

Community provides essential support to military families

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The deployment of military personnel to active war zones, which involves issues of separation, time away from home, and eventual reunion, increases the vulnerability of their families. The heavy reliance on National Guard and Reservists and the downsizing of traditional installations means that military families are increasingly likely to live in local communities rather than on military installations. This new context of military service ushers in new challenges for providing support to military families.

A new article in the journal *Family Relations* explores these concerns and potential solutions. Angela J. Huebner, Jay A. Mancini, Gary L. Bowen, and Dennis K. Orthner present the next phase of community support for military families, one that accounts for changes in the nature of [military service](#) itself and of the increasing integration of military families into civilian communities. The community capacity building framework described in the article outlines a new approach to providing support services to vulnerable families. The authors provide four diverse examples of programs currently utilizing the concepts in the community capacity building framework to connect potentially isolated families to areas of support while simultaneously addressing the changing context of military service and family life.

In brief, community capacity refers to community members' sense of shared responsibility and collective competence—the idea of collaboration or working together for the common good. Through real-life examples, the authors demonstrate the merits of such an approach

for making positive differences in the lives of military families. The approaches described are geared toward enhancing family strengths and targeted so as to prevent stressful experiencing from becoming crises. This model has substantial application to any community or grouping of citizens who are facing other than normal stressors and challenges.

"Rather than relying strictly on military sponsored support, the community capacity building framework suggests a model of building support so that families can help themselves and neighbors can help each other in the context of their own community," the authors conclude.

More information: This study is published in the April 2009 issue of *Family Relations*.

Source: Wiley ([news](#) : [web](#))

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