
Oregon Military-youth Community Capacity: Social-support Planning & Program Facilitation

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University of Oregon
2009

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Abstract

National Guard and Reserve families are less integrated into the military way of life, and compared to active duty families experience the greatest stress concerning deployment. Youth from military families often experience social isolation stemming from the inability of peers and others in their environment to understand their deployment experience. Oregon's largest deployment of service-members (and number of affected youth) since WWII will conclude throughout 2010. Oregon does not have active military installations providing adequate social-support resources for military-youth. Youth of Oregon Guard and Reserve families come from a variety of areas without any commonplace to conduct social-support activities. There is a demand for organized day-events and overnight camp programs facilitating curriculum that helps military-youth make friends with other military-youth and enhances personal sensations of belonging and identity with Oregon's military-community. This report satisfies three goals; to highlight the need for collaborative community capacity building by Oregon military-youth stakeholder groups, to inform the overall development of social-support programming throughout Oregon, and to specifically inform the facilitation of Oregon's *Operation Purple*® program. A needs assessment survey asked non-deployed parents questions relating to formal support program participation. Survey respondents prioritized program formats, curriculum and activities, and desired program outcomes. Completed surveys from a variety of Oregon regions did not indicate regional variations in military-youth social-support needs. This needs assessment reflects community planning efforts to invest in community capacity building; to support the ability of Oregon's military-community to identify their own needs and then as Planners to search out and facilitate local and regional solutions for them. Further research involving more comprehensive need assessments, and involving various public and nonprofit stakeholders is needed to fully develop Oregon's military-youth community support network. Recommendations outline needed action to provide effective social-support for Oregon's military-youth throughout the 2010 mass reintegration process.

Introduction: Outlining the Problem

There are more service-members from Oregon deployed with the military in 2009 than at any time since WWII. Consequently, there is a significant number of Oregon youth coping with one or more parents deployed; some for the second or third time. Deployment is comprised of three distinct phases of a cycle (pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment; the later also referred to as reintegration). There are practically an infinite number of personal perspectives associated with the US military, the nuances of military deployments, and those whose lives are deeply affected by the military deployment of a loved one.

Oregon's military-community is unique in that it is primarily affiliated with the National Guard and not supported by any federally active military installation. Youth of National Guard and Reserve families (those with parents who train on weekends and during summer months rather than full-time year-round) face special challenges and develop a special set of support needs associated with their deployment experience. Oregon's greater military-community is facing complex issues associated with the absence of active military installations, military-youth support resources, and a commonplace associated with social-support. Oregon's military-youth community faces special challenges without the same support structures active military-youth have.

Oregon's lack of a common place for providing adequate social-support programming is further complicated by a lack of recognition and understanding of Oregon's military-youth community. No published academic research informs programs or curriculum specifically for National Guard or Reserve-focused social-support programs. Moreover, no prior research assesses the effects of deployment on Oregon military-youth specifically or is able to inform program curriculum supporting Oregon-youth through the deployment experience. *Operation: Military Kids*, a national organization operating in Oregon with other organizations are facilitating social-support curriculum. However, the degree to which it is informed by academic research is unknown.

Operation Purple® Camp, a program of the National Military Family Association, has played a major role in providing social-support for military-youth in Oregon. While this program is for all military-youth regardless of their experience with deployment, it has become a significant tool in delivering social-support to Oregon military-youth needing a common *place* to connect with others experiencing deployment. Grant funding for *Operation Purple* has remained relatively steady since 2006. Deployment has affected a much greater number of Oregon youth in 2009; with roughly 1500 Oregon youth affected by deployment, funding allowed only 200 to attend. The lack of formal programs supporting Oregon military-youth during deployment motivated Ethan Erickson (Community and Regional Planning student with the University of Oregon, and Executive Director of Tsuga Community Commission LLC) to conduct this needs assessment. Table 1 shows the number of Oregon youth affected by deployment and the number of them who have attended *Operation Purple* from 2005 to 2009.

Year	Service-members Deployed		Deployment Theatre			Youth	Operation Purple Participants
	Total	Unit(s)	Iraq	Afghanistan	Other	Affected	
2005	1674	41 INF Brig.	1526	97	51	838	0
2006	1271	2-162 INF	305	955	11	635	110
2007	1316	1-186 INF	343	956	17	658	105
2008	413	41 INF Brig.	377	18	18	205	180
2009	2985	41 INF Brig.	2967	18	0	1485	200

Table 1: Oregon youth affected by deployment, attended *Operation Purple* from 2005 to 2009

This report is the first in Oregon to investigate the social-support needs of Oregon’s military-youth community or provide normative feedback to military-youth social-support programs operating in Oregon. This report discusses issues identified within academic literature pertaining to military-youth and considers survey respondent data regarding social-support program functions from the perspective of non-deployed parents of Oregon military-youth.

The recent increased demand (shortfall in *Operation Purple* attendance) for social-support programming coupled with the absence of specific facilities where formal social-support can be facilitated is a complex issue requiring Oregon’s military-family support leadership to develop a series of Oregon military-youth community goals. This report aims to:

1. Highlight the need for collaborative investment in Oregon’s military-youth community capacity and the networks needed to facilitate targeted social-support
2. Inform future social-support curriculum for Oregon military-youth programming
3. Analyze Oregon’s *Operation Purple* Camp schedule, activities, and curriculum, and provide feedback to TCC staff refining the facilitation of *Operation Purple* to more effectively meet the needs of Oregon’s unique and emerging military-youth community

Stakeholders and Community Partners

Military-Youth and their Caretakers

Military-youth (sometimes self-identified as “*military-brat*”) are traditionally those who live and attend school on a federal military installation. Because Oregon does not have any military installations, this report discusses “*military-youth*” as those who experience the deployment of a parent or guardian. Non-deployed parents are referred to within this report as military-parents or “*Caretakers*” during the deployment cycle. In some cases, a caretaker is a grandparent, relative, or even a family-friend.

Oregon Military Leadership

Recently, various Commissioned and Enlisted service-members have taken a significant interest in the development of Oregon’s military-youth community. Paul Evans is the military affairs policy advisor to Oregon Governor Kulongoski and a field-grade officer with Oregon’s Army National Guard. Evans coordinated Oregon’s first annual military-family appreciation day

celebration taking place in eleven Oregon communities. Evans provided the political access to field the need assessment survey during these community events. Major General Raymond F. Rees (Oregon Adjutant General) and Command Sergeant Major Brunk Conley coordinated the Home-front Heroes of Oregon (H²O) community festival in Salem, Oregon for military-youth. Conley provided the access to field the need assessment survey during the H²O event.

Social-support Providers

Although no current research is taking place by mental-health practitioners to understand the long-term effects of deployment on Oregon youth, individual practitioners and clinicians have become more involved with social-support programs in Oregon. Betty Groshong and Judy Rotondi are two Mental Health Consultants working with TCC and Oregon's Operation Purple program.

Oregon's *Operation: Military Kids* (OMK) program facilitates activities supporting military-youth. The goal of OMK programming is to, "work with community partners and provide youth program opportunities for elementary school, middle school, and teenaged youth connecting them to support resources where they live." Oregon's OMK program has a *Mobile Tech-lab* with laptops that military-youth have used to send emails to their deployed parents. Although Oregon's OMK program has not yet facilitated multi-day specialized program curriculum helping military-youth develop coping skills, it has recently coordinated two free / no-cost recreation events at a local family-entertainment facility helping military-youth interact with other military-youth.

