Since 2001, more than 800,000 American parents have been deployed for military service overseas leaving nearly 2 million children without one or both of their parents present in their daily lives. These children are vulnerable to a number of risk factors that could adversely affect their mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Because children spend the majority of their weekdays attending school, faculty and staff at schools with large numbers of military children have been making some important observations.

Although some of these children seem to be coping well with parental deployment, there are still several areas of concern. Anxiety related to parental absence, increased responsibilities at home, and poor mental health of the non-deployed caregiver appear to be negatively affecting school performance for some children. This anxiety may be displayed as academic, social, emotional, and behavioral problems at school.

Research suggests that, overall, both reading and math scores, as well as scores on standardized tests, are lower for military children during parental deployment (Chandra, et al, 2010). Children whose parents are overseas may experience mood swings, overwhelming anxiety, and sleep disturbance, all of which can cause poor performance at school.

What is important to realize in these situations is that children of deployed parents are increasingly relying on the school faculty and staff for social and emotional support. They may seek to fill a void that a lack of attention at home has created and can become needy.
or clingy. If a child exhibits severe attachment or emotional issues then the school counselor or other mental health professional should be notified.

Listening, learning and living together, it’s the science of life. “Family Album” is a co-production of UF/IFAS Extension, the UF/IFAS Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at http://www.familyalbumradio.org.

To listen to this segment: http://radiosource.net/radio_stories/316.mp3

**References**
