

# Deployment: Family Checklist

## Budgeting Tasks:

Managing the family budget while your spouse is away can be challenging, but it is manageable. Prior to deployment, sit down with your spouse and calculate your monthly expenses with regard to these topics:

**Utility Bills:** Look at utility bill statements from the past year and take an average of these expenses. This should give you a pretty good monthly estimate.

**Long Distance Bills:** Opportunities to call will vary depending on the spouse's duty location, but you should be able to decide how much of your budget should be set aside for long distance calls.

**Rent Or Mortgage:** Usually, this will be a fixed cost, although, if you have an adjustable mortgage rate, your house payments may go up (or down) slightly. Rent may also change if you do not have a lease.

**Monthly Living Expenses:** Calculate your average monthly expenses for groceries (less one), gas for the car, clothes, entertainment costs (such as video rentals, dining out, other purchases).

**Monthly Payment To Creditors:** Total up things like car and home equity loan payments, credit card payments, or bank loans.

**Savings:** Try not to get behind in putting money aside each month for your savings account. Less one family member in the house, you may find that you can actually save more. Use your family's savings as a "last resort" for covering unexpected expenses.

**Once-a-Year Expenses:** Don't forget to include things like car or homeowner's insurance bills, because they may catch you off guard near the end of the year, just when you thought you were "in the black."

Remember that you must also figure out the potential expenses of the family member on deployment. Here are some things to think about:

- Family Separation Allowance (FSA)

- Rate Changes
- Reenlistment
- Longevity Pay Increases

For various reasons, your spouse may be required to extend their deployment. There are policies in place to provide you with compensation during their deployment.

**Banking Decisions:** Consider signing up for direct deposit (if you haven't already done so). Direct transfer of money into your account can speed up your ability to cover bills. Also consider opening separate checking accounts to ease confusion over who is writing checks and when they are written.

Set credit card limits for you and your spouse. Limits will help prevent you both from adding to your credit card debt (if you have any). Also decide who will be using which cards during your spouse's deployment.

Make sure that your checking and savings accounts are in the same bank so funds can be transferred easily.

The pay allotments that the military can set up for you can be a real plus by automatically setting aside money for specific use. Listed below are some typical allotments:

- Dependent Allotment (D)
- Bond Allotment (B)
- Contribution Allotment (C)
- Home Allotment (H)
- Savings Allotment (S)
- Insurance Allotment (I)

**Vehicles:** Car problems can be very aggravating if you don't know who to contact to remedy them. Here are some suggestions for the spouse on the home front:

Make certain you have the name of a trusted mechanic or automotive garage where you or a friend have taken a car for service. Repair costs can mount rapidly if you simply select a repair shop out of the phone book.

Be sure to keep a record of the correct type of battery, tires, oil, etc., for the car.

Keep track of when automotive registration, insurance, emissions inspections, or oil changes are due.

**Home/Apartment Maintenance:** Know what to do or who to call if something in your home breaks down. Untested plumbing, roofing, or repair contractors can be very costly.

Before your spouse leaves for deployment, give your home a security check inside and out. This should include testing (or installing) smoke alarms, and checking door and window locks, as well as outdoor lights or motion detectors (if you have them).

If a move is expected during deployment, discuss the process for moving your household goods. Review your homeowner's or renter's insurance policies.

**Know your Resources:** During deployment it is important to know who is out there waiting to assist you with all kinds of issues. If all else fails call Military OneSource, Airman and Family Readiness Center, Chaplain, Military Family Life Consultant, First Sergeant or Commander.

## The Emotional Phases Of Deployment

During deployments, many Reservists would agree that the hardest thing to deal with is being separated from his or her spouse and family. Likewise, this is probably the most difficult aspect for the spouse and family! Deployments can produce a variety of feelings but most couples experience a predictable cycle of emotions. Different feelings and reactions may occur in each cycle. Listed below are some of the more common emotions.

**Pre-Deployment Phase (6-8 weeks prior to deployment):** Feelings in this stage may include fear, anger, denial, resentment, excitement, and guilt. Common thoughts include "What will I do without him/her?" "I can't believe he/she is actually leaving me!" "How in the world will I cope with the kids?" and "I wish the ship would leave so I could get on with my life!" Reactions during this phase may vary between "honeymoon" like behavior to severe arguments.

