

# **Anchors Aweigh**

## **Dealing with Deployment**

### **Overview**

Deployments are challenging but necessary to the Navy's mission. The event encompasses more than just the time spent while your Sailor is deployed. There is a cycle that begins long before the ship or unit departs, and it continues beyond its return. Preparation, flexibility, and utilization of resources are key components to successfully navigating the challenges of deployment.

### **Wave Tops**

Phases of Deployment

Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Preparation/ Education

Establish your Support Network

Identify your Command Ombudsman & Family Readiness Group

### **Phases of Deployment**

The deployment cycle consists of four phases: Pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment and reintegration. Being familiar with these phases will help you before, during and after deployment.

- **Pre-Deployment Phase:** Before deployment, commands and units undergo additional training to prepare for their upcoming missions. Service members may be gone for days or weeks at a time. This period, sometimes referred to as "workups," can be stressful due to the uncertainty of the schedule. For families, this is the time to begin preparing for the longer separation of deployment.
- **Deployment Phase:** The deployment phase begins with the departure of the ship or unit. Facing the extended separation can result in stress for both service members and their families. For families, it is a time to adjust to the absence of their loved ones and develop a new "normal" for the duration of the deployment.
- **Post-Deployment Phase:** Once the ship or unit has returned, there is a brief respite before a return to normal duties. Service members may be able to take leave during this time, but it is important to remember that leave is determined by the needs of the command.
- **Reintegration Phase:** The final phase of the deployment cycle is the reintegration phase. During this time, service members adjust to being home with loved ones and return to their customary habits and activities. This time can be stressful for service members and family members as everyone gets used to being together again.

**The Emotional Cycle of Deployment**, included in the FFSC deployment handbook, describes the emotional and behavioral changes that may occur during a deployment. Understanding this cycle and the common emotions for each stage can help service members and their families adjust to the changes they will experience during deployment. As you prepare for a deployment, it helps to understand and be familiar with the emotional cycle of deployment and:

- **Anticipation of Departure:** During this stage, families may struggle to find a balance between completing necessary pre-deployment tasks and spending quality time together as a family. It is not uncommon for spouses to alternately experience feelings of denial and anticipation of loss.
- **Detachment and Withdrawal:** As Sailors become more focused on their mission, an emotional distance may develop as couples attempt to protect themselves from the hurt of separation. It is normal to feel sadness and even anger, but it is important to recognize the value of this emotional connection.
- **Emotional Disorganization:** This stage usually occurs after the Sailor's departure. Spouses are adjusting to the changes at home and are beginning to create a day-to-day routine that works for them while their spouse is deployed.
- **Recovery and Stabilization:** At this stage, new routines have been established and spouses realize they are fundamentally resilient. An increased sense of confidence and a positive outlook enable spouses to view the deployment as an opportunity to create and achieve goals.
- **Anticipation of Return:** During this stage, Sailors and their families begin making preparations for homecoming. While generally a happy time, it is important to talk about realistic expectations with your Sailor, family, and friends. Open communication about expectations for homecoming is key to alleviating these concerns.
- **Return Adjustment and Renegotiation:** This stage is a period of adjustment after the excitement of homecoming has passed. This may be a time where roles and responsibilities are redefined. Open communication is key to understanding a new "normal."
- **Reintegration and Stabilization:** During this final stage, relationships have been stabilized and a new "normal" has been established. It may take a few months.

## **Checklist Terms:**

The following checklist may have some terminology you are not familiar with. Here is a brief description of many of the items listed.

**ID cards:** The Military ID card is an essential part of accessing your benefits. Without it you will not be able to access the base, commissary, childcare center, or receive health care. The Department of Defense issues eligible dependents and other eligible individuals a distinct identification card (ID) authorizing them to receive Uniformed Services benefits and privileges. Check the expiration date before your loved one deploys! If it expires while they are away, have your service member make an appointment for a new ID before deployment.

**Power of Attorney:** A power of attorney (POA) is a legal document in which your service member gives you the authority to act in his/her behalf when you are apart. Make sure you have a power of attorney before your service member deploys. The importance of having a comprehensive POA cannot be overstated! Make sure your POA covers banking, real estate and housing, children's needs such as medical and school, vehicles, credit cards, etc. FFSC provides support for developing legal documents needed for deployments.

**Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS):** This is an event-based system used by the Navy following a disaster or other "event," to help the Navy determine how and where Navy family members are. It is accessed through a user-friendly website designed to help Navy family members (Active duty, Reserve, Department of the Navy civilians, NAF/NEX employees and their immediate family members) who are directly affected by major natural or manmade disasters such as fires, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, etc.

**"Page 2" (Emergency Data Form):** The Page 2 is a document that lists a member's dependents, designates primary and secondary next of kin to be notified in the event of a member's serious injury or death and assigns beneficiaries of unpaid leave, allowances and pay. Sailors must make sure addresses are current and all relatives and beneficiaries are clearly identified and accurate. Outdated information can delay notification of next-of-kin or result in erroneous payments of benefits to persons other than those intended by the member.

**Beneficiary Information (Service members' Group Life Insurance, SGLI):** SGLI is a program that provides low-cost term life insurance coverage to eligible service members. A beneficiary is the person designated to receive insurance proceeds in the event of death. It is very important to make sure beneficiary information is always up to date. This will make it much easier on family members to file a claim and receive the benefit quickly. Beneficiary information should be reviewed at least once a year to ensure everything is current.

**Will:** A will is a legal document that sets forth your wishes regarding the distribution of your property and the care of any minor children. To maximize the likelihood that your wishes are carried out, you want a will that is set forth in writing, and signed by you and your witnesses. A visit to any base Legal office can offer assistance with the writing of a will at no cost to you.

### **Be Prepared-Educate Yourself**

Preparation is key to a successful deployment. Many tasks must be completed prior to your Sailor deploying. Find out if your Command is holding a pre-deployment briefing. Plan to attend, as it will provide lots of useful information. The following checklists, found on page 4 of *The Deployment Handbook* ([https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91\\_fleet\\_and\\_family\\_support\\_program/deployment\\_readiness/DeploymentSupportHandbook.pdf](https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91_fleet_and_family_support_program/deployment_readiness/DeploymentSupportHandbook.pdf)), created by CNIC and the Fleet and Family Support Center, are valuable resources as you prepare for the upcoming deployment. Work with your Sailor to complete the checklists.

### **Establish Your Support Network**

Separations require preparation. Establishing a support network is one of the most important ways to prepare. A specific formula does not exist as to who must be a part of your network. Your network will consist of people you trust and rely on during trying times. Members of your support network could be family members, military spouses, friends, your church community, a deployment support group or Family Readiness Group. Identify and utilize a caregiver for your child when needed.

### **Command Ombudsman**

If your support network is unable to provide assistance during an emergency situation, it is important to know who the Ombudsman is for your command. The Ombudsman is trained in crisis management in order to be prepared for any crisis that may occur, taking ongoing phone calls and emails from spouses and family members. An Ombudsman relays information to family members as directed by the Commanding Officer and is familiar with local resources needed and available during deployment. But please remember that your Ombudsman is a volunteer spouse and is not on call 24/7. Publishing a monthly command newsletter as well as sharing pertinent information with the Family Readiness Group is other responsibilities of an Ombudsman. Know your Ombudsman!

### **Family Readiness Group (FRG)**

The purpose of an FRG is to promote and create a friendly and social relationship among its members, to fundraise for group-oriented activities, and to serve, as best permitted, the crew, family and friends of your Command. Activities sponsored by the FRG may be informational, supportive, and/or social. An FRG's goals can include preparing for deployments and homecoming, providing family support during deployments or mobilization, helping families adjust to challenges, assisting one another in times of personal, unit or area crises, and promoting confidence, cohesion and commitment. By becoming a participant in your FRG, you will meet other family members in your Command and grow your support network.

## **Operational Security**

Operational Security (OPSEC) becomes second nature to Navy families. OPSEC is about keeping potential adversaries from discovering sensitive Department of Defense information. As the name suggests, it protects US operations - those planned, those in progress, and those completed. Our military success depends on secrecy and surprise to accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies of freedom want to know as much as possible about what the United States is doing, and they use sailors and their families as potential sources of information.

