



Military Pathways[®]

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

A DoD initiative to help service members and their families

Military Pathways is fully funded by:
Force Health Protection and Readiness,
Office of The Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Military Pathways Family Resiliency Webinar

Part 1: Supporting Our Military Youth

Michelle D. Sherman, Ph.D.
Director, Family Mental Health Program,
Oklahoma City VA Medical Center
Clinical Associate Professor,
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Part 2: Overview of the Family Resiliency Kit

Kerry O'Connell-Vale, MS
Military Program Manager
Screening for Mental Health, Inc.

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

What is Military Pathways?

- ❑ Is a DoD funded education and self-assessment program for mental health issues

- ❑ Self-assessments are offered:
 - Online
 - Via telephone, and
 - During events held at bases.

- ❑ After an individual completes a self-assessment, s/he receives referral information

- ❑ Is available to service personnel and their families in all branches of the military including the National Guard and Reserve

Military Pathways Programs

- In -person event kits**
 - National Alcohol Screening Day Kit
 - National Depression Screening Day Kit
 - Family Resiliency kit
- SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention curriculum**
 - middle school
 - high school
- Online mental health self assessments and educational resources**
- All materials are available at no cost to family members, service personnel and organizations working with military families**

Supporting Our Military Youth

Military Pathways Webinar

June 9, 2010

Michelle D. Sherman, Ph.D.

Director, Family Mental Health Program,
Oklahoma City VA Medical Center
Clinical Associate Professor,
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

**Welcome Home, service members.
Thank you, military families!
Thank you, military youth!
Thank you ALL for serving our country.**

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Outline

1. Describe today's military personnel and their families
2. Describe the experience of parental deployment for youth
3. Explore what parents can do for:
 - Their children
 - Themselves
 - Their relationships
4. Discuss specific resources for military youth

Military Families

- ❑ Over 2 million service members have been deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism
 - Average length of deployment = 12-15 months
 - Average number of deployments = 2.2

- ❑ As of June, 2010 (per the DoD):
 - 5,488 American troops have died in OEF/OIF
 - Over 45,000 have been injured



❑ Over half of service members are married

- ~2 million children have one or both parents in the military
- 900,000 troops with kids have deployed since 2001
- Currently over 200,000 kids have a mom/dad at war
- Over 1 million children attend US public schools

❑ Ages of children affected by deployment:

0-5:	40%
6-11:	33%
12-18:	25%

❑ Special populations affected by deployment

- Dual military families (6.9%)
- Single active duty parents (5.4%)
- Families with special health care needs (7.3%)



Strengths of Military Life that Foster Healthy Families/Youth

- Cohesive community environment
- Camaraderie created through shared experiences
- Sense of duty and mission
- Focus on respect for authority
- Predictable routines/schedules
- High commitment to the unit/teamwork
- Emphasis on education
- Many resources available for military families
- Job security
- Healthcare, Tax benefits, Commissary, etc.

Flake (2009)

Aspects of Military Life that May be Challenging for Healthy Families/Youth

- Increased sense of danger
- Not “if” but “when” the SMer deploys
- Balancing “Duty First” and the family
- 24/7 military employment
- Stigma that vulnerabilities (esp. mental illness) will impact SM’ers career
- Frequency of moves & relocation/”starting over”
- Separation from family/friends
- Unique school challenges
- Local community integration

Flake (2009)

Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq:

Unique Situation

- ❑ High possibility of repeated deployments
- ❑ Active duty, National Guard, Reservists & veterans
- ❑ Men and women: Women make up about 10% of U.S. OEF/OIF forces
- ❑ Different warfare - no safe place



Differences with members of the National Guard and Reservists

- Do not live on military bases
- Did not volunteer for full-time service
- Had not expected to be deployed for long, dangerous duty in war zone
- Many have established families and careers

**Life as an American
Military Kid Today**

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Being a military kid has unique challenges

- ❑ Frequent moves: average of 6-9 times from Kindergarten - high school (NMFA, 2009)
- ❑ Changing schools, friends, activities, etc.
- ❑ Parent working long hours and away for long periods of time
- ❑ Unprecedented combat deployments
- ❑ Many parents returning home with physical/emotional wounds



- ❑ “Even when Dad’s home, I don’t get to see him much because he’s training all the time. He leaves before I wake up, and he comes home after I’ve gone to bed. He did help me with my homework once...” - Sigrid, 11

Ellis (2008)

Children's Experience of Military Deployment

- What issues are you seeing in your children?
- How are you addressing them?