Tsuga Community Commission LLC (TCC) began facilitating Oregon's *Operation Purple* program in 2008. TCC is working to establish itself as a social-service community planning organization and is motivated by the work of Oregon's OMK program. TCC is committed to working with the above referenced stakeholder entities to coordinate and facilitate Oregon's military-youth social-support network through social planning and community planning practices.

Literature Review

Overview

Academic literature and publications from national military organizations were reviewed for issues associated with military-youth and the effects of deployment on military-youth. Theoretical concepts associated with community development including Social Capital and Community Capacity became a secondary focus of the literature review. Finally, needs assessment models were reviewed as it was determined that a social-support needs assessment was required to contextualize these concepts and specifically understand gaps in social-service provision. The following literature review outlines issues associated with Oregon's military-youth community, the deployment experience, and formal program services helping youth practice resiliency throughout their coping with the deployment of a loved one.

Nitzberg (2005) and Colyn (2008) both argue that residential camp communities serve well to increase interpersonal support and personal resiliency in young people.

Needs Assessments

Community Planners conduct needs assessments to identify, characterize, and document needed services. A series of data collection activities (surveys or focus groups) can help identify gaps in service provision. Gathered data offers Planners the information they need to allocate and coordinate resources. Needs assessment models generally focus on the identification and prioritization of needs, and then the identification and analysis of formal and informal resources available in the community (Hernandez-plaza, Pozo & Alonso 2004).

Research within the Military Arena

MacDermid (2008) and his colleagues, and Huebner and Mancini (2005) agree there is a large gap in literature addressing the long-term effects of deployment on youth of military families. Most studies focused on military-youth have studied the relationship between children and their nonmilitary spouse (Huebner et al. 2009). Few studies document the impact of deployments on military families and children; one explanation is that *Operation Enduring Freedom* (Afghanistan) and *Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Iraq) are ongoing and there has not been time to complete needed research (MacDermid et al. 2008, Huebner et al. 2009).

Barriers preventing outreach to military families and communities continue to exist in research and in practice; including assumptions about the self-sufficiency of the military and their ideological ambivalence toward warfare (Hoshmand & Hoshmand 2007). Perhaps a disincentive in becoming involved with emergent problems with military communities is the emphasis on theory-generated research questions in academia, as opposed to collaborative problem finding by practitioners responding to needs in the lives of people and communities (Hoshmand & Hoshmand 2007). Although many of the problems experienced by military-youth call for collaborative efforts both within psychology and with other disciplines, professional overspecialization may have prevented such collaboration (Hoshmand & Hoshmand 2007).

National Guard and Reservist Culture

Guard and Reserve families facing deployment find themselves making a sudden transition to managing new challenges associated with the active-duty military lifestyle. Integrating the “suddenly military” families and youth into support systems needs to begin prior to the activation of service-members and continue through reintegration (Jumper 2005).

Family descriptions of issues they faced during all phases of deployment indicate a spiral and not a cycle; Guard-families never come back to the same place they started (Jumper 2005). Although recent efforts in Oregon have supported the unique experience of Guard youth through deployment, National Guard and Reserve families are still less integrated into the military way of life (Burrell, Durand & Fortado 2003) and compared to active duty families, experience the greatest stress concerning deployment length (Jumper 2005). Additionally,

while efforts in Oregon have been directed at preparing Guard families to manage the financial and legal effects associated with deployment, Guard and Reserve families generally live farther from installations and unit support networks, and are more disadvantaged when preparing their legal, financial and healthcare situations to accommodate deployment (Wheeler 2004 / MacDermid et al. 2008).

While parent responsibilities are harder to manage due to deployment, so is the ability of military-youth to identify with their circumstances and understand how they can remain resilient throughout the varied phases of deployment. Oregon's Joint Family Support Assistance Program has begun to address this issue and help Oregon's "suddenly military" families and their youth avoid feeling as some have in recent years concerning their unexpected challenges associated with deployment.

"I think the hardest part for my family was the fact that as a Guard family, we had never been through a deployment before. I knew nothing about that life, the phases, anything. I felt very unsure about where my resources were and who to call for help. I really think that regardless of military status, every family needs to have a basic knowledge of deployment life... be it written resources, workshops, what have you." – Air National Guard Spouse (Jumper 2005, 9)

The Deployment Experience of National Guard & Reservist Youth

In recent years, we have confirmed that children whose parents serve with the Guard or Reserve face special challenges related to deployment; the support these children receive before, during, and after deployment is critical (Levin & Deynard 2005). Children of deployed Guard and Reserve service-members often experience a sense of social isolation stemming from the inability of peers and others in their environment to understand the challenges they face due to the deployment of a parent (Harrison & Vannest 2008).

For some families (military or otherwise), restructuring family duties and responsibilities may be a *normal* occurrence. However, when family restructuring involves the long-term absence of a parent it becomes '*disruptive*.' Military-youth often take on new duties at home throughout a deployment; disrupting their sense of normalcy (Levin & Deynard 2005 / Huebner & Mancini 2005). Again, upon reunification mixed emotions and the restructuring of family duties and is disruptive to their sense of normalcy (Levin & Deynard 2005). From the deployed parent's point of view, the family should pick up where they left off when the deployment occurred, however from the child's point of view, relationships with returning parents need to be updated to match who the child has become (Levin & Deynard 2005). In some cases, the child has been fulfilling the role of a parent for siblings in their absence (Huebner & Mancini 2005).

Even two-parent families find that the deployment of one parent often prompts the other to move nearer to relatives forcing children to change schools and leave friends (Lamberg 2006). Teachers and service providers should be aware of the potential emotional and behavioral needs of military-youth and the subsequent gap in learning that can occur when these students'

needs are not addressed – Children of deployed reservists can end up as a false negative, not receiving services because their learning and behavior issues are deemed temporary, or as a false positive, receiving referrals for services they do not need (Harrison & Vannest 2008).

Generating Social Capital

Social Capital theory suggests that social networks have value and affect the productivity of individuals and groups (Putnam 2000). Academic discussions of community building tend to include the notion of social capital as the level of trustworthiness within a social environment and the extent to which people feel obligated to one another (Temkin & Rohe 1998). Over the past decade, Temkin and Rohe (1998), Putnam (2000 & 2003), Huebner and Mancini (2005), Hoshmand and Hoshmand (2007), and MacDermid (2008) all agree that although measuring social capital quantitatively is difficult, the sense of belonging to a social network generates individual benefits associated with social capital experienced within that group.

Nationally, parents are providing fewer social networks and traditions for their children in recent decades; the result being fewer networks for children to make the passage to a productive adulthood through learned traditions (norms, values, and beliefs) influencing their personal community identity (Cote' 2005). Providing appropriate social networks for youth can become even more difficult when non-deployed parents move their military-youth to a new house or school due to deployment. Schools and organized camp programs aimed at creating opportunity for informal social-support have begun to take on the role of supporting military-youth by teaching coping skills and providing normative cultural guidance so military-youth feel validated when sharing their feelings, needs, and fears pertaining to deployment (Harrison & Vannest 2008). Many adolescents experiencing deployment are wary of the type of support offered by adults, yet are particularly responsive to social networks with other adolescents with deployed parents; formal programs should intentionally develop networking skills among adolescents that include how to communicate feelings and develop bonds with other military adolescents (Huebner & Mancini 2005).

Face-to-face communication in small-group settings is an effective way to teach community-building skills and setting the conditions for earning trust and creating empathy (Putnam 2003). Activities and conversations under these conditions yield personal sensations of belonging and identifying with a community. Generating personal sensations of social capital helps military-youth manage their feelings of isolation associated with the deployment of a parent.

