

# Kitsap Military Families Resource Document

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## Background

In "The Mental Health of Military-Connected Children: A Scoping Review" published in 2019, Heidi Cramm and colleagues concluded that "children growing up in military families experience more mental health problems than children in civilian families and use more mental health services" and that the two identifying factors to account for the difference were "family relocation and parental deployment."

A clinical report by Dr. Huebner in 2019 on the mental health needs of children in military families living in the United States, out of the 2.2 million military personnel, 58% have families and 40% have at least 2 children. Combined there are a reported 1.7 million children who come from those military families, roughly 38% between the ages of 0-5, 32% between the ages of 6-11, and 24% between the ages of 12-18.

As someone who has grown up as a military child, I know first hand how challenging this unique lifestyle can be on an individual and familial level. During my upbringing my parents, namely my stay at home parent, did not have a cumulative resource to rely on when one of my siblings or myself needed extra support while our father was deployed or if we were struggling with an upcoming relocation. This project aims to help fill this gap and provide a resource for military parents with children who may need extra support. In order to reach this specific audience, I have partnered with the U.S. Undersea Museum, who specialize in sharing the stories and history of the Navy's undersea operations and Sailors. Through the museum's dedicated family programs and exhibitions, this toolkit can become a helpful resource for military families searching for additional support for their children in their local area.

## Purpose

The purpose of this project is to provide a resource for military parents to address the mental and emotional health of their children due to the stressors of their unique lifestyle which include but are not limited to: Moving/Relocation, Deployment, and Losing a Loved One. In partnering with the U.S. Naval Undersea Museum, who serves this community with their mission and multiple family programs, the goal is that the deliverable will enhance the military communities way of life.

