

# Travel Pack



**A Deployment Information Guide  
for Teens ages 13-18  
whose families are in the National Guard  
National Guard Bureau-Family Program Office**



## Travel Pack Message

This pack is for any teen that has a family member in the National Guard and is facing deployment.

Family separation caused by deployment generates many emotions within the family unit. Some of the feelings you may experience are: fear, anger, guilt, excitement, and/or joy. Dealing with the emotions of separation can cause families to fall apart or be drawn closer together.

This pack is designed to assist you on your journey through the deployment process and offer you some help that will make it easier to deal with the time apart. You'll find suggestions on how to cope with separation and how to discuss the issues that arise along the way.

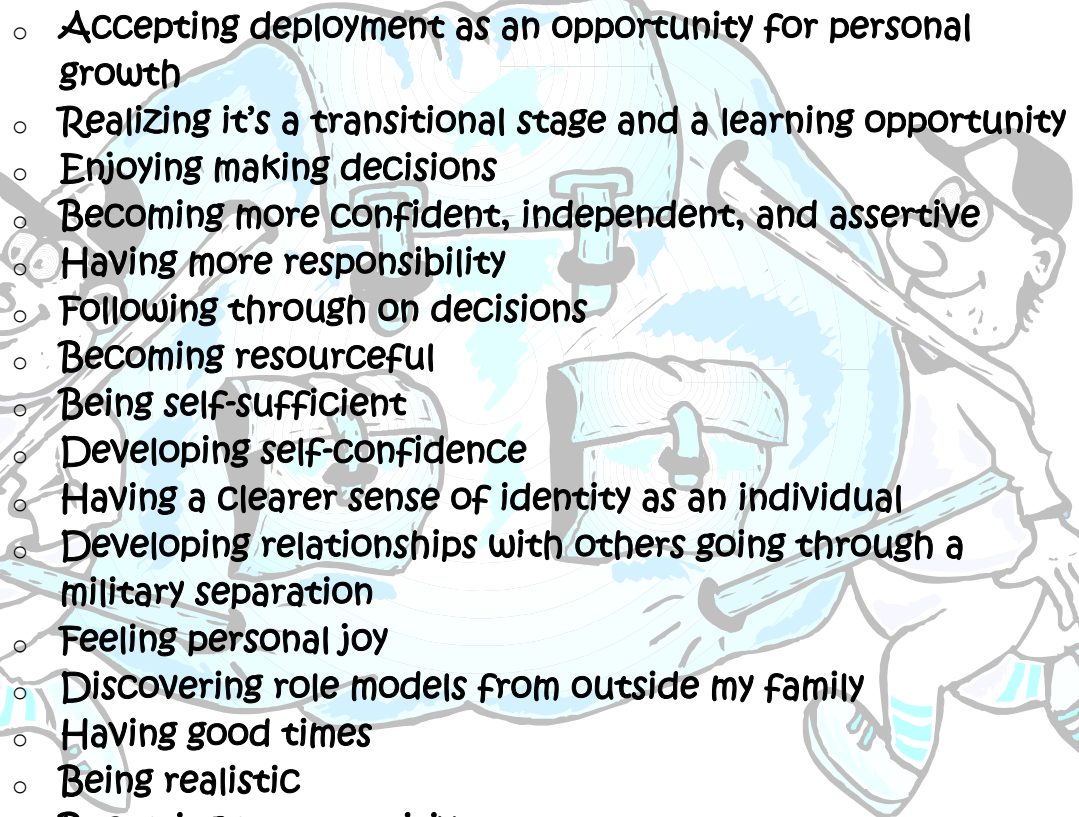
Deployment generates various situations for each family affected by separation. Use this travel pack guide to help in your situation. Look for what applies to you and your family.

We encourage you to seek additional help in dealing with deployment and hope this pack will assist you.

# Facing the Facts

Look at separation as a chance to grow. During the time of separation, you will be faced with many new challenges within your family that will force you to learn and grow together. How you choose to handle these situations will help you to become a more mature and competent teen.

Defining the good that comes from any situation can help you cope:

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- Accepting deployment as an opportunity for personal growth
  - Realizing it's a transitional stage and a learning opportunity
  - Enjoying making decisions
  - Becoming more confident, independent, and assertive
  - Having more responsibility
  - Following through on decisions
  - Becoming resourceful
  - Being self-sufficient
  - Developing self-confidence
  - Having a clearer sense of identity as an individual
  - Developing relationships with others going through a military separation
  - Feeling personal joy
  - Discovering role models from outside my family
  - Having good times
  - Being realistic
  - Becoming more sensitive
  - Developing greater closeness with my family
  - Becoming a stronger person
  - Knowing deployment does not last forever

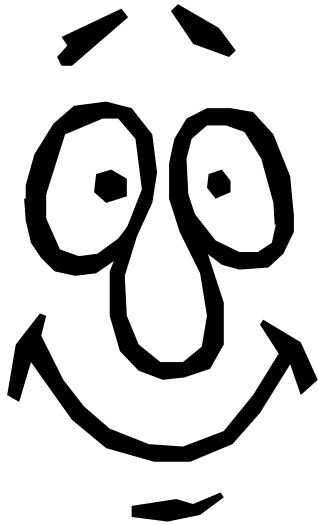


# Family Talk

Discussing the deployment mission will be very helpful to all family members. The questions offered are only suggestions for assisting you and your family in a basic discussion of how the separation will affect you.