You may think you don't know anything that might interest a foreign enemy. But even the location of troops, dates for homecomings, and other seemingly innocuous information is sensitive. What you post on Facebook and the content of your tweets needs to be carefully considered. Here are some types of information you should never discuss, put in writing, or include in an email or a social media post:

- Location of your spouse
- Information about any mission
- Locations or times of troop movements (including your spouse or friends)
- Unit morale or personnel issues
- Security procedures
- Details about military intentions or capabilities

## **Communication**

Once the deployment begins, the challenge of running the home front and supporting your deployed Sailor ramps up. If you have children, you will feel like a single parent, and in fact, will have to adjust to taking care of more than your share of the home responsibilities. While you are adjusting to life at home, your spouse is adjusting to life away. Many sailors find they "put on the uniform and cover" over their hearts to help protect themselves from the difficult feelings of separation and enable them to focus on the job at hand. Most commonly, this can make it feel like you are separated by more than just distance. If you experience this emotional distance, you are not alone. There are many things you can do to nourish your relationship while separated, and help both you and your family members stay connected with your deployed family member.

No matter how much "armor" your Sailor puts on to protect his or her emotions, all will tell you there is an enormous need to hear from home. U.S. Postal Service, email, telephones, and Skype are just some of the ways families stay in touch. Here are some communication items to consider:

**Email:** Quick and easy, email is a great way to stay in touch if your Sailor has access to the Internet. Some locations have communal computer stations where people can email or Skype; others with desk assignments may have their own computer; while some may have very limited access to computers. Remember to

be flexible with your plans to communicate based on what your Sailor has available to him or her.

Email, while quick and easy, is also a double-edged sword. It's easy to type out a rant or angry note and push send in the heat of the moment when you're feeling upset, and then regret it a moment later. If you find yourself writing angry emails, put them in your draft folder and re-read them the next day to decide how much of it you really want to send, or if a phone conversation might be better. Also, remember that emails are not confidential—others can see them—through no fault of your Sailor. So be careful about what you write or send electronically.

**Telephone:** Sometimes sailors have access to telephones. And many veteran service organizations, especially the United Service Organization (USO), provide pre-paid calling cards to deployed service members to make it easier to keep in touch. You can ask to have calling cards sent to your Sailor at any time. Here are some tips to make the most of your telephone time, because sometimes the excitement of hearing your Sailor's voice can leave you tongue-tied!

- Make a list of things to talk about; encourage children to do the same
- Try to stay positive and upbeat, or at least end each call on a positive note
- Share your daily activities to make it easier to reconnect at homecoming
- Talk about plans for homecoming and future activities
- Discuss problems or challenges you are dealing with, and brainstorm solutions for them together
- Tell your Sailor you love him/her and appreciate their sacrifice

A few things to keep in mind regarding telephone calls... First, remember your Sailor is most likely not in a private area. There will be people around him or her. Second, you may hear traces of that "cover over the heart" that sailors put on without even realizing it. That self protection creates a bit of distance to help service members stay focused and not dwell on how much they miss their loved ones at home. So if your Sailor sounds a little distant, try to understand this dynamic. Finally, if you are sharing bad news over the phone, try to make sure that someone is available to provide emotional support to your loved one wherever he or she is. You can do that by reaching out to the command Chaplain in advance.

**Letters and Mail:** Most sailors can be reached through the mail, but delivery is often delayed. Consider numbering your letters in case they arrive out of order. Make sure you have the full mailing address to ensure delivery. Letters don't have to be long to be appreciated. Share your day's activities, ideas about the future, and feelings. Don't underestimate their impact. Print out a few photos and send with some sticky putty for hanging on the walls, and remember that no one has any privacy, so be thoughtful about what you send.

**Video Conferencing:** While letters and emails are nice, nothing takes the place of seeing your loved one's face! If your Sailor is able to use video conferencing software, be patient with the quirks of technology. Connections get broken, visuals can get pixelated, and other less-than-perfect issues may result from remote locations with weak Internet connections.