Deployment and homecoming can tough for KIDS

“...it’s hard to have fun when at that same moment he might be in the middle of a battle. I could be laughing and singing and right at that moment, he could be getting shot or bombed, or maybe he’s hurt or scared. Why should I have fun when he’s not?” Erika, 17

“When my dad gets back from Iraq for the third time, I’ll be 12 going on 13. He’ll hardly know me. He’ll hardly know any of us...” Dylan, 11

“I don’t know if he killed anybody or not...he certainly wouldn’t tell me, and I don’t think I’d want to know” Cherilyn, 10

Overall...

most youth are resilient

and do well!

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Research by RAND interviewing military youth

- ❑ 53% “worry about my military parent while he/she is deployed”
- ❑ 38% “worry about the person who takes care of me while my parent is deployed”
- ❑ 57% of interviewed youth said that getting to know their parent again (upon homecoming) was difficult.

Chandra et al 2008

Common Problems Among Military Youth

- Trouble sleeping**
- Increased fear/anxiety when parent deployed**
- Increased behavior problems at home and school**

Flake et al., 2008; 2008 DOD survey



- ❑ **ACADEMIC PROBLEMS:** Parental deployments may be related to modest decreases in test scores across most subjects - effects may be long-term (Engel et al., 2006)

“Most of my grades dropped because I was thinking about my dad, because my dad’s more important than school”
- NMFA (2009)

- ❑ **PHYSIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES:** Teens whose parents had been deployed to Iraq had significantly higher levels of systolic blood pressure, heart rate, and perceived stress than a civilian comparison group (Barnes et al., 2007).

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS



- ❑ Overall, it's been found that military kids whose parents have deployed have more emotional difficulties than national samples (Chandra et al., 2010; Flake et al, 2008)
- ❑ Military tweens and teens at camp showed: heightened anxiety, attention difficulties, and emotional/behavioral problems (Chandra et al., 2008).

Emotional Problems

- ❑ **Age 5-12:** 1/3 of the children were categorized as “high risk” for psychosocial problems (which is 2.5x the national norm) (Flake 2008)

- ❑ **Preschoolers:** 1 in 5 children ages 3-5 (whose parent was deployed) from a large Marine base daycare showed significantly more distress than military kids whose parent was not overseas. Behaviors included:
 - Disrupted eating and sleeping
 - Increased anxiety or sadness
 - Acting out
 - Inability to concentrate(Chartrand et al, 2008)

Pentagon Report (2009)

- ❑ **Military youth are seeking mental health care at much higher rates than at the beginning of the war:**
 - They sought outpatient mental health care two million times in 2008, double the number in 2003.
 - Inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations among military children have increased 50% in the same time period

Deployment and homecoming can be tough for AT-HOME PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- High levels of stress for at-home parent / caregiver**

- ❑ “She (Mom) was so stressed out so she’d yell a lot, and I was stressed and I’d yell back, and the whole thing was really a mess. What was going on was that we were both worried about Dad, and there was nothing we could do about that. We couldn’t go over to Afghanistan and make him come home with us. So we didn’t have any power to make our worry go away. We were scared and frustrated and angry, and we yelled at each other because we didn’t know what else to do.”

- Matthew, 11

High Levels of Parenting Stress

- ❑ Parenting stress levels were double that of normative data (Flake, 2008)
- ❑ Parental stress is often the most significant predictor of child's mental health
- ❑ Also parents worry about their kids:
 - ~1/4 said their children were coping poorly or very poorly (2008 DOD Survey),



One consequence of the increased stress...

- ❑ Some research has found an increased risk of child abuse by at-home caregivers
 - Neglect
 - Physical abuse

Rentz (2007); Gibbs (2007)

Beyond the normal reintegration challenges, some returning troops go on to develop PTSD and other mental health difficulties...and many more have symptoms of various disorders

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Possible Responses to Trauma

- ❑ Most people are resilient - and recover!
- ❑ Trauma DOES NOT EQUAL PTSD!
- ❑ Trauma is life CHANGING...but does not have to be life DEFINING

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- ❑ **Re-experiencing** (nightmares, vivid daydreams, flashbacks)

- ❑ **Avoidance & numbing**
 - Difficulty w/ family cohesion & expressiveness
 - Difficulty with self-disclosure
 - High rates of co-morbid substance abuse

- ❑ **Increased arousal, startle, angry outbursts, and violence**
 - High rates of domestic violence

How do these difficulties affect parenting / children?