Informal Support and Resiliency through Formal Programming

Formal support is that offered through structured programming offered by military units, schools, or community organizations. Informal (or interpersonal) support refers to the positive personal effects from feeling others can identify with their life-situation; this typically results from sharing a common bonding experience with fellow formal program Participants. Because the purpose of formal programs supporting Oregon military-youth is to create residual support networks when the program is completed, the primary function of formal networks should be the support of informal networks (Huebner et al. 2009).

Given that a large proportion of Oregon's current military population comprises service-members from the National Guard, it is important to expand the vision of formal support systems to include nonprofit and community organizations (Huebner et al. 2009). It is common mantra within military culture to hear the expression, "we take care of our own." However, given that Oregon is primarily a National Guard state, Oregon's military-community and the adjacent military-community programs would mutually benefit from developing a set of community goals involving local community organizations. As communities are successful in accomplishing their mutual military / civilian community goals, social capital accrues and a mutual web of support resources envelopes military families (and their youth); reciprocal and synergetic effects emerge from the combination of formal and informal sources of support (Huebner et al. 2009).

It is important to recognize the link between formal social-support programs, the potential benefit of formal programs to generate informal support, for increased informal support to yield a shared sense of belonging (social capital), and finally for social capital to become the motivation for military-youth to remain resilient and positively cope with their deployment experience. It is also important to recognize the link between this theoretical process and the community goal collaboration required by Oregon's military-youth community supporters.

Social Planning – Community Capacity Building

Reserve and National Guard communities are becoming contiguous with civilian communities – The definition of *Military Community* no long refers to self-contained communities on military bases (Hoshmand & Hoshmand 2007). Moreover, a vision for how military communities will be structured in the future, or practice value based traditions is unclear.

Community capacity is conceptualized as being composed of two essential elements, *shared responsibility* for the general welfare of the community and its members, and *collective competence* demonstrating a community's ability to take advantage of opportunities to address their needs through programs and other actions (Huebner et al. 2009). Planners must be direct about investing in community capacity building; supporting the ability of communities to identify their own needs and as Planners to search out and enact solutions for them (Kubisch 2005).

Methodology

A statewide survey became the primary research instrument used to address the goals of this report; informing the curriculum and structure of future social-support programs including Oregon's *Operation Purple* program. The survey instrument was fielded across a variety of Oregon regions intending to identify regional variations in military-youth social-support needs. Quantitative respondent data was analyzed to develop qualitative findings.

Primary Research Investigation

What type of social-support programming (structure, activities, and outcomes) can local youth development organizations build and facilitate throughout Oregon to socially-support Oregon's military-youth community experiencing deployment?

Secondary Investigation

How do needs assessment findings inform TCC's facilitation of Oregon's Operation Purple program?

The Survey Instrument

A survey instrument targeted parent perspectives of those fulfilling the role as primary caretaker of military-youth during Oregon deployments. The survey asked questions relating to formal support programs and informal action by caretakers to connect their military-youth with other military-youth during deployment. Several questions ask about social-support services desired at each phase of deployment (before deployment, during deployment, and during reintegration). Several questions ask respondents to prioritize activities and program outcomes on a four-choice spectrum.

The survey instrument was organized into five basic sections investigating:

1. Age and zip code demographic data of military-youth and their caretaker
2. Prior military-youth experience with deployment and formal support-program participation
3. Caretaker intentions for youth to participate in specific support-program formats
4. Prioritized program outcomes including types of activities and life-skills development
5. Perceptions of readiness to support military-youth at home, in school, and in the community

Procedures

Fielding the Research Instrument

Surveys were fielded during Oregon's first Annual "Military Family Appreciation Day" community events in four of eleven Oregon communities (LaGrande, Bend, Springfield, and Canby) and during the "Home front Heroes of Oregon" event in Salem. These community events for Oregon military-families took place in May of 2009 toward the beginning of Oregon's largest deployment since WWII. University of Oregon's Office for the Protection of Human Subjects authorized the research instrument and survey methodology.

Volunteers were briefed on methodology protocols and traveled from their home locations to the communities listed above to mingle and socialize with military-families during the above-described events. Volunteers were instructed to follow a scripted recruitment-statement located on the cover sheet of the survey instrument. Adults were casually asked if they met the sample criteria (Adult Oregon residents acting as primary caretaker of at least one child currently coping with the military deployment of at least one parent). If the approached adult self identified as meeting the criteria, they were asked to complete the anonymous paper survey-instrument and

return it to a cardboard box maintained by the survey volunteer. Surveys typically took three to four minutes to complete. Completed surveys were gathered and analyzed the following week.

Operation Purple Analysis

Oregon's *Operation Purple* weekly schedule was analyzed within the context of survey findings. Program activities, protocols, and mission statements were compared to survey findings to affirm, inform, or refine the overall facilitation of Oregon's *Operation Purple* program.

Limitations

There are several limitations to account for when considering the number of complex issues involved with needs assessment methodology. The most significant limitation of this data is that the small sample size does not provide a rigorous data sample informing public policy decisions. Although the number of completed surveys was below expectations (34 from a goal of 100), the sample is positively representative of Oregon military-youth caretaker populations impacted by deployment and effectively samples various Oregon regions. While surveys were fielded across a number of Oregon regions, analysis suggests the lack of observable regional variation in social-support needs due to the small data sample. Likewise, no observable variations resulted from a secondary analysis of prior experience with deployment and other factors considered.

This needs assessment was challenged to reach and sample a dispersed population across Oregon; a challenge amplified by the fact that a portion of military-youth and their caretakers move throughout Oregon or leave the state due to deployment. Many military-youth caretakers live where there is no internet access. The process of surveying caretakers where and when they come together during community events may or may not have been as effective as an internet supported survey process.

The survey instrument samples adult perceptions of military-youth and does not account for military-youth opinions or intentions to participate in social-support programs. Caretaker perspectives recorded during the beginning of a deployment may change toward the end of a deployment cycle; different yet during the reintegration process.

This needs assessment targeted adult perspectives because research involving youth requires a more rigorous human-subjects protocol authorization and requires additional administrative tasks acquiring parental permission to involve youth in social research. Future research investigating social-support needs may seek direct military-youth perspectives at varied stages of the deployment cycle to mitigate the effects of complex spurious factors associated with only sampling caretaker perspectives. Following research should consider changes in youth perceptions of belonging to Oregon's military-youth community, changes in interpersonal relationships between Oregon military-youth, and the degree to which formal programming curriculum does or does not increase social capital within Oregon's military-youth community.

Data Analysis & Key Findings

Results

Observation from volunteers regarding the atmosphere of the community events where surveys were fielded suggests there was effective participation by support-provider organizations during these events yet very little attendance of military-families. Most (more than half) people present at four of the military-family community events were providing services or representing a community organization. Thirty-four surveys were completed sampling 74 of 1,485 youth experiencing deployment in 2009 (5% of the total sample population). The smaller data sample might suggest that due to the lack of military installations, Oregon military-families are still unaware of formal program opportunities and community events where they can acquire support resources and provide their military-youth with structured opportunities to increase Oregon military-youth community social capital. Another variable to consider is that because the survey was fielded in May 2009 (during the same time Oregon military-families were preparing to deploy) that families prioritized being at home together rather than out in the community.

