems or concerns the NOK may have with respect to funerals. He will also make flight arrangements for the NOK to meet the remains of the Marine at Dover Air Force Base. The CACO will continue to provide assistance to the next of kin throughout the entire process.



The 3/9 Family

In addition to the CACO, 3/9 next of kin can expect to be emotionally supported by others spouses in the Battalion. The Command Family Readiness Team has developed a response plan that includes childcare support, meals support, and a lot of compassionate listeners. They will help as much or as little as requested.

Hints for Happy Homecoming

Reuniting after a long deployment is fun, exciting, and one of the best things about Navy life. Enjoy homecoming and be prepared to renegotiate your relationship as you reconnect.

Cooperation

Each of you has been making daily decisions for yourself. Now you'll have to relearn cooperation. What television show are you going to watch? What do you want for dinner? What time are you going to get up in the morning?



Responsibilities

Homecoming provides a great opportunity to re-evaluate and reassign family chores. Who manages the money, mows the grass, does laundry and walks the dog are the types of daily chores that must be done. Discover which family member enjoys doing a particular chore and fairly divvy up the unpleasant jobs.

Friendships

You both may have made some very good friends during the deployment. You may miss the camaraderie and daily connection.

New Stresses

Physical, social and psychological consequences of combat deployment may present challenges. The birth of a child, a serious illness in the family, a possible surge deployment, PCS move or other significant change can be stressful. If you need assistance in dealing with stress, contact your local Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain, Military OneSource or a psychologist or psychiatrist through your local medical department.



Communication

Learning to cooperate can be challenging because your communication skills may be rusty. Service members may have to soften their communication style as they are used to giving and receiving orders without much discussion.



You're not used to reading your partners non-verbal skills. "What did he mean by that sigh?" "Did she roll her eyes when I said that?" Watch for those nonverbal signals and calmly ask if you're not sure what is being "said."

Those at home may have to help their service member "catch up" with missed experiences. Marines may have to "clean up" their language and social skills. You may have to adjust to different access to privacy than was experienced during deployment.

Tips from Experienced Couples

- Be careful not to get caught in the "Who Had It Worse" game.
- Plan time together as a couple.
- Share your feelings. It's natural to have mixed emotions at this time; excitement and happiness together with nervousness and insecurity.
- Be realistic. The perfect reunion fantasy is just that — a fantasy.
- Expect to be more tired than you think. With the excitement and preparations, fatigue is a common homecoming reaction for everyone.
- Intimacy involves emotional as well as physical closeness. Talk about each other's expectations for reconnecting physically.
- Communicating openly and honestly with your partner about your feelings, expectations, needs and worries is a sure way to make this homecoming the best it can be!
- If homecoming day is also a duty day, plan to make the best of it. Have dinner together!



Children and Homecoming

Reunion is a time of excitement, joy and re-adjustment. Younger children take their cues about homecoming from you, their caretaker. Older children may have similar feelings as you do. They will be excited and happy but may feel anxious if they believe they did not live up to their deployed parent's expectations.

Often the parent who has been at home is reluctant to share the responsibility of parenting. It is important for children to see both parents in the caretaking role. It also allows the returning parent to experience the innocence, intimacy and joy that caring for their children can provide.

Just as parents need time to reestablish relationships, so do children. It's best for the returning parent to initially not make drastic changes to their children's routine, rules and responsibilities. For the first few days after their deployed parent's return, children will likely go to the parent who has remained at home with them for the first few days upon their deployed parent's return for permission, questions and assistance.

If possible, plan a few days for a family vacation at home. Do fun activities as a family. Limit house cleaning and chores to the essentials. Talk, play, listen and enjoy being a family again.

Duty nights can be challenging after an extended deployment as young children may worry that their parent has left again. Older children are usually delighted that their family is reunited, even though they may, at times, resent the discipline enforced by having two parents at home.



Helpful Organizations

Get to know the following organizations that provide helpful services and programs to military families.



American
Red Cross

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org

Primary service is emergency communications and verifications to enable commanding officers to make informed decisions about granting emergency leave. Additionally, it provides emergency financial assistance for families who are not near a Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society office. Onslow County Chapter:

12 Ruth Street
Jacksonville, NC 28540
910-347-3581
1-800-REDCROSS (1-800-733-2767)



Armed Services YMCA

www.asymca.org

The Armed Services YMCA offers programs for spouses of junior-enlisted. Programs vary by location, but typically include:

Camp Lejeune Armed Services YMCA:
TT2469 Iwo Jima Boulevard
Tarawa Terrace, NC 28543
910-450-0497



Chaplains

<http://www.chaplaincare.navy.mil/index.htm>

Chaplains play a vital role in helping their fellow service personnel and family members during crucial moments in their lives. They are available 24/7 to provide spiritual guidance and help “sort through” a variety of issues or concerns.