- ? Where are you going?
- ? When will you be back?
- ? Who will be responsible for us?
- ? What will my responsibilities be?
- ? How will I get to my after school activities?
- ? Will we have enough money?
- ? Can I still drive the car?
- ? How will I talk to you while you are gone?
- ? What do we do in case of an emergency?
- ? What if I don't like the changes?
- ? What will happen to us if something happens to you?

A family talk should allow you adequate discussion time and an opportunity for negotiation of family rules, responsibilities and how-to's for each family member. Plan to get together as often as possible to prepare for the deployment.



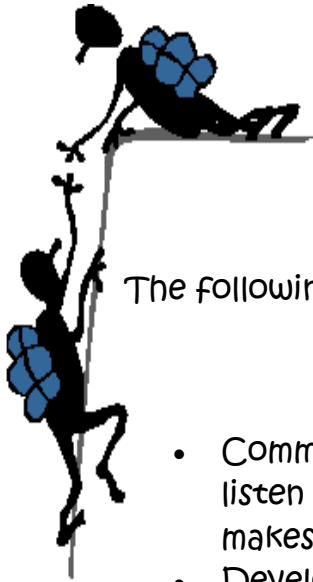
# Feelings You May Experience

No two people will react in the same way, depending on a variety of factors such as age, maturity, sex, and your relationship with each parent, and how the remaining parent copes with the separation.

The following is a list of common, normal reactions family members may experience.

- Helpless, feeling as if you have no control over the situation
- Stress due to the increase in responsibilities
- Frustration because of the unknown
- Anger towards parents
- Being negative, disobedient, talking back, or disrespectful
- Refusing to have contact with the absent parent
- Revenge wished for the insecurity and embarrassment the parent caused
- Crying to release pain, anxiety, anger, and guilt
- Physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, stomach aches, trouble sleeping, headaches, nightmares, restlessness, nausea
- Anger toward the National Guard for taking your parent away
- Denial of the parent deploying, lying to others about it





# How to Help

The following actions help reduce the complexities caused by deployment:

- Communicate, get your parent to talk about what is going on and listen to what they are saying. Sometimes just talking about a problem makes things better.
- Develop individual and family goals. Use them to develop/maintain family routines.
- Accept the lack of control over deployment events.
- Encourage all family members to share their feelings.
- Reassure your parent of your love and support.
- Concentrate on what you can control: yourself, your family, your job, etc.
- Become or remain active: get a job, volunteer, or take up a hobby.
- Seek relevant information about the deployment.
- Try to see the deployment as a Challenging opportunity for growth.
- Seek social support from friends, relatives, Family Assistance Centers (FAC), and the families of others who have been deployed.
- Communicate with others and open channels of communication within your own family.
- Check out rumors, and don't believe everything you hear.
- Assist with the daily tasks: laundry, cleaning, taking care of younger siblings, cooking, etc.
- Spend some time together as a family: go to a museum, to a movie, on a picnic, take a hike, attend a sporting event, go skating or bowling.
- Encourage your parents to get help. Remind them of the services available through the National Guard Family Assistance Center or the American Red Cross.
- Remember that deployment is not forever.

# Being Prepared for Deployment



There are many challenges for National Guard families to overcome during the five stages of deployment. Anticipating these challenges is important to minimize the emotional trauma caused by extended deployment. It is important not to over-interpret arguments which are often caused by the pain and loss of separation. Dates of departure and return often "slip" forwards and backwards. Establishing or maintaining a support network helps families cope. Breaking up the time is a useful technique to prevent being overwhelmed. This can include: weekly get-togethers with other families, monthly outings for the children (a favorite restaurant, the park, a picnic, etc.), just to name a few. Lastly, and most importantly, Guard member, spouse and children will change and grow during the deployment.

## Highlights of the Five Stages of Deployment

**1. Pre-deployment** - The onset of this stage begins with the warning order for deployment. This stage ends when the Guard member actually departs from home. The pre-deployment time frame is extremely variable from several weeks to more than a year.

**2. Deployment** - This stage is the period from the Guard member's departure from home through the first month of the deployment. A roller coaster of mixed emotions is common during the deployment stage.

**3. Sustainment** - The sustainment stage lasts from the first month through the fifth month of deployment. It is a time of establishing new sources of support and new routines. Many rely on the Family Readiness Group (FRG), which serves as a close network that meets on a regular basis to handle problems and disseminate the latest information. Others are more comfortable with family, friends, church or other religious institution as their main means of emotional support. As challenges come up, most families learn they are able to cope.

**4. Re-deployment** - The re-deployment stage is essentially defined as the month before the parent is scheduled to return home and is generally one of intense anticipation. Like the deployment stage, there can be a surge of conflicting emotions. On the one hand, there is excitement that the parent is coming home. On the other, there is some apprehension.