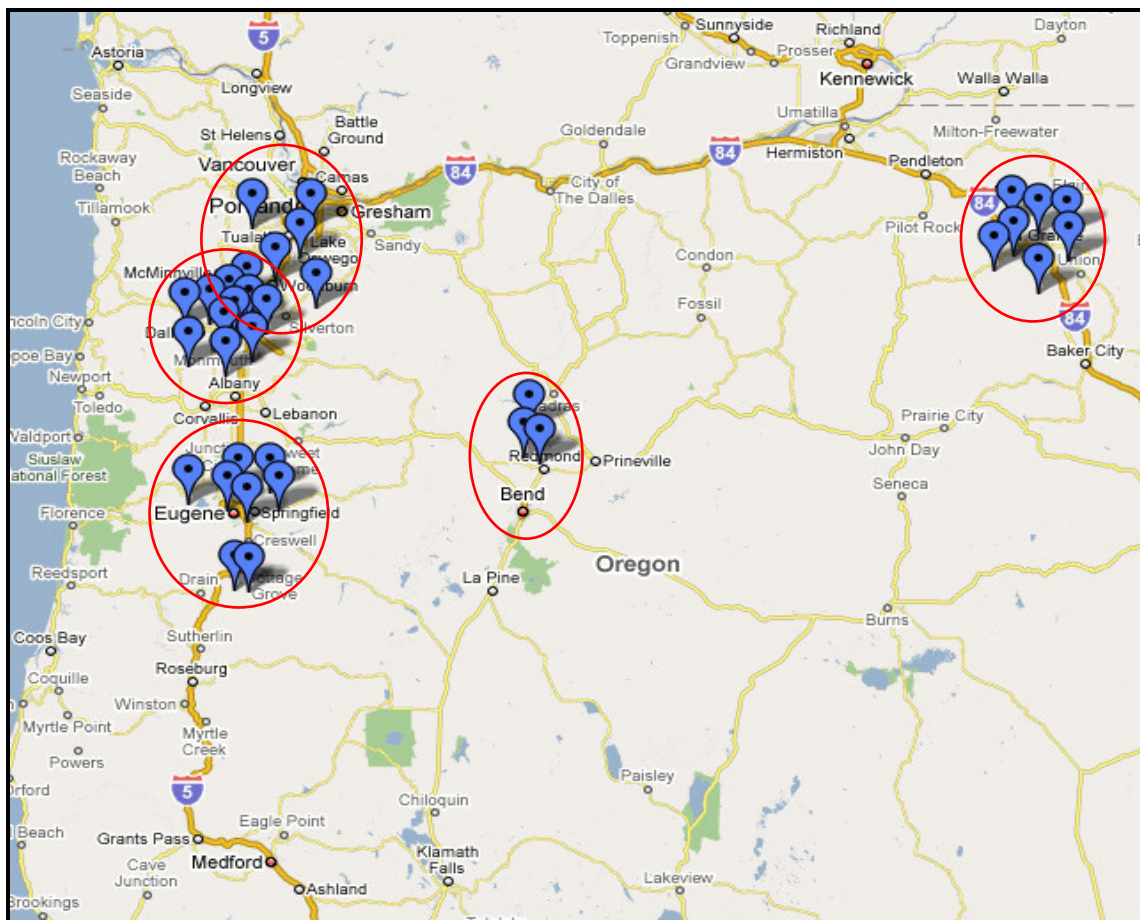


Figure 1: Geographical dispersion of data sample (n = 34)

Survey results are geographically clustered across Oregon due to the limited number of volunteers and because of the communities selected for sampling. Survey respondents did not provide demographic information linking them to their survey responses to ensure confidentiality. However, it was observed that three surveys were completed from the Oregon Military-Family Appreciation Day event in Bend, Oregon and yet none of the survey respondents indicated their residence to be from Bend, Oregon zip codes. Corresponding with the three completed surveys from the Bend, Oregon event are three data cases located within the Bend, Oregon satellite community of Redmond, Oregon to the north. This observation reinforces that this particular survey method of sampling zip code locations of military-youth provides more accurate information for placing social-support programs throughout the state. Highlighting the lack of place associated with social-support programs, sub-military-youth communities can develop localized sensations of belonging and specific schools and community organizations located within concentrations of military-youth can respond by more accurately creating appropriate *places* for social-support programs.

Demographics

Demographic data is important when regionally targeting future programs throughout Oregon. Survey respondents indicated the age and zip code location of the caretaker and their military-youth. The survey asks whether military-youth had experienced a prior deployment, or have moved to a different house or school because of the current deployment.

Total Youth Represented	Average Youth per Respondent	Average Age of Youth Represented
74	2.2	9.2

Table 2: Oregon military-youth Demographics

Demographic analysis found that 21% of Oregon military-youth have recently coped with more than one deployment, and that the same percentage of Oregon military-youth (not necessarily the same data cases) moved to a new house due to 2009 deployment circumstances. Of those who moved to a new house in 2009 because of deployment, 15% are attending a new school. Oregon military-youth moving to new residential locations or schools during deployment is one factor adding complexity to the understanding of Oregon military-youth social-support needs; this data should be considered by educators and service providers when developing unique social-support curriculum to address these issues.

New House due to Current Deployment	New School due to Current Deployment
21%	15%

Table 3: Oregon military-youth relocated due to deployment

Perceptions of Readiness to Support Military-youth

Respondent perceptions are important to record and communicate to policy makers interested in constituent perspectives. Although support was not specified as emotional, financial, or otherwise, respondents indicated their perceptions of preparedness and readiness of themselves the home caretaker, the military-youth's school, and the greater community to support military-youth through all three phases of the deployment cycle. Community in this case was not implied as exclusively military or civilian.

“Do you feel prepared to support your child through the deployment experience?”
 “Is your child’s school prepared to support your child through the deployment experience?”
 “Is your community prepared to support your child through the deployment experience?”

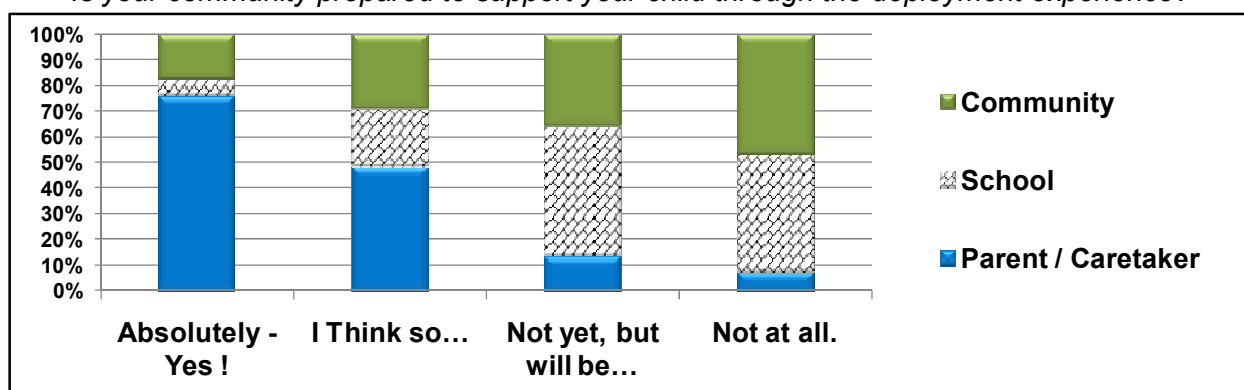


Figure 2: Caretaker perceptions of readiness to support Oregon military-youth through deployment (n = 34)

Oregon military-youth caretakers feel personally better prepared than they feel their child's school or the community to be in *supporting* their military-youth through all three phases of the deployment cycle.

Military-youth Programming in Oregon

Showing changes over time of formal support program participation (e.g. OMK or *Operation Purple* events) might become valuable information to public sector officials allocating budgets for military-family support programs. Caretaker intentions for their military-youth to participate in certain types of future programs (if made available) is important to record and present to public and nonprofit entities interested in developing well-received program formats to military-families. Survey respondents indicated the types of prior program formats their military-youth recently attended and the type of program formats they would be interested in attending in the future.