## **Supporting Yourself and Your Sailor**

Many people ask about how service members are doing when they are deployed. They may not think to ask about how you are doing. Maintaining smooth sailing on the home front is an enormous job, made extra challenging by the fact that you are also supporting your Sailor who is far from home.

Be vigilant about your own needs and take care of yourself as a top priority. Do you need some rest? Do you need some help with the kids? Time to get some exercise? An escape for a few hours to see a movie? Reach out to your friends and family for the extra help you need. It may not occur to them that these small things can make a big difference to you. There are also many local community service organizations that are committed to helping the spouse at home during a military deployment. Call Military OneSource if you need a place to start. Military OneSource will also provide confidential, short-term counseling to help you get through the hardest points if you need it. Don't feel like you are alone.

## **10 WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR SAILOR WHILE ON DEPLOYMENT**

1. Get organized. Use the checklists to make sure you have everything you need while your Sailor is away.
2. Stay positive. Long separations can seem unbearable. However, they do provide the opportunity for personal growth for both you and your Sailor. Bolster each other's confidence that you can make it through the separation.
3. Manage the home front. Your Sailor will be better able to focus on the mission and stay safer by knowing you can handle daily responsibilities, such as finances, your home, and your vehicle.
4. Discuss solutions. Inevitably, you will face challenges. Discuss solutions with your spouse. Work together to figure things out, and share your successes.
5. Communicate. Staying in touch is essential for both of you. Write letters, send pictures and care packages, and use email. Send cartoons or humorous things you see in a magazine.
6. Take care of yourself. You need to stay healthy and focused. The usual rules of good health apply: Eat well, get exercise, get rest, and drink water. Visit your doctor. Your physical strength and wellbeing will help bolster your emotional health. If you need help, remember there are many resources available for you.
7. Take care of your children. Single parenting while your Sailor is gone is challenging. You may need to ask your friends and family for a little extra help, and if they aren't able, reach out to the FFSC for ideas for how you can get the assistance you need. Call the Chaplain, Ombudsman, or Military OneSource.

Knowing your children are being supported reduces your Sailor's worries. Share stories about what your kids are up to in your letters and emails.

8. Tell your Sailor you love them. Absence really does make the heart grow fonder. Make a point to tell your Sailor that you love him/her every chance you get. Try to limit venting your frustrations directly (find another outlet if you can) so your limited talking time can stay positive.

9. Watch for signs of stress—both at home and in your Sailor. You know your Sailor better than anyone else. Pay attention to signs of stress while deployed. Although everyone has an off day or two, if your Sailor seems consistently moody, angry or depressed, suggest he/she talk with a Chaplain or a trusted friend. The same is true for you and your family. Stay vigilant for signs of emotional pain in yourself and your children, and get whatever help is needed.

10. Ask for assistance when you need it. No one can do everything by himself or herself. Small issues can become large ones if left unattended. The Navy and dozens of other support organizations are there to help you if you need it. Use your resources, and don't give up!

### **Preparing for Homecomings and Reunions**

Reunion is an exciting time. People use countdown clocks, marked calendars, iPhone apps, and countless other ways to countdown to that lovely moment when you have your Sailor in your arms again.

Be sure to talk directly with your Sailor about how he/she wants to mark the homecoming. Some want a big party to see everyone again. Others would just like to go home and have quiet time with the family. Everyone is different, so bridging your expectations or assumptions with the reality of what your Sailor needs and wants is extremely important. It will enable everyone to get the most from the reunion. Remember not to post homecoming dates on Facebook or other social networking sites!

Some ideas to discuss with your Sailor before homecoming:

- Who do you want to meet you at the airport or pier? Immediate family? Parents? Friends?
- What do you want to do first?
- What foods do you want to eat upon return?
- Where would you like to visit (other than home)?
- How will you integrate the children in the homecoming? Children will have many feelings and expectation of their own upon their parent's return. Talk to them about it, and try to address their needs.

