

Families Serve Too: Military Spouse Well-Being After Separation From Active Duty Service

Findings from the Millennium Cohort Family Study

Military spouses are often just as invested in the military as their active duty spouse, which makes separating from active duty a trying time for all.

Compared to families remaining in active duty, spouses whose families transitioned from active duty experienced:




- Increased post-traumatic stress symptoms
- A decline in the quality of marital relationships
- Less work-family conflict





There were certain factors that existed before the military family separated from active duty that impacted how well a military spouse adjusted following the transition out of military life:

Spouses' initial well-being and preparedness to face challenges (e.g., psychological and physical health; family relationship quality) was the most consistent factor related to adjustment over time.

Factors that increased risk for poorer outcomes included:

-  Having two or more children under the age of 5
-  Experiencing financial stress
-  Marriage to a service member with poorer mental health

Factors that decreased risk for poorer outcomes included:

-  Having a strong social support network
-  Having strong feelings of personal mastery (i.e., belief that one has control over the events in their life)

DoD offers support to families as well as service members during the transition out of service life:

- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-life-cycle/separation-transition/military-separation-retirement/transition-assistance-programs-and-resources/>
- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-life-cycle/separation-transition/>

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The Millennium Cohort Family Study follows spouses of junior military personnel for 21 years to help the Department of Defense understand the needs of families and provide better support.