Prior Program Attendance

Informational interviews with military family-support specialists (Kochosky 2009) catalogued and characterized the types of programming military-youth have had the opportunity to attend. Although knowledge or awareness of existing social-support programs for military-youth was not the purpose of this needs assessment, understanding what programs actually have been attended did fall within the scope of this project.

Prior support programs for military-youth listed on the survey instrument were:

- **Family Readiness Group (FRG) events** – Three-hour picnic or potluck events held at local Guard drill-floors or local parks; initiated by Guard family support personnel
- **Family Education events** – Traditionally more serious than Family Readiness Group events where families receive printed materials and attend instructional briefings
- **Other Day-events** – Structured activities held at theme parks or family entertainment centers (e.g. *JJ Jump*, *Oaks Amusement Park*, or *Operation: Military Kids* events)
- **Overnight residential camps** – Contiguous multi-day and night programs facilitating community development curriculum in addition to the type of activities and goals of single day events (e.g. *Operation Purple* or other programs held at typical summer camp venues)
- **School activities** – Programs facilitated through public or private schools helping youth cope with deployment experiences (e.g. OMK Military Child Education Coalition workshop)

“What type of military-youth programs has your child participated in previously?”

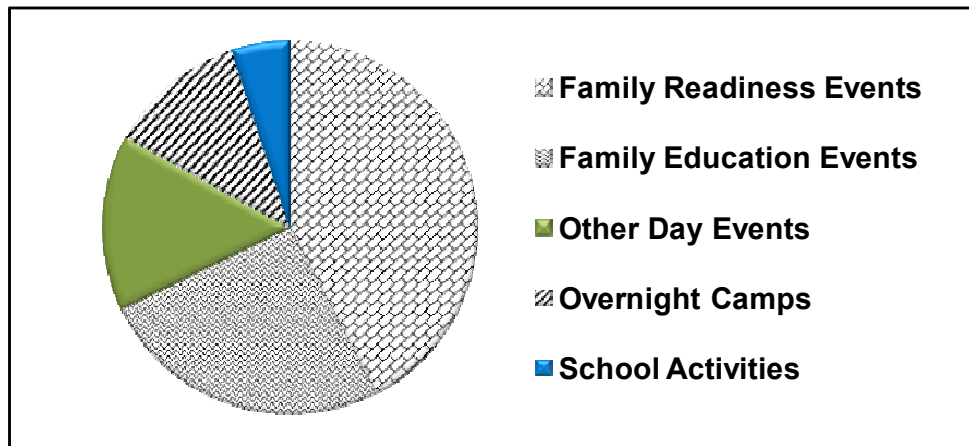


Figure 3: Prior program participation by Oregon military-youth (n = 34)

It is difficult to assess the pros and cons associated with the structure of military-youth programs without considering the goal of each program specifically. Informal observations of prior FRG, OMK, and TCC programs suggests appropriate structures are being chosen to support respective program goals. FRG events assemble military-families (and sometimes their youth) for short periods during the day or evening. OMK events provide opportunities for military-youth to recreate together and socialize with peers experiencing deployment. The TCC facilitated National Military Family Association *Operation Purple* program provides a continuous multiple-day residential camp experience focused on developing social capital and positive community-association with Oregon’s greater military-community.

Future Social-Support Programming

Program Activities

Understanding the type of activities and program outcomes desired by military-parents is important when creating curriculum and program goals. Survey respondents indicated the type of activities and life-skills development they felt were most appropriate for programs supporting Oregon military-youth. Excluding curriculum provided by the National Military Family Association's *Operation Purple* program, there is no prior knowledge of social-support programs for Oregon military-youth intentionally pursuing certain activities or curriculum for the purposes of fulfilling specialized program outcomes. While prior attended programs have been well received by military-youth caretakers, needs assessment data suggests a demand for intentionally including outdoor physical fitness, military-themed curriculum, art projects, environmental education, and community service.

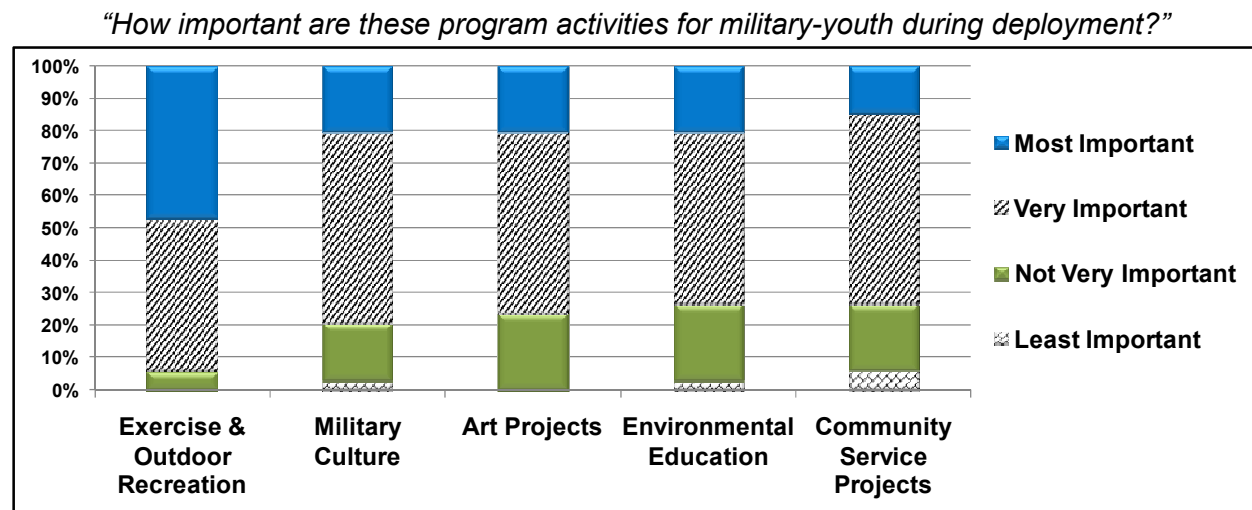


Figure 4: Prioritized program activities for military-youth during deployment (n = 34)

Figure 4 shows that among a list of positive activities, all are considered more important than less important. The goal associated with these questions within the survey was to determine relative importance of activities from a list of positive options.

Program Outcomes

Beyond specific activities, military-youth caretakers want their youth experiencing deployment to learn community-building skills like earning trust and building friendships with other military-youth while learning communication skills and becoming comfortable discussing their experience coping with a deployed parent.

Figure 5 shows that community-building skills (including making new friends with military-youth) and communication skills (including becoming comfortable discussing their deployment experience) are both significantly important to military-youth caretakers. However, notable is that *making new friends with other military-youth* specifically is relatively more important than *learning community-building skills* generally, just as *becoming comfortable discussing the deployment* specifically, is relatively more important than *learning communication skills* generally.

“How important is it that military-youth learn Community-building or Communication skills?”
 “How important is it that military-youth make friends with other military-youth?”
 “How important is it that military-youth become comfortable discussing the deployment?”

