

Conversation Starters for School Personnel Working with Students Impacted by Injuries

Discussing injuries with your students may be difficult. Younger children may struggle to understand the injury, while older students may be unwilling to open up or may feel unsure about how the injury influences all the aspects of their daily lives. When initiating these conversations, it is often useful to start with a question or prompt like the ones below. Remember, each situation is different; you may have more luck with some conversation starters than others. The conversation starters below are grouped to help facilitate age-appropriate conversations. For specific language to use while talking about PTSD or TBI injuries see the Trauma, PTSD, and Invisible Injuries handouts at schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/toolkit.

Preschoolers and Younger Children

- Tell me about what's happening in your home.
- What have your parents told you since your mommy/daddy has returned?
- How does mommy/daddy seem different since they have returned?
 - Even though they may seem different, they still love you.
- How does it make you feel that mommy/daddy is acting a little bit different?
- What are some ways that your family shares feelings?
- How do you think you can make your mommy/daddy feel better during this tough time?

Elementary and Middle School Students*

- What changes have you noticed in your parent since he/she returned home?
- What changes have you noticed within your family after your parent returned home?
- Tell me about how you're feeling. Is it physical, emotional, or both?
- Talking about your feelings can sometimes be difficult. What do you think are some healthy ways that you can express what you are feeling?
- How do you talk about your feelings with your family?
- What are some extra tasks or roles that you have taken on to help your family function recently?
- How do you think the members of your family feel about this?

High School Students**

- What changes have you noticed in your home since your mom/ dad returned?
- What changes have you noticed in your personal emotions/behaviors since your parent returned home?
- What changes have you noticed in your daily life/ school routine/ school relationships/ after school activities/ home routine/ home responsibilities/ home relationships because of the injury?
- What is difficult or challenging about this adjustment for you?
- What is something that you've been able to do to help support yourself or your family?
- How do you describe what's going on within your family to others outside of it?
- What strategies or routines help you describe what you are feeling?
- Who do you talk to when you are feeling overwhelmed?
- What do you normally do when you feel overwhelmed? Before your parent returned home, what did you used to do when you felt overwhelmed or stressed?

*Questions for preschoolers and younger children may also be appropriate.

**Questions for preschoolers and younger children as well as elementary and middle school students may also be appropriate.