- ❑ **Two critical tasks in effective parenting**
 - Develop a healthy emotional connection with the child
 - Help the child manage strong emotions and learn appropriate behaviors (e.g., “discipline”).
- ❑ **These tasks may be challenging for trauma survivors**

Effects of Parental Trauma on the Kids

- Kids may experience parent as hostile, scary, distant, and/or overprotective
- Parent may isolate and withdraw from children's activities

- ❑ Kids feel uncared for, unloved, left out, and lonely
- ❑ Detachment and numbing may directly impact veteran's ability to parent by decreasing his/her ability to engage the child in everyday activities



“Before I deployed down range I was different about my wife and kids. Now that I’m back I can only let them get so close before I have to get away from them. I used to have fun letting my boys jump and crawl all over me. We would spend hours playing like that. Now I can only take a couple of minutes of it before I have to get out. I usually get in my truck and drive back to the base to be with my platoon.”

*(A paratrooper home from Iraq,
quoted in *Down Range to Iraq and Back*
by Bridget Cantrell & Chuck Dean)*



Common Youth Responses

- Detach and avoid -- act as if they don't care
- Act as rescuer and assume parental responsibilities (role reversal)
- Over-identify and take on the parent's symptoms
- Experience separation anxiety and be clingy -- struggle with issues of autonomy and independence
- "Act out" to get attention
- Worry about "catching" the parent's problems
- Feel abandoned and alienated from the family

What Parents Can Do for...

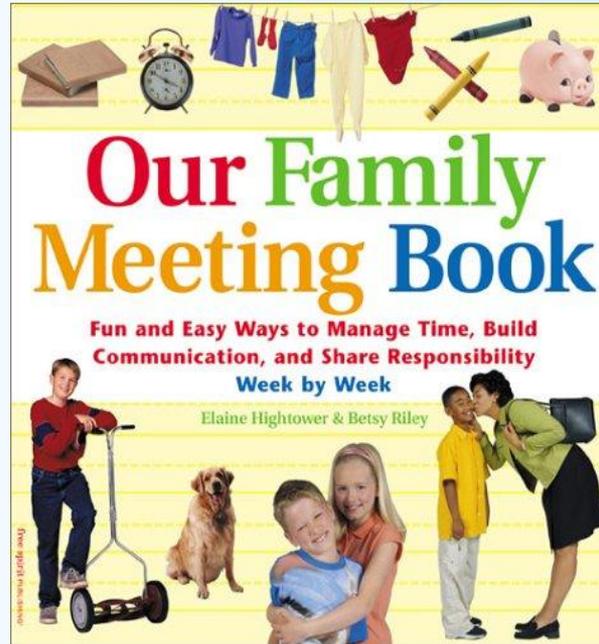
- Their Kids
- Themselves
- Their Relationships

- ❑ Teach kids how to get a good night's sleep

- ❑ Talk about how to manage strong emotions, remembering you are role modeling how to do so!
 - How to identify and accept their feelings
 - Relaxation strategies (deep breathing, imagery)

- ❑ Encourage involvement in social activities
- ❑ Normalize a variety of responses to having their parent deployed (worry, sadness, poor concentration)
- ❑ Talk about how they've coped effectively with past challenges to empower them in dealing with deployment

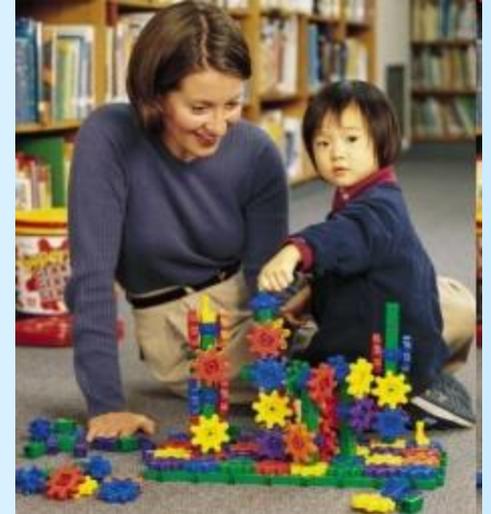
- ❑ Have regular family meetings



- ❑ Limit their exposure to media (news, internet, war movies) that depicts graphic images of war

- ❑ **Maintain consistent expectations and reasonable, firm & consistent limits**
- ❑ **Keep up regular family routines, activities, and rituals**
- ❑ **Help your children feel safe, secure, and confident that they will always be cared for**

- ❑ Remember to praise your children often!
- ❑ Strive to have special “alone time” with each child (not multi-tasking!), especially during deployments



How Family Members Can Help Service Members Reconnect with their Children

- Support your SMer in getting to know your kids again (can be a special time for the two of you!)
- Your SM may have some great ideas about how to parent. Be creative and try them out! As long as the child is safe, it is ok for your SM to do things differently than you.
- Encourage your SM to get involved and help with daily routines such as bedtime rituals, reading, providing snacks, and playing.