**Deployment Phase (during the deployment):** Feelings in this stage may include relief, anxiety, enthusiasm, pride, and sense of abandonment. Thoughts associated with these feelings include "Now I can get on with my life!" "He left me...he actually left me!" "What if something happens that I can't handle?" and "I'm handling things so much better than I thought I would!". Reactions during this phase may include a change in schedule (eating and sleeping habits), intense busyness, establishing routine, and being independent.

**Reunion Phase (1-6 weeks prior to reunion):** Feelings in this stage may include anxiety, excitement, guilt, fear, and elation. Thoughts associated with this phase may include "Oh no, I didn't accomplish everything I needed to!" "Hey, I'm managing just fine without him/her!" "I can't wait to see him/her!" or "I wonder if he/she still loves me". All of these feelings and thoughts are normal. Reactions during this phase may include home improvement (cleaning, decorating, etc.) and increased focus on personal appearance (new hairstyle, shopping for a new outfit or lingerie, etc.).

**Post-Deployment Phase (1-6 weeks post reunion):** Feelings in this stage may include euphoria, resentment, and role confusion. Although this is an exciting and happy time for most couples, it is often the most difficult period they face. The servicemember may feel displaced and no longer

needed in the day-to-day functioning of the family. The spouse may feel resentful when the servicemember attempts to take charge of an activity (finances, discipline, parenting). While they are reestablishing intimacy, they are also renegotiating their relationship and redefining roles.

**Each of you will react to separation differently:** Intensity of feelings vary, and normal ups and downs will occur regularly during separation. If you are having problems coping with the separation or feel overwhelmed, there are both civilian and military resources than can be of assistance to you.

## Your Children And Separation

Children going through deployment may experience many of the same effects as children of divorce. They worry about what will happen to them. They worry that the non-deployed parent will leave, too. Who will take care of them? This is particularly true if the family has trouble with mail deliveries or pay allotments which is sometimes the case in early days of separation. Preparing a child emotionally prior to departure will help the child cope as the service member leaves for training or for deployment.

Make sure children know they are loved. Whenever there is distress in a family, children assume responsibility for it. They may feel responsible that a parent is going away or feel that the parent does not love them anymore. Providing consistent, loving assurance will help alleviate this.

**Be Truthful.** Children are very perceptive! As soon as the service member starts planning and preparing for a drill or deployment, the child will catch on that something is up. Do not lie to your child in an attempt to shield him or her from the truth or they may assume something worse. Talk to your child openly and honestly.

**Share Feelings.** Children often lack the vocabulary to share their feelings. It will help if parents talk about their own feelings which will help children communicate their feelings. Let your child know that even negative thoughts and feelings are OK and normal.

**Explore Destination.** Using a map or globe, show your child where you are going and chart your route. Using books or encyclopedias, explore weather conditions, cultural norms, or products produced in that region.

**Communicate with Teachers.** If your child is school-age, let the teacher know what is going on at home. The teacher may use maps and chart your travels with the class!

**Design an Activity to Pass Time.** With your child, design or create an activity to help mark

time. For younger children, make a paper chain with a link for each day you will be gone that the child can use to measure time (the child will break a link each day). For an older child, choose a book that you both would enjoy and each read a pre-assigned passage every day.

**Show Your Workspace.** If possible, set aside time to show your child the ship and where you will be eating, sleeping, and working. Or, take your child to the armory prior to departure and show him or her the artillery guns or weapons that you might be working with while away.

**Let Your Child Help You Pack.** Letting your child help you pack will allow him or her to be more involved in the process and also allow them to "care" for you. If possible, let them decorate the inside of your footlocker. Not only will they have great fun but you will enjoy their artwork for days and months to come.

### **Signs of Distress**

Even with the best laid plans and a cheerful demeanor, parents cannot always prevent their children from experiencing stress when the Reserve member is called to duty. They may not fully understand why Dad or Mom is gone and they may worry about their safety. They will also be very perceptive to what the parent at home is feeling. These fears may consciously or subconsciously trouble children. The following are signs of separation anxiety that children may exhibit when their parent is away.