### **Reintegration: Finding the New Normal**

Coming home is the easy part. Reintegrating into the family and finding the "new normal" is often the longest part of this journey. Both you and your Sailor have experienced unique challenges over the last year. You have grown individually

and together. Neither of you are exactly the same as the people who said goodbye to each other. In fact, rather than “returning to normal,” your family must now evolve to a “new normal” that reflects the changes you have all been through. This is important to realize and embrace, because it is the reason why reintegration is an experience for the entire family, and not just the sailor. The family has tightened its flanks to address its needs, and now needs to widen the circle to re-admit the Sailor returning home. Make room for your Sailor. Include them in your routines. Be aware that the family will seem different to your Sailor, just as he or she may seem a little different to you.

### **Emotional Challenges of Reintegration**

Your Sailor spent months in a “hyped up” emotional state during deployment. Like many deployed Sailors, he or she may have a “cover” over his heart to create the emotional distance needed to function well during deployment. It takes time, trust and space to unwind from that experience. In addition, stress injuries are not uncommon.

Let your Sailor take the time needed to unravel from deployment. Let them know you will be there for them when they are ready to talk. But also be on the look out for signs and symptoms that suggest that more than time may be needed.

## **CHILDREN AND DEPLOYMENT**

### **Overview**

Deployments are challenging but necessary to the Navy’s mission. They can be tough on a family, especially children. It is key to prepare yourself for when your spouse deploys, but it is also extremely important to prepare your children.

### **Takeaways**

Preparing Children for Deployment  
Coping with Deployment Separation for Children  
Reintegration with Children  
Resources

### **Preparing Children for Deployment**

Children may need help coping with the stress of an upcoming deployment. Reassure them that they will be cared for while Mom or Dad is away. Encourage them to ask any questions they might have. They may not be able to talk about how they are feeling because they may not be sure of their own emotions. Set small goals, or plan activities before the service member leaves so the child has something to look forward to.

Children can respond to a deployment in different ways. Each response is unique to the child.

- Shock, denial, anger or fear
- Sadness that Mom or Dad is leaving
- Feelings of isolation

- Moodiness, whining and irritability
- Testing limits
- Angry out bursts, possibly followed by clinginess
- Acting out at home or school
- Reverting to previously outgrown behaviors

When these feelings or behaviors arise, remind yourself that they are normal responses to a deployment. Listen to and talk with your child.

“Ages and Stages,” found on page 12 of *The Deployment Handbook* ([https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91\\_fleet\\_and\\_family\\_support\\_program/deployment\\_readiness/DeploymentSupportHandbook.pdf](https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91_fleet_and_family_support_program/deployment_readiness/DeploymentSupportHandbook.pdf)), created by CNIC and the Fleet and Family Support Center, shows how children might react to the absence of a parent dependent on their age.

### **Resources:**

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Beneficiary information (Service members’ Group Life Insurance): [www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/sgli.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/sgli.asp)

Command Ombudsman Registry: [www.ombudsmanregistry.org](http://www.ombudsmanregistry.org)

Everyone Serves: [www.everyoneservesbook.com](http://www.everyoneservesbook.com)

Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC): [www.ffsp.navy.mil](http://www.ffsp.navy.mil)

Legal Services Locator: [http://www.jag.navy.mil/legal\\_services/legal\\_services\\_locator\\_rls0.htm](http://www.jag.navy.mil/legal_services/legal_services_locator_rls0.htm)

Military Kids Connect: [www.militarykidsconnect.org](http://www.militarykidsconnect.org)

Military OneSource: [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

Navy Marine Corps Relief Society: <http://www.nmcrs.org>

Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS): <https://navyfamily.navy.mil>

Operation Home front: [www.operationhomefront.org](http://www.operationhomefront.org)

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP): [www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil)

**Publications:**

Deployment Support Handbook, Commander, Navy Installations Command:  
[https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91\\_fleet\\_and\\_family\\_support\\_program/deployment\\_readiness/DeploymentSupportHandbook.pdf](https://www.cnic.navy.mil/content/dam/cnic/hq/pdfs/n91_fleet_and_family_support_program/deployment_readiness/DeploymentSupportHandbook.pdf)

Are You Ready? Guidelines for Navy Family Emergency Preparedness, Naval Services Family Line:  
<http://www.nsfamilyline.org/publications/FamilyLineEmergencyPrep2013.pdf>