

School-based interventions could benefit children from military families

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David Albright, an assistant professor at the University of Missouri, says military children are an overlooked population in need of more attention from school officials. Credit: University of Missouri

Nearly 2 million children in the United States have experienced a parent's military deployment. Previous research has shown that these children may be at increased risk for emotional, behavioral and relationship difficulties, yet little is known about how best to address military children's specialized needs. Now, an MU researcher says school-based interventions could benefit children whose parents have deployed.

David Albright, an assistant professor at the MU School of Social Work, says [military children](#) are an overlooked population in need of more attention from school officials. To best help military children, teachers,

administrators, guidance counselors and social workers should be aware of military culture and how it may influence children's behaviors at school.

"Many children who act out in school are asked about common causes of bad behavior, such as bullying or parents' divorce," Albright said.

"Rarely are children asked whether parents or siblings serve in the military. If their loved ones are away, these children may be experiencing feelings of separation or worrying about whether their parents will be injured or killed. If family members recently have returned from active duty, they may be displaying symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) that can make children's home lives more stressful."

Albright recommends school counselors, [social workers](#), teachers and administrators re-examine how they evaluate children who are struggling or misbehaving in school. Albright says that when asking children about factors at home, school officials should determine whether parents or siblings are deployed or have been deployed because those experiences affect children's home lives and may reflect in their behaviors at school.

Schools can develop better interventions to help these children once officials begin to ask if behavioral problems may be related to parents' military experience, Albright said.

"Right now, we don't have a set of approved best practices for supporting children from military families," Albright said. "If schools begin asking whether family members serve, then we can better help these children."

Albright suggests developing interventions that could be implemented in schools that directly target military [children](#) and their [family members](#).

More information: Albright recently co-authored, "Effects of School-Based Interventions With U.S. Military-Connected Children: A Systematic Review," which was published in *Research on Social Work Practice*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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