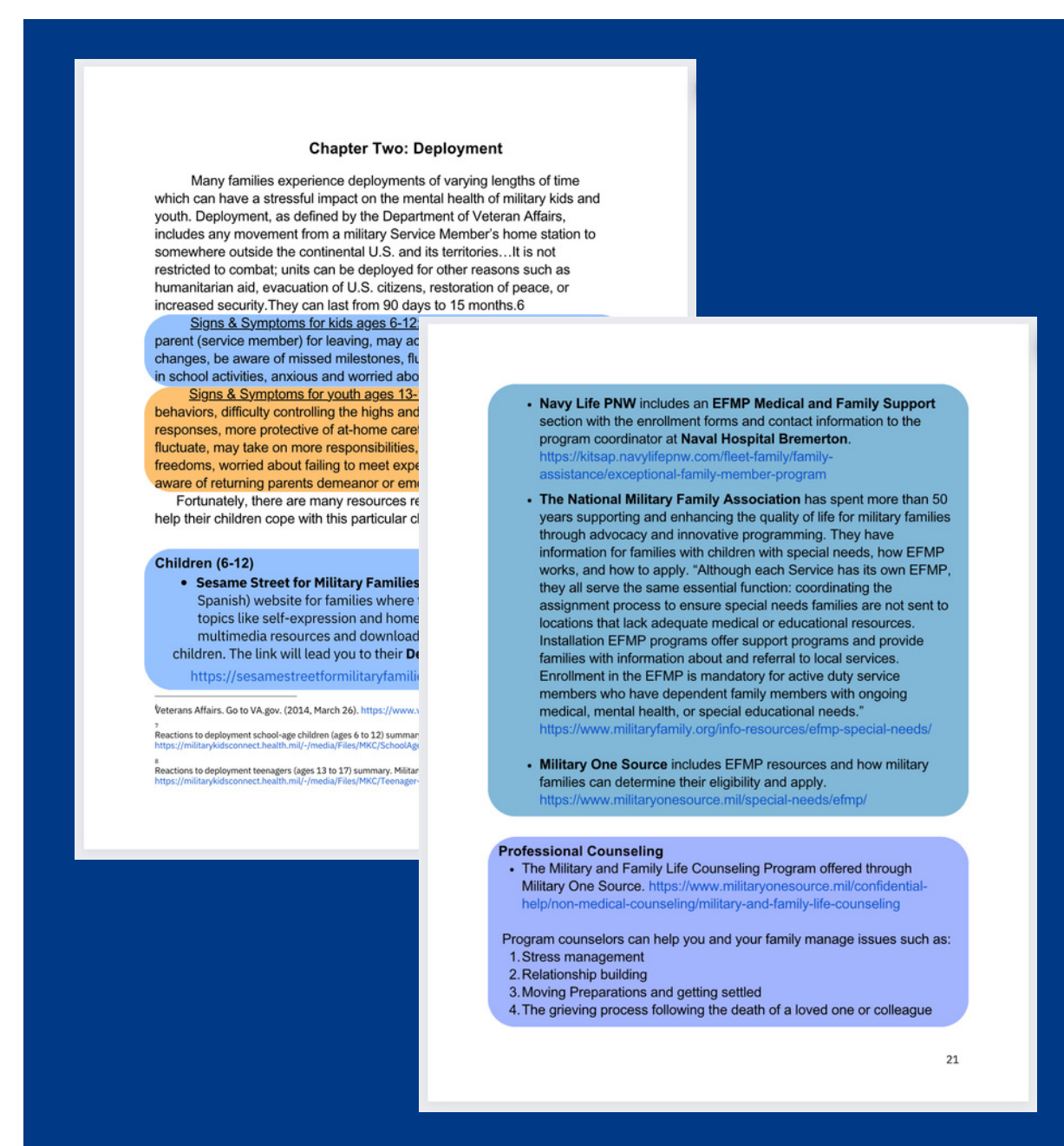
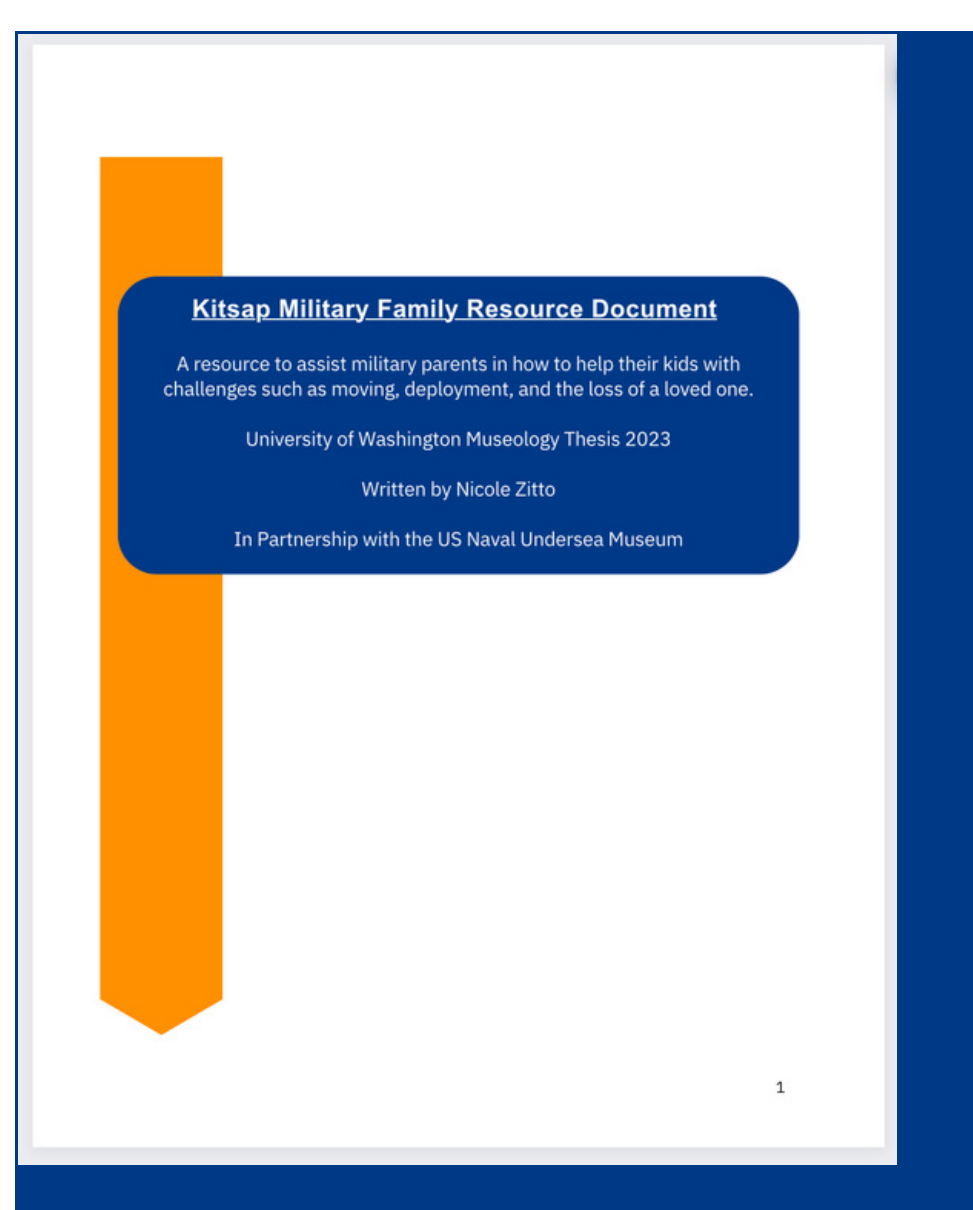
## Host Site

