

## Strategies to Support Students Experiencing Reintegration

Reintegration can be a joyful time for families, but it can also be quite stressful adjusting to a “new normal.” Students may have a challenging time with the return of their Service member parent. Below, is a list of some informal communication and stress management strategies that you can use with students and parents to support them during this time.

### Communication

- Encourage families to create a plan prior to a parental absence to maintain parent-child relationships (Louie & Cromer, 2014)
- Encourage families to discuss plans for dealing with changes in household responsibilities after parental absence and share with the school any changes in child pick-up, responsibilities, or other factors affecting the school context (Lara-Cinisomo, Chandra, Burns, & Lau, 2013)
- Assist students and families in creating a family communication plan and how to improve quality of communication (Lara-Cinisomo, Chandra, Burns, & Lau, 2013)
- Communicate with families about changes in student behavior and possible sources of stress and parental absence (Lara-Cinisomo, Chandra, Burns, & Lau, 2013)
- Discuss reintegration prior to homecoming
  - Family roles, meaningful experiences during deployment, children maturation, plan time to become familiar again
- Create a shared meaning of the deployment and reintegration experience (Bowling & Sherman, 2008)
- Develop plans for responding supportively to family members

### Stress Management

- Encourage children to engage in an activity they enjoy
- Use Feelings Thermometers to talk about emotions they are likely feeling (anger, sadness, guilt, shame, anxiety, or fear), how strongly they feel the emotion, and what they should do about it.
- Communicate with other family members during stress
- Practice relaxation techniques to decrease stress (Lester & Bursch, 2011)
- Provide families with an easy-to-use chart of developmental milestones and possible deviations from normal functioning that may be signs of stress (Lara-Cinisomo, Chandra, Burns, & Lau, 2013)
- Provide age-appropriate psychoeducation for students experiencing signs of stress (Lara-Cinisomo, Chandra, Burns, & Lau, 2013)
- Encourage families to be involved in any child counseling sessions at the school

## References

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