

# Videos available for children whose parents deploy

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*U.S. Army MEDCON Public Affairs*

"It's important to recognize your fear, but not to dwell on it."

The speaker is Cameron Lucke, 17-year-old son of an Army officer, who is addressing concerns of other teenagers as narrator of a video, one of three now available to help families and communities deal with the stresses of military deployments.

"Military Youth Coping With Separation: When Family Members Deploy" is a half-hour video of teenagers discussing their feelings and how they cope with issues that arise when a parent is deployed. This is available for viewing at the Army's behavioral health Web site in the children section, [www.behavioralhealth.army.mil/](http://www.behavioralhealth.army.mil/) and on the Web site of the American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org/sections/unifserv/deployment/ysp-resources.htm](http://www.aap.org/sections/unifserv/deployment/ysp-resources.htm).

"Mr. Poe and Friends Discuss Family Reunion after Deployment" uses cartoon characters to address deployment issues affecting children ages 6 to 11. Both of the videos will also be available for viewing or download by the end of June.

"Talk, Listen and Connect: Helping Families Cope with Military Deployment" features the Sesame Street character Elmo dealing with the prolonged absence of his father. It is suitable for ages 3 to 5, and is available from Sesame Street Workshop at [www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc).

The videos will be available on DVDs for anyone who cannot download large files from the Web. Watch the Web sites for information on how to get them.

"Our goal is to have a proactive, preventive package in the community before deployment," said Col. George Patrín, a pediatrician and new commander of the Presidio of Monterey,

Calif., Army Health Clinic, who helped develop two of the videos and undertook related research for his thesis in the Army-Baylor Graduate Program in Health and Business Administration.

At present, at least 700,000 children in the U.S. have at least one parent deployed, according to the American Psychological Association February 2007 report.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that children's reactions to a parent being deployed may include anger, sadness, fear, confusion, and feelings of abandonment, loss, anxiety, and depression. These reactions can lead to significant problems such as school absenteeism and failure, social isolation, family emotional abuse and violence, psychosomatic medical complaints and depression.

Patrín said the program will be most effective if an adult facilitator guides a discussion among the children during or after viewing the video.

"People often assume the only way they can get help is through the hospital," Patrín said. "That's simply not true. If we collaborate as a community, the community becomes the first level of intervention, rather than waiting for a situation to blow up and require social services or the emergency room. With an effective intervention tool like the video toolkit, the amount of child abuse should go down. People will be able to deal with their issues before they begin striking out."

"Ultimately, this is a way the entire United States community can be a part of the war effort. If you tune in you will get a better idea of what military families are going through," he said.

The character of Mr. Poe originated in 2003, when commanders of troops returning from Southwest Asia asked Gregg Drew, a Reserve chaplain in Hanau, Germany, to develop a program

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