

# CLEARINGHOUSE FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

## Resources for Military Family Health and Well-Being During Online and Home Education

Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Team

As of September 28, 2020

This material is the result of partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with Penn State University



**PennState**

## Introduction

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to encourage families to physically distance themselves from those not residing in their home. Many children are participating in some form of online school, and many parents are participating in some form of telework. It is important for children and adults to continue to connect socially to protect the family's emotional well-being. Military families may also have the added stressors of relocation and building relationships within a new community during this PCS season.

How can families build new social connections while following the CDC's guidelines? The following tip sheet offers a list of suggestions to help military families connect with others this PCS season while following the CDC's recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## Tips to Help Military Families Stay Socially Connected While Following the CDC's Guidelines

The following list offers eight tips to help families continue to connect socially with others during the pandemic. The list has been adapted from resources curated by the Center on the Developing Child by Harvard University (2020) found here:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-support-children-and-yourself-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

- 1. Talk over video chat or by phone with family and friends.** For families who have moved away from friends and family, this is a great way to maintain and build social connections. It also gives children a chance to interact with other children and adults outside of the home.
- 2. Make cards or write letters to send to friends and family.** If you have recently moved to a new area, reach out to your local school counselor or classroom teacher to explore whether you can connect your child(ren) with another local peer who may also be looking for social connections. For students who are homeschooling, look for other local homeschool parents who may want to build relationships with other families. Have kids write letters to grandparents or other neighbors who may welcome receiving a letter!

3. **Get outside.** Take a walk or hike. Stop and say hello to neighbors and others you meet! (Just make sure to follow CDC recommendations for masking and give each other 6 feet of space!)
4. **Join a local community group online.** Look for local community groups on Facebook or other social media platforms and join the conversation! You may be able to meet neighbors in the community virtually. Military families within your installation may also have a social media presence. For example, Fort Bragg, N.C., home of the U.S. Army airborne and special operations forces, runs a Facebook page with local resources and news and encourages comments and discussion from its members.
5. **Find virtual events to participate in!** If you miss attending local events in-person, look for opportunities to participate in virtual events. Invite neighbors or other local military families to join you for a virtual event like a trivia or game night, concert, or another event. Look for a virtual race that you can participate in and sign-up with another family or group from your community.
6. **Host a digital Sunday supper with friends through a video call.** Start a book or film club for parents or adults from your community.
7. **Consider volunteering locally.** Deliver meals to local seniors or other community members who may need assistance. Offer to grocery shop for neighbors who may be unable to go to the store.
8. **Remember to take a break for yourself!** Parents may need to step away from children for a minute. Take a walk around the block. Try meditation, deep breathing, or call a friend. Use the strategies that work for you to relieve stress and care for your mental health.

## Online Resources for Families

### **Article: *Connect While Social Distancing: Cook Online with a Loved One* (Military Families Learning Network)**

- Find out how to cook and eat with friends and loved ones, even while physically apart. This blog post from MFLN shares the authors experiences with planning a virtual meal and provides a link to Harvard Medical School's blog with apps to help connect in a time of physical distancing.
- <https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/2020/04/16/connect-while-social-distancing-cook-online-with-a-loved-one/>

### **Checklist: *Building Developmental Relationships During the COVID-19 Crisis* (Search Institute)**

- Offers a checklist of ideas for educators and parents on how to connect with youth, both now and through the pandemic to help youth become more resilient and to thrive.
- <https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-checklist-Search-Institute.pdf>

### **Resource Page: *Turning Stress into Strength* (Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC))**

- Lists tips to reduce stress in kids, provides links for parent resources, and includes a resource on to help create a personal stress management plan for kids and adults.
- [https://www.militarychild.org/upload/files/resources/Parents/2020\\_HO\\_Turning\\_Stress\\_Into\\_Stre.pdf](https://www.militarychild.org/upload/files/resources/Parents/2020_HO_Turning_Stress_Into_Stre.pdf)

### **Webinar: *Emotional Wellness for Military Children During COVID-19, Webinar Recording* (Military Child Education Coalition or MCEC)**

- Provides an audio recording of evidence-based tips and ideas for parents to use at home with their children. It was created for parents as the primary audience. However, professionals who work with military-connected children may also find it useful.
- [https://events-na5.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/968319730/en/events/event/private/1825780098/2269415441/event\\_registration.html?connect-session=na5breezcpki2mo9zf9efr3b&sco-id=2410716335& charset =utf-8](https://events-na5.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/968319730/en/events/event/private/1825780098/2269415441/event_registration.html?connect-session=na5breezcpki2mo9zf9efr3b&sco-id=2410716335& charset =utf-8)

**Website: *Coping with Stress* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)**

- Provides practical ways to take care of your mental health and manage stress. Resources and contact information are provided to families who need additional assistance.
- [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html)

**Website: *Five Tips to Make the Most of Video Chats* (Zero to Three)**

- Offers five quick and easy tips to make connections over platforms such as Skype or Facetime easier with young children. Learn how to help kids build relationships, communicate, and learn from loved ones on the screen.
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2535-five-tips-to-make-the-most-of-video-chats>