**5. Post-deployment** - The post-deployment stage begins with the arrival home. Like the pre-deployment stage, the time frame for this stage is also variable depending on the particular family. Typically, this stage lasts from three to six months.

It is not realistic to return home and expect everything to be the same as before the deployment. Some things will have changed: spouses are more independent, children have grown, and individual personal priorities in life may be different. Basic household chores and routines need to be renegotiated. Patient communication, going slow, lowering expectations and taking time to get to know each other again is critical to the task of successful reintegration of the Guard member back into the family.

# Things to Do to Cope



**Write Letters.** Contrary to popular belief, in the case of separation, “No news can be BAD news.” Write regularly and use the correct mailing address.

Each family member could write individual letters to the deployed parent. Send schedules of ball games and special events so Mom/Dad can ask how the game or class event went. Mail is an important communication device; use it often and make it cheerful and newsy.

**Record Events.** Record cassettes or videos. Record special times, dinner times, fun times, and have everyone talk to their parent.

**Take Pictures.** Make a picture book of the parent doing everyday things with the kids, reading, taking a walk, playing ball, etc. Show the parent in uniform and where he/she works (if possible). If you don't own a camera, borrow a friend's.

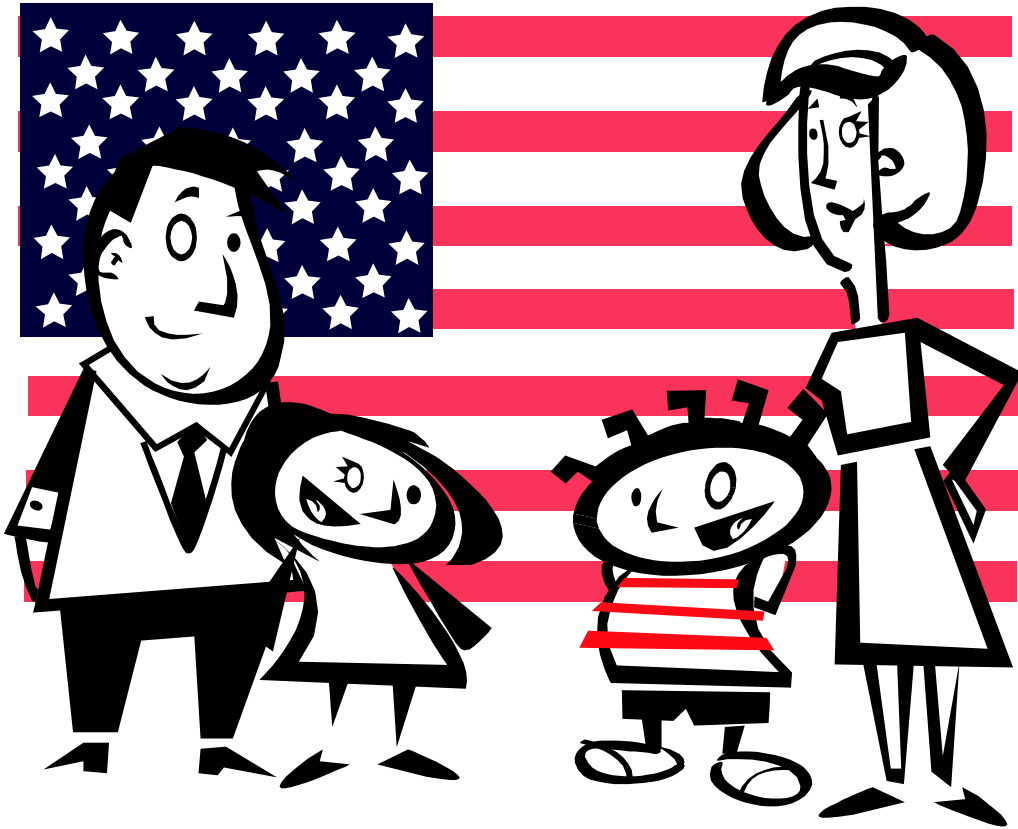
**Follow on a Map.** Acquire a world map; you can follow Dad/Mom around the world. You can also obtain brochures from a travel agency.

**Be Prepared for Emergencies.** In case of emergency, we tend to forget many important things. It's important to have telephone numbers of friends or your FRG representative for your family to call in case of an emergency, along with police, fire department, hospital, etc.

**Be Aware of your Emotions.** We all get down in the dumps sometimes, but what do you do about it? Becoming aware of, and being in touch with your feelings can give you an inside track as to how you feel.



# Reunion



It can take much effort for the family members to get to know one another again. Reunion occurs the first few days after the family is back together. Reunion is a period of happiness, celebrating, togetherness, sharing, courting, all the things it takes to get to know each other again and begin coming together as a family unit. This occurs during the time before, during, and following the actual reunion.

**REUNION STRESS.** Families need to prepare for some changes in the home when reunion occurs. The people themselves haven't changed, but coping skills have. Those changes will cause stress.