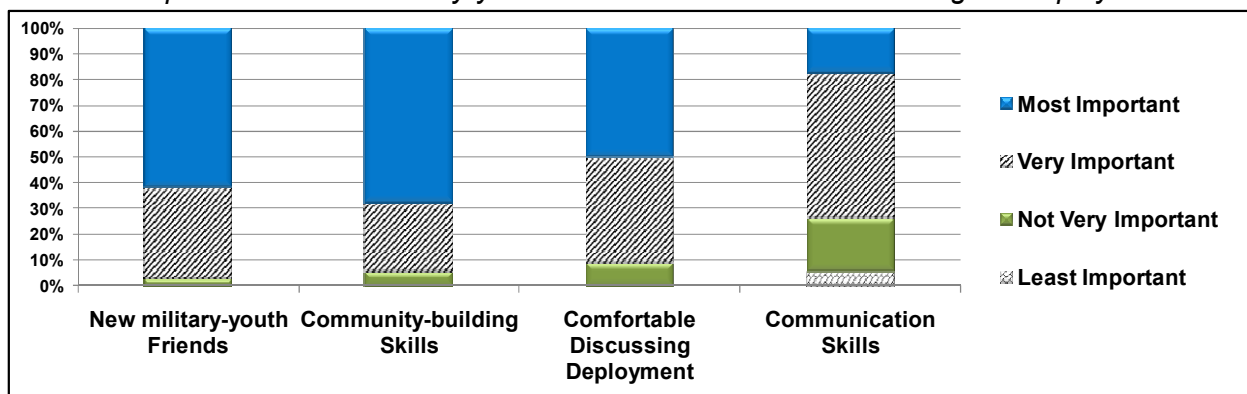


Figure 5: Prioritized life-skill program outcomes building military-youth resiliency

These parent-prioritized program outcomes are an important context in which to understand the process of generating social capital and individual benefits of sense of belonging. The literature indicates that children with deployed parents often experience sensations of isolation stemming from the inability of peers in their environment to understand their reality. The literature suggests levels of trust within a social environment to enhance feelings of obligation to one another (social capital) and that military-youth become more resilient and feel validated when sharing their feelings, needs, and fears pertaining to deployment. The literature also recommends that programs should intentionally develop networking skills among military-youth that include how to communicate with other military-youth and develop bonds of understanding regarding their mutual experiences with deployment. Data in Figure 5 affirms that caretaker perceptions reflect the literature regarding the importance of these outcomes of future social-support programs for Oregon military-youth.

Program Formats

Survey respondents indicated the types of program formats they felt would best support Oregon military-youth and best deliver the activities and outcomes discussed earlier in the Findings section. Respondents indicated that during deployment, and during the summer months of a deployment cycle to be the most helpful times for all types of program formats to occur. Survey respondents indicated weekends as the best time for day-events to occur regardless of deployment phase. Why respondents indicated these times to be most helpful is unknown.

“What types of military-youth programs would your child attend in the future?”

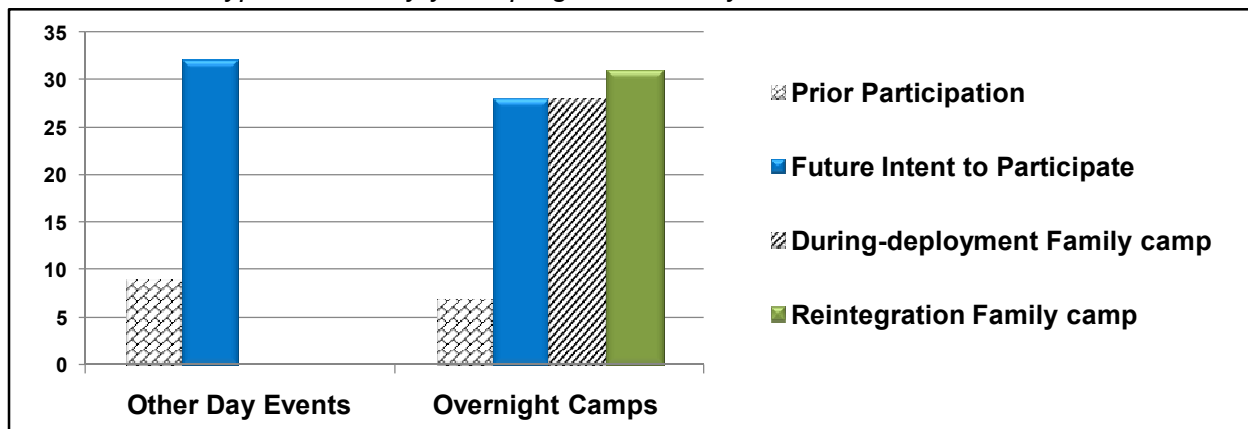


Figure 6: Program formats respondents indicated an interest in their military-youth attending (n = 34)

Figure 6 shows respondents indicated a greater interest and intention to attend both future day-events and overnight camp programs for military-youth. Day events include Family Readiness events, education events, and *Operation: Military Kids* events. Overnight camp programs include *Operation Purple* for military-youth, during-deployment family camps for youth and their non-deployed parent (caretaker), and after-deployment family camps for military-youth and the reintegrated family-group.

Respondents indicated a substantial interest in attending during-deployment, and particularly after-deployment (reintegration), family-camp programs. Reintegration family-camp programs in Oregon could potentially mirror military reintegration curriculum from the service-member’s perspective (programs aiding service-member adjustment from a military to civilian lifestyle before returning to reintegrate with their family) and include curriculum and program goals focused on supporting caretaker and military-youth adjustments from a lifestyle without the service-member to one of a reintegrated and reformatted family-group.

These programs were offered as overnight-camp options within the survey instrument because the potential goals of such programs resemble those of *retreats* or *family workshops*. Addressing clinical or psychological issues might require professional Mental Health Consultant input and oversight throughout the development and facilitation of these programs supporting military-youth by providing support for the reintegrated and restructured whole family group.

Oregon’s *Operation Purple*® Camp

Operation Purple is a grant-funded social-support program of the National Military Family Association. Oregon military-youth have been *Operation Purple* Participants since 2006. *Operation Purple* has been a social-support cornerstone within the web of Oregon’s military-youth social-support resources. Analysis of Oregon’s *Operation Purple* weekly schedule suggests that it effectively includes all program activities listed as *important* by survey respondents.

The light gray with black text portions of Figure 7 represent when during an Oregon *Operation Purple* week that the same program activities occur as those indicated as important by survey respondents. Additionally, the dark-gray with white text portions of Figure 7 represent when during an Oregon *Operation Purple* weekly schedule that important program outcomes are likely to develop; the yellow section on Thursday from 10:00 to 15:00 is a pinnacle blend of both.