**Website: *The Importance of Self-Care* (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)**

- Take time to support and care for yourself. Get tips and resources for ideas on how to practice self-care and reduce stress.
- <https://www.bethe1to.com/the-importance-of-self-care/>

**Website: *How to Support Children and Yourself During the COVID-19 Outbreak* (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University)**

- Provides a list of four key suggestions on how to support both children and parents during COVID-19. The website also offers links to other evidence-informed resources to support parents and families.
- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-support-children-and-yourself-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

## Online Resources for Families with an Interactive Component

**Newsletter: *Military Families Magazine* (Ameriforce Media)**

- Stay connected to other military family stories and experiences through this online magazine which covers deployments, relationships, finances, PCSing and more. Sign up for free newsletters and access monthly electronic magazines. Military Families Magazine is run by a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business founded in 1999.
- <https://militaryfamilies.com/>

**Newsletter: Military OneSource Blog Brigade**

- Sign up to receive a copy of the Blog Brigade which includes experiences shared by other military families featuring topics such as PCSings and self-care. Families can also share their experiences, stories, and advice as a Blog Brigade contributor to help other families in the military spouse community.
- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/coronavirus>

**Resource: *We Care about Each Other! Connectedness* (College of Health and Human Sciences at Purdue University)**

- Practical evidence-informed suggestions for how families can stay connected to each other, including activity ideas for kids and parents.
- <https://www.mfri.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WeCareAboutEachOther.pdf>

**Social Media: *Families Tackling Tough Times Together* (Purdue University's College of Health and Human Sciences)**

- Connect with a Facebook group designed to help families tackle the challenges brought forth by the pandemic. Every week the page posts new materials and activities, tailored toward different ages, that focus on a specific aspect of resilience. Interact with posts and meet other families facing similar challenges.
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HHSFamiliesTogether>

**Service: *Tutor.com* (A service of Princeton Review)**

- Tutor.com for U.S. military families, funded by the U.S. Department of Defense and Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, is a program that provides on-demand, online tutoring and homework help at no cost to eligible Service members, civilian personnel, and their dependents. Students can work with a tutor anywhere in the world in one of three ways: request a tutor's help right now, schedule a future tutoring session, or upload a document for offline review and get comments back within 24 hours. Keep kids on track in school and get the support you need at home.
- <https://military.tutor.com/home>

**Virtual Event: *Boys and Girls Club of America Virtual Club***

- The MyFuture social platform offers 11 programs that youth can participate in. Programs include Digital Literacy Essentials, Media Making, Computer Science, Visual Arts and more.
- <https://myfuture.net/cms/member-how-it-works>

### **Virtual Event: *Get WalkIN'* (Purdue University Extension)**

- Join this free e-mail based walking initiative. Get WalkIN' lasts 12 weeks and includes email messages to participants twice weekly for the first 4 weeks and then weekly for the next 8 weeks. The event starts September 28!
- [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0IAAn3cKO7Fm7pw9?fbclid=IwAR0XMBS3L1yUFkmUXXbf6ypaXDDEsEBvJX2oNpMdalXkSpX3mBgJjd7luq4](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0IAAn3cKO7Fm7pw9?fbclid=IwAR0XMBS3L1yUFkmUXXbf6ypaXDDEsEBvJX2oNpMdalXkSpX3mBgJjd7luq4)

### **Virtual Program: THRIVE (Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness)**

- Free online parenting programs for parents and caregivers of children from birth until 18 years of age. The program helps parents and caregivers learn and practice effective strategies for raising healthy children.
- <https://thrive.psu.edu/>

### **Website: Bloom: *Empowering the Military Teen* (Elena A. and Matthew O., Military Teenagers)**

- Bloom is a website designed by teens for teens. It is a place for military adolescents to connect. Teens can find advice on almost everything - from moving tips to the top things to do at a duty station. Bloom often features posts from other military kids who want to share their stories and connect with their community. Each post offers a different perspective on military life. Through Bloom, teens can read about how other kids are coping with moves and making friends. Bloom also offers teens the ability to become a part of their PCS project, where one can share information about where they have lived to help other military kids moving into the area!
- <https://www.bloommilitaryteens.org/>
- MCEC Podcast to learn more about BLOOM:  
[https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-wcxj6-eb13ae?utm\\_campaign=u\\_share\\_ep&utm\\_medium=dlink&utm\\_source=u\\_share](https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-wcxj6-eb13ae?utm_campaign=u_share_ep&utm_medium=dlink&utm_source=u_share)

### **Website: *Military Kids Connect* (Department of Defense, National Center for Telehealth and Technology)**

- Offers an online community created by the Department of Defense National Center for Telehealth and Technology for military connected students which provides access to age appropriate resources dealing with the unique challenges of military life. Check out the Military Kids Connect Message Board to connect your kids with other military kids.
- Website: <https://militarykidsconnect.health.mil/Military-Life/Moving>
- Message: <https://militarykidsconnect.health.mil/MessageBoard#/recent>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MilitaryKidsConnect>

**Website: *Stuck at Home (Together)* (The UNLonely Project (The Foundation for Art & Healing))**

- Encourages creativity and social connections. Post a stuck-at-home story in words or images, access creative activities that promote connections with friends and family, or subscribe to updates to hear when new creativity challenges are released.
- <https://www.artandhealing.org/stuckathome/>