

Women who serve in the military and veterans face unique challenges regarding family and children. These issues span from child care during deployment to transitioning back into civilian life, and they often have long-term effects on the women's well-being and their families.

Child Care

Child care is a significant issue for female service members, especially those who are single parents. The military does offer child development centers, but they often have long waitlists, making it difficult for women to secure reliable, affordable child care¹.

Deployment-Related Stress

Deployments can cause significant stress for the entire family. Children may struggle with their mother's absence, leading to emotional and behavioral problems. Meanwhile, deployed mothers can suffer guilt and anxiety about being away from their children.

Pregnancy and Postpartum Support

Pregnancy in the military can be challenging due to physical training requirements and the potential for deployment. After childbirth, returning to duty can be stressful, particularly without adequate maternity leave or breastfeeding support.

Transitioning to Civilian Life

Women veterans transitioning to civilian life may face difficulties securing employment, accessing healthcare (especially reproductive health services), and finding housing. These challenges can create instability for their children and increase the risk of family homelessness.

Mental Health Concerns

Women veterans have higher rates of mental health disorders, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), than their male counterparts or civilian women. These conditions can affect their ability to parent and establish stable family environments.

Policy Response

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive policy responses, including improving childcare options, enhancing mental health services, and providing better support during the transition to civilian life. Legislation, such as the Deborah Sampson Act and the Military Child Care Expansion Act, aims to address some of these challenges. However, further efforts are needed to fully support women service members, veterans, and their families.

Resources

WoVeN ([Women Veterans Network](#)) offers local resources, including The Veteran's Closet, which provides resources to veterans and their families affected by poverty, homelessness, or tragedy.

The **Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Technical Assistance (SMVF TA) Center** collaborates with other agencies and groups to enhance behavioral health services and support for veterans and their families.

The **Coalition to Salute America's Heroes** presents a comprehensive directory of online resources for OIF/OEF veterans and their families. The **National Veterans Memorial and Museum** also provides resources for veterans, their families, and caregivers about VA services.

Military OneSource offers a wealth of parenting resources, benefits, and programs to help manage the journey through childhood and adolescence³. Furthermore, the **Department of Health and Human Services** has a Military Family Resource Area and Knowledge Bank, providing a database of information about the challenges facing military families and children.



MILITARY &
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Past, Present & Future