- > The U.S. Naval Undersea Museum
- > Mission: Weconnect you to the U.S. Naval undersea experience from yesterday to tomorrow.
- > Vision: We work to make the naval undersea experience relevant and accessible to all people.
- > This toolkit will also be made available on the museum's website.

## Deliverable

The deliverable for this project is a culmination of existing resources for military families, assembled in detail in one document for easy and efficient access in the event that the children of a service member need additional support to cope with the stressors in their lives. The U.S. Naval Undersea Museum will be given this toolkit to distribute and share with the Naval Kitsap community.

Photos of the document content provided.



## Process

The process began in Fall of 2022 after identifying the absence of a cumulative resource or toolkit of this design during my search for references and research study.

After forming a committee, I set out to form an advisory group of 2-3 mental health professionals that had previous or current experience working with military families. Unfortunately, that avenue was unable to come to fruition, though in the future I would recommend the host site and/or any interested museum to collaborate with local professionals on adapting the toolkit to their community needs.

During this time, I began amassing online sources by government organizations, non-profits, educational institutions, etc. that provided helpful resources and tools specifically for military families to improve their way of life. Having collected research articles and other source materials I began assembling the toolkit over Winter and Spring of 2023. On April 1st I attended the USNUM's E-Day for military families to gather feedback from parents about the draft resource. Not only was the draft received positively, specific feedback was incorporated into the final deliverable.

### October - December 2022

- Solidified thesis project idea
- Met and partnered with committee member for the host site.
- Held first committee meeting to discuss plan for Winter quarter (Jan - Mar)

### January - March 2023

- Sought to connect to mental health professionals in order to vet deliverable (Fell through).
- Began searching for military resources and studies about military families pertaining to the three challenges included in the deliverable.

### April - June 2023

- Attended the host site E-day for military families to gather input from parents about draft deliverable.
- Began sorting through the materials gathered into an organized document. Included parental feedback by including section for EFMP and local resources for calendar events.
- Held meetings two and three with updated drafts for committee members to review.

## Next Steps

The following are recommended next steps for the continuation of this project:

- > Give the host site full access to this document so that they may update it in the future by adding more resources and keeping it's contents relevant to their community.
- > Make it available on it's own website that acts as a community gathering space for military families to share their stories and resources they may have used that helped them with challenges they have faced.
- > Expand the document to include other topics of import such as military spouse employment, child care services, financial support, etc.
- > Partner with museums with military communities and adapt the document to their localities as well as collaborate with mental health professionals.

## Acknowledgments

This project would never have been completed without the help of many people.

I would like to extend a sincere and genuine thanks to my Advisor, Meena Selvakumar, my thesis committee members Valerie Johnson with the US Naval Undersea Museum and James J. Mazza with the College of Education at the University of Washington. Their guidance and support were paramount. Thank you all.

Thank you to all my family and friends for your unyielding support and encouragement. Mahalo Nui Loa.

## References

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