



Operation: Military Kids FACT SHEET

Background:

Operation: Military Kids (OMK) is the U.S. Army's collaborative effort with America's communities to support children and youth of National Guard, Reserve and Active Duty families impacted by the Global War on Terrorism. State 4-H Military Liaisons lead OMK State Teams 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. These and other community organizations are joining Army Child & Youth Services to support "Suddenly Military" youth before, during, and after the deployment of a parent or loved one.

OMK Mission:

OMK supports deployed National Guard, Reserve and Active Duty Soldiers' children living in communities across the country by:

- Creating networks of people, organizations and other resources to support "suddenly military" children and youth where they live.
- Delivering a wide range of recreational, social and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities
- Acknowledging the strengths and sacrifices of military kids as everyday "Home Front Heros"
- Supporting military kids coping with the stress of knowing their deployed parents may be in harm's way
- Educating the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on Soldiers, families, kids and the community as a whole





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OMK Infrastructure:

Ready, Set, Go! Training (RSG)

Led by trained facilitators, RSG! Trainings are designed to develop local support networks of youth workers, educators, counselors and community service agencies. These workshops offer an insight into military culture and 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 (HP)

Hero Packs serve as a tangible expression of support for military families from their communities and OMK Partners. Hero Packs are backpacks filled by non-military youth with mementos and items designed to help connect kids with their deployed parent. They are a way to *hand-deliver* a salute to military children & youth for their strength and sacrifices while parents are deployed. A Hero Pack project involves youth groups and adults in a valuable community service effort that also builds awareness and fosters community support for geographically dispersed military families.

Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK)

SOMK is a youth-led, adult supported project that generates community awareness of 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 (MTL)

The labs are used to facilitate connections between deployed soldiers and the children & youth left behind. Any OMK partner such as The American Legion, Boys & Girls Clubs, Schools, 4-H can request and use the laptop computers, digital camera, video recorder, printer, scanner and the necessary software and materials for children and youth to send a personal messages to their deployed loved one.