Program Activities

	19-Jul-09	Operation Purple Camp 2009 (Youth)				24-Jul-09	4-H
	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
7:15 AM		Staff Wake Up					07:15
7:30 AM	During first week, staff stay on site the prior night...	Cabins Wake Up					07:30
7:55 AM		Table Toppers / Color Guard Report					07:55
8:15 AM		Daily OPORD - Squad Formation - Morning Flag					08:15
8:30 AM		(Medic Time) Breakfast					08:30
9:15 AM			Cabin Area Maintenance & Duties		T-Shirts		09:15
9:30 AM	Staff Arrive	Fire Drill			Camp Photo		09:30
10:00 AM		Field Study			Military Themed Mission Rotations including Top 10 and Community Service Project	Move Out	10:00
10:30 AM	Counselors Arrive					Sign T-Shirts	10:30
11:00 AM						Begin Check-out	11:00
11:30 AM	Packets					Detachments	11:30
12:00 PM	Site Tour	Squad Formation / Hand Washing / PL Table Toppers				12:00	
12:15 PM	Report for Lunch	Lunch		MRE Picnic *	Staff Lunch	12:15	
1:00 PM	Field Study	"Bear Trap" Journaling / Skit Preparation		Military Themed Mission (Continued)	Clean Site	13:00	
1:30 PM	Training					13:30	
2:00 PM	Cabin Area Train.	Recreation 1			Staff Huddle	14:00	
2:30 PM	Staff Huddle					14:30	
3:00 PM	Attachments	Snack		Journaling / Squad Recall / Community Act	Staff Depart	15:00	
3:30 PM	Move Luggage	Recreation 2			End of Week	15:30	
4:00 PM	Contraband					16:00	
4:40 PM	Get to Know "U"	Shower Time - Re-fit					16:45
5:15 PM	Accountability	CAM / CLAC Meeting & FI Afternoon Activity					17:15
6:00 PM		Dinner					18:00
6:45 PM	Constitution / Cabin Flag / Wall of Honor	Quiet In-Cabin Activity & Evening Re-fit		Guest Speakers Build Squad Boat		18:45	
7:15 PM		Field Game			19:30		
8:00 PM		Squad Recall (beads) & Medic Time					20:00
8:08 PM	Flag Training	Squad Formation - Evening Flag					20:08
8:15 PM	Opening Ceremony & Campfire	Campfire		Campfire		20:15	
9:00 PM				Wish Boats		21:00	
9:45 PM		Quiet Cabins		Movie		21:45	
10:00 PM	Lights Out	Fire-Watch Check Out			22:00		
10:15 PM	Cabin Meetings	CLAC Meetings					22:15
11:15 PM	Staff Meeting	Staff Meeting	Tsuga's Choice	Staff Meeting	CLAC Watch	23:15	

* Field lunch when MREs are not available

Figure 7: TCC 209 Operation Purple Salem weekly schedule

Exercise and Outdoor Recreation

Recreation 1 and 2, and Field Game are three opportunities each full-day for program Participants to either swim, run, shoot archery, play on a giant swing, ride horses, or play various other sport-activities.

Military-themed Activities

Daily OPORD (referencing a military Operations Order) is a military-themed speech at the beginning of the day. Although it may not be explained to program Participants until the very end of the week, this is where Participants first hear of their coping and resiliency building skill to focus on and reflect on throughout the day.

Morning and Evening Colors (*flag*) are two times each day when the whole camp marches to cadence and conducts drill-facing movements. The whole camp community is able to recognize the US flag and associate it with the common military bond they share.

Thursday's block of time dedicated to *Military-themed Mission* rotations is supported by local Guard and Reserve units who come to camp and set up static military displays (e.g. vehicles, gear, equipment). Groups of program Participants rotate through these displays learning of the military way-of-life from the service-member's perspective. Additionally, this time serves as an opportunity for cabin groups (squads) to show proficiency in both the individual and team tasks learned throughout the week. Training for Thursday's mission is a theme expressed throughout the week during *Field Study*.

Thursday's *Military-themed Missions* conclude with a guest-speaker panel of non-deployed caretakers, prior-deployed service-members, and prior military-youth provides a more structured opportunity for program Participants to ask questions about the deployed service-member's lifestyle.

Art Projects

Recreation 1 and 2 serve as opportunities for Participants to conduct art projects including weaving friendship-bracelets, painting, making tie-die clothing, making dream-catchers, working with beads, or molding clay. Often *Community Service* projects (e.g. camp improvements or outreach to local community groups) require painting or drawing as well.

Environmental Education

Field Study each morning serves to teach program Participants individual wilderness skills (e.g. fire building, backpacking, setting up a tent, or washing dishes in the wilderness), conservation education (composting practices and environmental education), and team-building (low-rope elements or physical challenges where Participants have special roles to play and require the development of specific communication skills).

Community Service

Making quilts for youth staying in children's hospitals and repainting camp facilities are two prior examples of Oregon *Operation Purple* community service projects. In 2009, Participants planted flowers on site and made greeting cards to send overseas to deployed Oregon Guard units.

Program Outcomes

Accurately assessing the effectiveness of *Operation Purple* or any other military-youth program to successfully deliver intended program outcomes should be the focus of future military-youth research in Oregon. Desired program outcomes identified within this needs assessment should be further explored through formative program evaluations. Although current needs assessment data does not indicate program outcome effectiveness, there are several examples throughout an Oregon *Operation Purple* week where staff facilitate programming specifically intending to generate program outcomes according to TCC and *Operation Purple* program goals.

New Tasks and Responsibilities

The literature outlines how family tasks and responsibilities are disrupted and often require reassignment when one or more parent deploys. Youth become resilient and cope more positively when they practice this life-skill at Oregon's *Operation Purple* camp. *Table Toppers* and *Color Guard* are duties each cabin-group (squad) performs in addition to other morning *Cabin area Maintenance & Duties*. Each day cabin-groups are held accountable for a new task and responsibility. When TCC Senior staff oversee the execution of these daily tasks, they take a few moments to help program Participants identify with their task and the life-skill they are developing.

Making Friends with Other Military-youth

There are several times each week (typically when closing campfire at the end of the day) where the Camp Director talks to the whole camp community about "*making new friends through personal outreach*." Senior Staff commonly use "*trust*" (social capital) as a theme to discuss life-lessons associated with *Field-study* team-building activities. While *Field Study* activities do not typically address the number of friends each program Participant has or the levels of social-support each Participant might be receiving from peer military-youth, they do serve as catalysts for interpersonal social-support and create the conditions for friendships to develop.

TCC Senior Staff often ask program Participants toward the end of the week, "*Did you make a new friend during camp that you feel understands what you're going through?*" It is fair to assume that a large percentage of youth attending *Operation Purple* do make a new friend during camp; what is lesser known is to what degree camp relationships are maintained or further developed after camp, and to what degree each interpersonal connection during *Operation Purple* provides real social-support and yields increased resiliency for program Participants.

Oregon *Operation Purple* Participants write or draw each day in a journal. The day's coping or resiliency skill heard during the morning *OPORD* and revisited whenever camp announcements take place throughout the day also becomes the journaling / reflection topic; often this topic is

associated with interpersonal relationships at camp. Specifically through personal reflections, journaling helps youth become more comfortable discussing their deployment experience.

Becoming Comfortable Discussing Deployment

Thursday's *Military-themed Mission* rotations serve primarily as an opportunity for cabin groups (squads) to execute team tasks learned throughout the week. However, one of the mission stations engages program Participants in small-group discussions asking questions like; "*How are military-youth different than (and the same as) youth who do not have a deployed parent...*" or "*Has your role changed at home, at school, or within your community because of the deployment?*" Simpler questions like, "*Tell the group why your Mom / Dad (deployed parent) is so special to you*" are more appropriate for military-youth under the age of 12. The goal is not for military-youth to become hyper-emotional when discussing their deployment experience, but it should be for military-youth to approach the topic comfortably and for difficult questions to be asked. Oregon military-youth participate fully in these discussions within a participation spectrum from verbally expressing many ideas and emotions to simply being a respectful active listener.

As future program evaluations assess the effectiveness of military-youth social-support programs to increase social capital and the interpersonal social-support between program Participants, so should they characterize the after effects of programming on military-youth levels of comfort discussing personal resiliency and their deployment experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Youth of National Guard and Reserve units face special challenges and develop a special set of support needs associated with their deployment experience. No published academic research informs programs or curriculum specifically for National Guard or Reserve-focused social-support programs. Moreover, no prior research assesses the effects of deployment on Oregon military-youth specifically. However, organizations like *Operation: Military Kids* provides a comprehensive curriculum applicable to military-youth from a national perspective.