The Camp Lejeune Credo office leads Personal Growth Retreats. **Phone: 910-450-1668**



Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS)

www.dod.mil/dfas

DFAS ensures that service members are paid. MyPay is a useful feature of the DFAS website, allowing service members (and their families if they have a pin number) to get information about their pay accounts, start and stop allotments, sign up for the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), change their withholding and much more.



Marine Corps Community Services www.mccslejeune.com

This is the GRANDDADDY of websites that lists what is going on at Camp Lejeune. From Counseling resources to movies to youth programs, it is all here.

Programs include:

- Marine Corps Family Team Building Program.
- New Parent Support Program.
- Children, Youth, and Teen Programs.
- Unit, Personnel, and Family Readiness Program (UPFRP).
- Movies. Check for listings base movie theater.
- Information Tickets & Tours (ITT).
- Life Long Learning Program.
- Voluntary Education.
- Library Services.
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO).



Military OneSource

www.militaryonesource.com 1(800) 342-9647

Military OneSource is a 24/7, real-time information and referral service, funded by the Department of Defense. All services are provided at no cost and are available to Active Duty, Guard and Reserve personnel and their immediate family members, regardless of activation status. MOS is a "virtual extension of existing installation service." Besides helping with referrals, MOS also maintains a library of over 3,000 educational materials such as CDs, DVDs, and booklets on a wide range of topics. They also offer interpretation and translation services in more than 140 languages. Through MOS, you can access up to six in-person or telephone non-medical counseling sessions per issue with a licensed counselor. They also offer financial counseling at no charge.



Navy-Marine Legal Services

www.jag.navy.mil

Free attorney assistance is available at local Navy Legal Service Offices (NLSO) for service

members and family members with military ID cards. Services available may include adoption advice, domestic relations, immigration and naturalization, Service Members Civil Relief Act, Powers of Attorney, Wills and notary service. Navy Legal Services is also the clearinghouse for personal property claims for damages that result from a PCS move.



Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS)

www.nmcrs.org

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) is a volunteer based not for profit private 501(c) (3) organization sponsored by the Department of the Navy. The Society provides interest-free loans or grants to help with emergency needs such as:

- Food, rent, mortgage and utilities.
- Essential vehicle repairs.
- Emergency transportation.
- Funeral expenses.
- Patients share of medical/dental bills.
- Disaster relief assistance.
- Child care expenses.
- Pay problems or delays.
- Unforeseen family emergencies.

Financial assistance is provided on a need basis. All loans are interest free and normally repaid by allotment. In some instances, if repayment would cause a hardship, assistance may be provided as a grant. However, **loans are only made to the service member**. During deployments, in the absence of the service member, an eligible family member may seek assistance with a **valid power of attorney**.



Operation Military Child Care

www.childcareaware.org

Operation Military Child Care is a Department of Defense initiative to support child care needs of military parents who are activated or deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Active duty families who are unable to access care on military installations are eligible during the deployment period and for 60 days after the return of the military parent.

This initiative helps eligible military families locate and subsidize affordable child care in local communities. Military families who are using licensed/legally operating community-based child care programs and providers pay reduced fees.

Child care costs often increase when your Marine is deployed. This subsidy program can be used by spouses who are employed or looking for work, going to school or have special medical needs. For more information contact the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies at 800-424-2246 or visit their web site www.naccrra.org.



Operation Military Kids

www.operationmilitarykids.org

Operation: Military Kids is a collaborative effort with America's communities to support children and youth of National Guard, Reserve and active duty families. State 4-H Military Liaisons in 34 states in partnership with the National Guard, Reserve, the Military Child Education Coalition, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, The American Legion, schools and other community organizations are supporting youth before, during, and after the deployment of a parent or loved one.

Some of the programs include:

- Workshops for community professionals who work with youth to offer an insight into military culture, the deployment cycle and suggest ways to understand the needs of and provide support to military kids and their families through community resources.
- Hero Packs are backpacks filled by non-military youth with mementos and items designed to help connect kids with their deployed parent.
- Speak Out for Military Kids is a youth-led, adult supported project that generates community awareness about issues faced by youth of military families. Through simulations, interviews, and research, participants begin to understand what military families go through during deployment. As the youth form speakers bureaus they develop presentations, public service announcements, videos, and other materials and actively seek opportunities to share their experiences with others in the community (e.g. school assemblies, youth club meetings, city council meetings, fairs, and teacher in-service programs).
- Mobile Technology Labs are used to facilitate connections between deployed service members and the children left behind.