### **Preschool or Kindergarten Age Children**

- Clinging to people or favorite toy or blanket.
- Unexplained crying or tearfulness.
- Choosing adults over same-age play mates.
- Increased acts of violence toward people or things.
- Shrinking away from people or becoming very quiet.
- Sleep difficulties or disturbances (waking, bad dreams)
- Eating difficulties or change in eating patterns.
- Fear of new people or situations.
- Keeps primary care giver in view.

### **School-Age Children**

Any of the signs listed above, and:

- A rise in complaints about stomachaches, headaches, or other illnesses.
- More irritable and crabby.
- Problems at school (drop in grades, does not want to go, or general complaining)
- Anger toward at-home parent.

### **Adolescents**

Any of the signs listed above, and:

- Acting out behaviors (trouble at school, home, law)
- Low self-esteem and self-criticism.
- Misdirected anger (lots of anger over small things; directed at siblings/parent)
- Sudden or unusual school problems.
- Loss of interest in usual interests and hobbies.

### **Positive Aspects of Separation**

Many parents worry about the negative impact of deployments on children. However, deployments offer many positive growth opportunities. Several psychological studies show that despite the distress during separation significant developmental gains are made by many children. Some positive aspects of separation include:

Fosters maturity. Military children encounter more situations and have broader and more varied experiences than children from non-military families. Induces growth. Military children learn more about the world and how to function within a community at an earlier age. Taking on additional responsibilities in a parent's absence provides a chance to develop new skills and develop hidden interests and abilities.

Encourages independence. Military children tend to be more resourceful and self-starters. Prepares for separations. In a life-style filled with greetings and farewells from deployments and relocations, helps for future farewells and building new friendships.

Strengthens family bonds. Military families make emotional adjustments during a separation which often lead them to discover new sources of strength and support among themselves. A major function of family readiness is assuring that the family is aware of all support services available to them and how to access these services. It is imperative that the Reserve family realize that they are not alone and, chances are, whatever problem or situation they encounter has been addressed before.

# Support Our Troops

The following charitable organizations help send gifts, cards, and care packages to our troops:

[4theTroops](#) - Coordinates the shipments of supplies, goods and gifts to our servicemembers abroad.

[The Billy Blanks Foundation](#) - The Billy Blanks Foundation was founded by the creator of Tae Bo. One of the foundations many projects is sending care packages to U.S. Servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Adopt a Platoon](#) - Support the troops through gifts and sponsored mail.

[Any Soldier](#) - Sponsor care packages to servicemembers in Iraq.

[Army and Air Force Exchange Services](#) - Purchase gift certificates for active and hospitalized servicemembers.

[Blue Star Mothers](#) - Organizes postcards to troops and care packages, and is currently petitioning Congress for reduced air fares for servicemembers.

[Books for Soldiers](#) - Donate books, movies, and more.

[Cell Phones for Soldiers](#) - Donate your old cell phones, which pay for calling cards for our troops.

[Commissary Gift Certificates](#) - Give the gift of groceries -- buy or donate gift certificates.

[DefendAmerica](#) - Send a virtual thank-you card.

[GI-Bracelet.org](#) - Buy a bracelet to support the troops, and contribute to a fund of your choice.

[A Million Thanks](#) - Collects emails and letters of appreciation for our armed forces.

[Operation Air Conditioner](#) - Help pay for air conditioners and heaters for the troops.

[Operaton Dear Abbey](#) - Send greetings and messages of support.

[Operation Give](#) - Donate toys to be given to the children of Iraq.

[Operation Gratitude](#) - Contribute to care packages sent to our servicemembers.

[Operation Homefront Hugs](#) - Contribute to care packages, or adopt a servicemember.

[Operation Military Pride](#) - Sends letters, care packages, and gifts overseas.

[Operation Troop Aid](#) - Provide care packages for our deployed U.S. Servicemembers.

[Operation Uplink](#) - Donate a calling card to help keep servicemembers in touch with their families.

[Operation USO Care Package](#) - Sponsor a care package for \$25.

[Treats for Troops](#) - Purchase care packages for Soldiers.