Be aware of possible “red flags” for children having difficulty

- Sadness**
- Anger**
- Withdrawal (family, friends, activities)**
- Sleep disturbance**
- Excessive worry**
- Aggressiveness**
- Insecurity**
- Unexplained headaches, stomachaches, etc.**
- Irritability**
- Drop in grades**
- Regression (bed wetting, separation anxiety, etc.)**

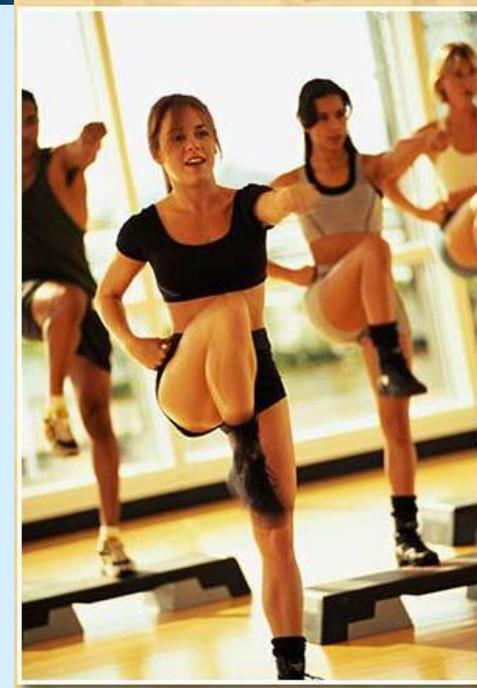
Parents need to take good care of themselves!

You're being a good parent by taking time for you!

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

How Can I Do So?

- Regular physical exercise
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Adequate sleep.
- “Alone” time every day.
- Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, prayer/meditation, and muscle relaxation.
- Be creative about ways you can include your children in the things you love or enjoy.



What to do when YOU feel stressed?

- Ensure your child is safe and go into the other room for a few minutes to calm down.
- Take a walk or a jog
- Take several deep breaths.
- Schedule a pleasant activity (for you alone or with your partner/ a friend)
- Talk to a trusted friend or family member. Ask for help!
- Remember that this is just a season of your life! While things may feel overwhelming or out of balance right now, it's not always going to be like this.

And how about those relationships?

- Parents often say “but we don’t have time...we cannot afford it...we’re too busy!”
- Guess what? We understand...but we challenge you to be creative

- ❑ Get a babysitter (maybe extended family) and have an evening out...or maybe a weekend get-away?
- ❑ Spend 10 minutes as a couple every night after you put the kids to bed. Focus this time ONLY on the two of you!
- ❑ Invite another family over for dinner or go on a picnic together.
- ❑ Join a couples Sunday School class at your church / synagogue / house of worship.
- ❑ Exercise together regularly.
- ❑ Seek professional help if needed!

Resources for youth

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Videos

- ❑ *Young Children on the Home front, ZERO TO THREE.*
- ❑ *Talk, Listen, Connect: Deployments, Homecomings, Changes. Sesame Street DVDs for families with youth ages 2-5. Free through Military OneSource*



- ❑ **Youth Coping With Military Deployment:** *"Promoting Resilience in Your Family"* and *"Mr. Poe and Friends."* **American Academy of Pediatrics**

What resources are available?

- ❑ **Military OneSource (1-800-342-9647).**
www.militaryonesource.com
- ❑ **Military Child Education Coalition** (www.militarychild.org)

Operation Purple Camp

- ❑ National Military Family Association (NMFA)
 - In 2008, there were 100 weeks of FREE camp held in 62 locations in 37 states and territories.
www.nmfa.org

- ❑ Just began in 2008: [Operation Purple Healing Adventures](#) is for wounded SMers & their families. Involves one week of fun family centered activities with opportunities for individual, as well as couples seminars and activities

Resources for Youth:

Picture Books / Stories

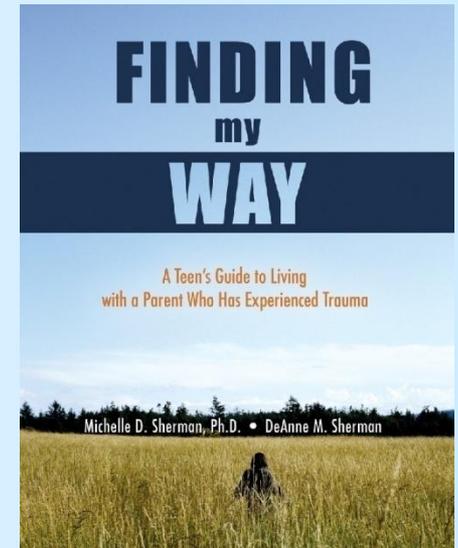
- ❑ *I Miss You: A Military Kid's Book About Deployment.* (Andrews, 2007).
- ❑ *Daddy, you're my hero! // Mommy, you're my hero!* [for kids ages 4-8] (Ferguson-Cohen, 2005)
- ❑ *You And Your Military Hero: Building Positive Thinking Skills During Your Hero's Deployment.* (Jensen-Fritz et al., 2009)

