



Deployment

Military life is filled with unique circumstances that our civilian counterparts may never experience. The strains of deployment can be long in duration, such as with an extended deployment, or frequent deployments. Most will cope well with deployment and develop new skills to apply to future challenges, some may experience distress and may need assistance to maintain health, build resilience, and preserve readiness.

PRE-DEPLOYMENT

Although most individuals will adapt well as they prepare for deployment, they may experience a wide range of symptoms of distress. Increased tension in family members is also common as deployment approaches. Deploying families may find that they begin to emotionally disengage as their energy and thoughts become increasingly focused on the challenges of deployment.

DEPLOYMENT AND OPERATIONAL STRESSORS

Deployment can be a very difficult time for deployed members as well as the spouses (or significant others), children, friends, and coworkers who remain behind. It is perfectly normal for those involved to feel some anxiety and distress about deployment. It is important to recognize that despite the potential stress of deployment, it can be a highly rewarding and beneficial experience for those involved.

POST-DEPLOYMENT REINTEGRATION

Reintegration and reunion with family, friends and work can be a very joyful experience as everyone impacted by deployment looks forward to returning to a “normal routine.” However, reintegration represents a significant transition period that can present unique challenges.

Signs Wingmen Should Know/Look For

- Younger Airmen/families and first time deployers.
- Recent arrivals to the unit who may not have had time to develop supportive relationships in the unit and community.

Deployment

- Families/personnel that have had difficulties with stress in the past or are known to have additional stressors (e.g., marital problems, financial problems, physical/mental health issues, etc.).
- Families/personnel/units that experience repeated deployment.
- Families that move away from a military installation (and all of the services provided by them) during a deployment.
- Losing income from any second jobs.
- Couples with a history of domestic violence or frequent arguments.
- Couples for which there are concerns regarding either partner’s fidelity during the deployment.
- Persons with a history of alcohol-related incidents or excessive alcohol use.
- Those who experienced trauma or combat exposure while deployed.
- Persons with a history of poor anger management or difficulty adjusting to change, including previous deployments.



Recommended Wingman Action

- Make arrangements for paying bills and other practical issues, such as car and home care.
- Complete necessary paperwork (e.g., renew insurance, will, powers of attorney).
- Ensure continuous personal and family readiness for deployment.
- Be particularly aware of the needs of deployed families.
- Make list of emergency contacts, including unit POC.
- Form a reliable support network to assist in the event of unexpected difficulties, such as car trouble or a sick child.
- Determine how future events, such as birthdays and anniversaries, will be handled.
- Determine how you will communicate during the deployment.
- Decide plans about how family routines, rules, and expectations will change or remain the same.
- Normalize the fact that reintegration may take time.
- Inform leadership of personnel that seem to be having difficulty adjusting.
- Help individuals and families focus on the positive aspects of deployment.

Leadership Considerations

- Give the deploying member as much information as possible about the deployed location, living conditions, job duties, etc.
- Provide up-to-date information regarding the likely departure date.
- Encourage members to get in touch with a person who is already at the deployed location.
- Be visible and available.
- Sponsor and encourage family support groups.
- Host recreational activities for families.
- Keep the family as informed as possible about important topics (e.g., return date).
- Encourage spouses to utilize available resources, such as Airman & Family Readiness Center.
- Ensure Key Spouse representative or other unit POC maintains regular contact with family members.
- Ensure all re-deploying personnel complete redeployment requirements, such as briefings and medical screening.
- Communicate the expectation that unit leaders/supervisors will be aware of re-deployed personnel's status until they feel adequately adjusted.
- Sponsor reunion activities and programs and/or organize a homecoming celebration.
- Ask returning members to discuss experiences and "lessons learned."
- Consider recognizing efforts of non-deployed personnel.