Operation Purple Camp

www.operationpurple.org

Operation Purple Camp Program was created in 2004 to help military children struggling with having a parent deployed. Any military child can apply. If all spaces are not filled with campers who meet the deployment criteria, the remaining camp slots are filled with any military child from any service branch, the National Guard, Reserve, PHS and NOAA. "Deployment" is defined loosely as it is recognized that TDY and travel can often take service members away from family for significant periods of time.

Registration for the free summer camps begins in April for all Operation Purple camp locations. Details on how to register and the necessary forms to apply for camp are available at www.operationpurple.org. Click on the applicable state for camp registration, application, and contact information. In 2008, 100 weeks of camp in 62 locations, in 37 states and territories were available.



TRICARE

www.tricare.osd.mil

TRICARE is the health care program for Marines and their families. Reservists and National Guardsmen are also eligible for TRICARE coverage when they are on active duty, pre and post mobilization.

The four most common TRICARE programs are:

- TRICARE Prime.
- TRICARE Extra.
- TRICARE Standard (formerly called CHAMPUS).
- TRICARE Reserve Select.

TRICARE provides a dental benefit, a pharmacy program and TRICARE for Life for most Medicare-eligible uniformed service retirees. There is also a Program for Persons with Disabilities (PFPWD) that can help with some of the costs associated with specialized medical equipment and services. In addition, mental health services are available.

Each TRICARE program has its own eligibility and enrollment requirements. Individuals must be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to be eligible for any TRICARE benefits. Enrollment for TRICARE coverage is subject to location, eligibility category, and the specific program requirements. Costs and enrollment fees also differ by program.

Health benefits advisors are available at local TRICARE Service Centers (TSC) or military treatment facilities (MTF) to help with questions regarding health care services or go to the above web site.



United Service Organization

www.uso.org

Until Every One Comes Home.™

The USO's mission is to support service members and their families. There are 130 centers worldwide whose programs and services include:

- Emergency Assistance — USO centers offer housing and financial information, along with support for military members and their families, especially during emergencies. Programs set up by USO centers help provide military families with resources and assistance.
- Support Groups — With troops deployed all over the world, USO centers have established local support groups where family members of deployed service members can gather to provide support and encouragement for one another.
- New Spouse Orientation -Moving to a new area is often a difficult transition. Many USO centers offer orientation programs, which help acclimate new residents to the culture and community.

Other Helpful Resources

The following websites are very helpful. Take a few minutes and surf through them so that you are able to be better informed of all that is available to you!

Various

www.militaryfamily.org

www.military.com

www.nmfa.org

www.militaryspouse.com

www.themilitarycoalition.org

www.operationhomefront.net

Pet Foster Care

www.netpets.org

Lodging

www.afvclub.com

www.armymwr.com

www.dodlodging.net

www.uscg.mil/mwr/lodging/lodging.asp

www.usms-mccs.org

Money

www.militarymoney.com

Infidelity Support

www.dailystrength.org

Children

www.militarychild.org

www.sesameworkshop.org

www.zerotothree.org

www.operationgiveahug.org

Spouse

wwwmilspouse.org

www.msccn.org

www.militaryspousejobsearch.org

www.armywifetwork.com

A Deployment Readiness Assessment

Do a quick self-assessment to determine your deployment readiness:

Do you have your Marine's phone number, mailing and e-mail addresses? YES NO

Do you have copies of your Marine's orders? YES NO

Is your contact information current in DEERS, NFAAS, at your Marine's Command and with the command FRO? YES NO

Do you have a will and a power of attorney? YES NO

Have you attended a pre-deployment readiness brief? YES NO

Do you have access to myPay, bank accounts, allotments and safe deposit boxes? YES NO

Will your ID card, base decal and car registration be current throughout the deployment? YES NO

Did your Marine update his/her Emergency Data Form (RED)? YES NO

Did your Marine update beneficiary information on their Service Member's Group Life Insurance policy? YES NO

Do you need additional term-life insurance (one without a war clause)? YES NO

If for any reason need immediate childcare help, can you name three local people able to provide care for them until you are able to return or until family support can arrive.

YES NO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Do you know how to do your husband's chores—or can you hire someone? YES NO