The recent increased demand for social-support programming coupled with the absence of specific facilities where formal social-support services can be facilitated is a complex issue requiring Oregon's military-family support leadership and Oregon's military-youth social-support practitioners to develop a series of community goals addressing:

1. Collaborative investment in Oregon's military-youth community capacity
2. Future social-support curriculum for Oregon military-youth
3. Oregon's *Operation Purple* program with additional feedback for TCC staff

The following recommendations outline action to fully develop Oregon's military-youth social-support network through the proper development and execution of social-support programming.

Program Activities and Outcomes

Caretakers want their youth experiencing deployment to participate in both day events and overnight camp programs offering outdoor recreation, art, military-themed activities, environmental education, and community service.

Caretakers want their youth experiencing deployment to learn community-building skills like earning trust and building friendships with other military-youth while learning communication skills and becoming comfortable discussing their experience coping with a deployed parent. These parent-prioritized program outcomes are an important context in which to understand the process of generating social capital and individual benefits of sense of belonging. The literature indicates that children with deployed parents often feel isolated and withdraw, but become more resilient and feel validated when sharing their feelings, needs, and fears with peers copings with deployment.

Recommendation: Future military-youth programs in Oregon should intentionally include outdoor recreation, art, military-themed activities, environmental education, and community service. Future social-support programs should intentionally develop the networking skills of Oregon military-youth including how to communicate with peers and develop bonds of mutual understanding (interpersonal informal support).

Coordinating Local & Regional Community Goals

Generating social capital and building the community capacity of military-youth is well within the mission of many Oregon social-service organizations. Oregon's military community and the adjacent military community programs would mutually benefit from developing a set of goals supporting Oregon's military-youth community. Because Oregon's military community is primarily Guard and Reservists active in their civilian communities, it is inappropriate to attempt building a social-support system for Oregon military-youth without the guidance and collaboration from both military leadership and localized youth development organizations.

Recommendation: Oregon military-youth community stakeholders need to initiate, meet, and discuss challenges and opportunities each entity faces in providing social-support for Oregon's military-youth community. Challenge and opportunity assessment help identify simple resource-sharing options. Programmatic feasibility assessments considering available resources and Oregon deployment cycle timelines will outline feasible community goals, available resources, and identify the collaborative web of interdependent social-support facilitation.

Formal Social-Support through Public Education Programs

The survey instrument recorded prior participation of school activities, but failed to record future intentions to participate in school-facilitated support programs. Data analysis suggests 15% of Oregon youth relocate to new schools due to deployment circumstances. Data factored from Table 1 in the Introduction section suggests more than 200 Oregon youth are currently attending new schools temporarily due to deployment circumstances. Teachers and school

psychologists should be aware of whom these students are and of the type of support they need. Additionally, educators should be aware of the potential emotional and behavioral needs of military-youth and the subsequent gaps in learning that can occur. Local initiatives might model future efforts after Oregon's *Operation: Military Kids'* annual coordination of the Military Child Education Coalition workshop for teachers and school counselors in Oregon.

Survey respondents indicated a common perception that schools are unable to address the unique academic and social needs of Oregon military-youth. Schools have the opportunity to compensate for the absence of traditional military installations by providing a common *place* for social-support to occur. Local youth development organizations (e.g. YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, OMK, or TCC) are capable of facilitating after school social-support programming at public schools that can become local military-youth community commonplace.

Recommendation: School psychologists should survey parents of military-youth regarding their child's academic needs and with the support of teaching faculty, monitor academic performance and social changes of each military-youth student throughout each phase of deployment. As needs are identified and characterized, they should be addressed through targeted support programming. Military Child Education Coalition's workshop may help inform this process. Oregon schools that have initiated programs to support military-youth need to communicate through state government to help build curriculum based on best practices.

Tsuga Community Commission and Oregon's Operation Purple program

Even though *Operation Purple* Participants often cross state-lines to attend an *Operation Purple* program, with such a large demand for *Operation Purple* coming from Oregon military families, Oregon's military-youth community became virtually synonymous with Oregon *Operation Purple* Participants in 2009. The following sections of this report specifically call on TCC *Operation Purple* staff to consider the findings of this report within the context of the activities, intended outcomes, and program goals they pursue.

Activities, Outcomes, and Program Goals

Analysis of Oregon's *Operation Purple* weekly schedule suggests that it effectively includes all program activities listed as *important* by survey respondents. *Field Study* in prior years has focused more intentionally on field-science work and environmental education. Recent changes in staff career goals has added leadership development, and conservation education curriculum to Oregon's 2009 *Operation Purple* curriculum. Likewise, TCC staff have responded through new localized curriculum to the NMFA's release of their own curriculum focused on communication skills development. While *Field Study* activities do not typically address the number of friends each Participant has or the levels of social-support each Participant might receive from peer military-youth, they do serve as catalysts for interpersonal social-support and create the conditions for friendships to develop.

Personal Resiliency and Discussing Deployment

After almost a full week within an intimate setting with peers, Thursday's conversation of roles and responsibilities and community contribution provides a safe environment for military-youth to share their thoughts and emotions. Again, the goal is not for military-youth to become hyper-emotional when discussing their deployment experience, but with the help and oversight of Mental Health Consultants on site, military-youth should approach these open discussions comfortably and allow difficult questions to be asked. Journaling provides an important second opportunity for program Participants to communicate and validate their emotions concerning deployment in private. Thursday's guest-speaker panel provides a third opportunity for program Participants to ask questions and reacquaint themselves with their feelings surrounding deployment.

The Beginning and the End of each Day

Early mornings and late evenings seem to best serve as opportunities to pause from the fast-paced daily schedule to reflect on personal behaviors and peer relationships. Morning and Evening Colors (*flag*) are two times each day where the whole camp community is able to recognize the US flag and associate with a tangible common military-community bond. *Flag* is a unique opportunity in the *Operation Purple* schedule because it is camp, community, military, and from a Camp Director's perspective, a barometer telling how the mood of the camp community has evolved at ten evenly spaced times throughout a six-day week. Camp staff should utilize these moments when cabin groups on site are in formation and able to hear important or sentimental information; information adjusting or maintaining the camp barometer.

Recommendation: Camp ought to be '*fun*' as many camp programs intend it to be. However, with *Operation Purple* and other future multi-day camp programs serving Oregon's military-youth community, camp ought to facilitate larger community goals. Camp by its own nature does not require further staff training to ensure youth return to their caretakers saying, "*It was fun.*" TCC staff should bring a heightened awareness of Oregon's *Operation Purple* schedule, activities, and curriculum when interacting with Participants and to the forefront of staff discussions during meetings. When camp becomes busy, and one activity seems to blend into the next, remember that increasing social capital (the positive byproduct of informal social-support developed through formal social-support programming) and helping Oregon's military-youth community develop resiliency throughout their deployment experience is, as survey respondents indicated, *Important*.

Final Thought

Oregon military-youth lack a common *place* to engage in both formal and informal social-support activity. With prior support from Oregon 4-H, *Operation: Military Kids*, and Oregon's National Guard Family Readiness Groups, Tsuga Community Commission LLC has utilized the National Military Family Association's *Operation Purple* Camp program to create a common place for military-youth in Oregon. However, in 2009, due to the increased demand for multi-day social-support programming, a large percentage of military-youth were not afforded the opportunity to attend *Operation Purple*. Schools, community organizations, and military programs can take on the responsibility of fully developing Oregon's military-youth social-support system typical of those facilitated through active military installations. Oregon's largest deployment of service-members (and number of affected youth) since WWII will conclude throughout 2010. Looking forward to the mass reintegration of Oregon service-members in 2010, shared responsibility (involving the various public and nonprofit stakeholders) for the development of Oregon's military / civilian community goals and the execution of social-support programming is the only effective way to build Oregon's future military-youth community capacity.

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