



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION MILITARY PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM – INFORMATION SHEET

As a loved one, supervisor, co-worker or neighbor of a military service person who is leaving for duty or just coming home, you probably have questions and concerns. Each deployment and the circumstances surrounding it, as well as, the individual’s strengths, characteristics and overall resilience, will influence someone’s reactions.

You may have had prior interactions with someone who has been through a deployment. However, this one is different because it is a different time with different circumstances. For instance, some service members are involved in combat and some are not. It is certain that no one comes home unchanged and it can be a life altering experience for all involved in the service member’s life. Everyone transitions differently but there is always a reintegration and adjustment period. Many different emotions and reactions will emerge and helping the service member understand that these are normal will bring a sense of security and comfort to them. It is important that trust and openness are established or reestablished.

It is well known that service members benefit from appropriate social support. Being aware of the possible signs and symptoms of common stress reactions as well as available services has shown to be helpful to the service member. This reference sheet is intended to provide practical suggestions on how friends and family may offer support during all facets of the deployment.

DO’s	DON’T’s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their service and sacrifice • Conduct periodic check – ins • Prepare the workforce for the return of the service member • Support families before/during/after deployment • Listen more, talk less • Use supportive statements, It’s ok to feel this way” “I’m here for you, how can I help?” • Show concern • Build rapport by being sincere & yourself • Take time with them • Work at their pace • Reassure them they are safe • Be helpful with routine tasks • Give them private time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume the worst or assume anything • Label with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) • Isolate • Ignore harmful behaviors • Offer advice • Say ‘it could have been worse’/minimize their experience • Discuss your opinions on foreign policy • Single the military person out publicly without his/her prior approval • Take their anger or other feelings personally • Don’t rush/force the natural process of their understanding of experiences • Don’t underestimate your ability to help/support the service member
<p>DO ASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you do in Iraq/Afghanistan? • How are you and your family doing? • What can I do to help? • What concerns you the most? • What are you doing to take care of you? 	<p>DON’T ASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you kill anyone? • Are you glad to be back? • Do you think we are winning over there? • Is it all worth it? • Do you have to go back?

STRESS REACTIONS

The degrees to which service members are affected by their experiences vary. The effects can range from mild to acute distress. Understand that all reactions are normal and does not necessarily require professional help. Yet it is important to know the different signs and symptoms one may exhibit or encounter for you to recognize when you are no longer able to help and the service member needs further assistance. Remember the degree of affect differs. Some service members have experienced and may still be experiencing some of the itemized signs and symptoms below:

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
Fatigue	Shock & Disbelief	Fear	Difficulty sleeping
Headache	Confusion	Guilt	Sudden crying
Nausea	Forgetfulness	Numbness	Wandering aimlessly
Heart palpitations	Intrusive images	Irritability/agitation	Intensified pacing
Weight gain or loss	Intense sense of vulnerability	Sadness	Not wanting to talk about the experiences
Dizziness	Denial	Helplessness	Withdrawal
Shaking	Uncertainty	Apathy	Anti-social acts
Restlessness	Self-doubt	Relief	Erratic movements
Tightness in chest	Nightmares	Loneliness	Sighing
Muscular pain	Absentmindedness	Depression	Emotional outbursts
Breathlessness	Mind racing/ Slowed thinking	Anger/Hostility	Change in social activity
Lack of energy	Inability to focus	Anxiety	Substance abuse
Oversensitivity to noise	Hallucinations	Feeling abandoned	Loss or increase in appetite
Elevated blood pressure	Poor concentration/ attention	Panic	Change in speech pattern
Perspiration	Hyper-vigilance	Grief	Overly assertive
Grinding of teeth	Suspiciousness	Despair	Changes in communication
Hyperventilating	Poor problem solving	Feeling overwhelmed	Jumpy
Muscle spasms	Disorientation	Feeling out of control	Restlessness

It is vital that you know what your limitations are and when your service members need further assistance. The following are different agency references to encourage your service member to consider when seeking further help.

EAP - 1-800- 252-4555
 CT Military Support Program – 1-866-251-2913
 DoC’s Military Peer Support Program Coordinator, pager- 1-860-340-0349, or Maloney
 CTSD 203-271-5100
 Veteran’s Affair Vet Centers – Norwich-860-887-1755, W. Haven 203-932-9899,
 Wethersfield 860-563-2320