Resources for Teens

❑ *Finding My Way:
A Teen's Guide to Living
with a Parent who has Experienced Trauma*

Michelle D. Sherman, Ph.D. and DeAnne M. Sherman [for youth
ages 12-18]

www.SeedsofHopeBooks.com



www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Finding My Way Provides:

- Comfort in knowing that they are not alone
- Facts presented in clear, concise language
- Opportunities for reflection and journaling
- Tips on healthy coping skills
- Help in identifying supportive people and in dealing with friends
- Encouragement to take good care of themselves
- Resources for further learning
- Support, encouragement, and hope

Educational / Interactive Elements

- ❑ Short stories depicting:
 - Parental reactions to trauma
 - Common responses among youth
 - Adaptive coping strategies for teens
- ❑ Reflection questions
- ❑ “Think about a time when...”
- ❑ Open-ended sentences
- ❑ Inspirational quotes and poems
- ❑ 8 key lessons

Part One: The Basics

- ❑ Chapter 1 What is my parent going through?
The facts about trauma and PTSD
- ❑ Chapter 2 My parent has really changed...what's up?
The symptoms of PTSD
- ❑ Chapter 3 Why MY parent? And why NOW?
Risk factors for developing PTSD
- ❑ Chapter 4 Why is my parent so tense and sad?
Anxiety and depression
- ❑ Chapter 5 Why does my parent turn to alcohol / drugs?
Common addictions among trauma survivors
- ❑ Chapter 6 What can help my parent?
My parent's treatment plan

PART II: Life With A Parent Who Has Experienced Trauma

- ❑ Chapter 7 Are all of my feelings normal?
 Understanding my strong emotions

- ❑ Chapter 8 How can I cope with all of this?
 Tools for getting through rough times

- ❑ Chapter 9 Who can I count on?
 Identifying people who can support me

- ❑ Chapter 10 What do I tell other people?
 Dealing with my friends

- ❑ Chapter 11 What can I do to help?
 Tips on supporting my parent

PART III: Wrap Up

- ❑ Chapter 12 Final Thoughts and Lessons Learned
- ❑ Chapter 13 Commonly Asked Questions
- ❑ Chapter 14 Resource List
- ❑ List of Feelings
- ❑ Glossary

- ❑ Being used by MCEC's Living in the New Normal Curriculum
- ❑ Being distributed to National Guard units via the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program

My Story: Blogs by Four Military Teens

The blogs in *My Story* address issues such as:

- ❑ Pride in parent's military service
- ❑ Sadness, anger and confusion regarding deployments
- ❑ The excitement of homecoming
- ❑ Challenges of reconnecting after deployment
- ❑ Finding a "new normal"
- ❑ Teen depression
- ❑ Dealing with parent's emotional / physical challenges (e.g., PTSD, substance abuse, injury)
- ❑ Divorce
- ❑ Resilience and post traumatic growth



***Finding My Way and My Story* are only available at:**

❑ Secure website:

www.SeedsofHopeBooks.com

❑ Book House Fulfillment (distributor)

1-800-901-3480, x118

Discounts are available for large quantity orders.

Price of Peace Gaddis/Steen 08

Sung by sisters Cassy (16) and Alyssa (12) Gaddis;

Their father, CW5 Jim Gaddis, is the command chief warrant officer of the Illinois Army National Guard

Standing at the gate knowing I couldn't wave enough

No matter what...

It's gonna be tough

For a girl to say goodbye to her Daddy's smile

It's rough...can't cover it up...

That's how much you love

Having him there for dances, dinners, for you

When you're off fighting Dad, we're fighting to see you soon

The price of piece is paid by the families on their knees
praying tonight

By the soldiers' feet on some foreign street just trying to save
a life

By a daughter's tears as she
sees her hero do what he
thinks is right

The loss may run deep, but if
it's love we leave

Well that's the price of peace



It's hard that he's gone, but the moments go on nonstop
I think about him a lot
But for him it's more than just a job
So the comfort for me is his letters each week
This I know...he knows...I can't wait til he's home
So I can hug him, have him hold me & not let me loose
When he's told you "don't be sad"
Hope is all you can do

The countdown goes from months to weeks to days
Time stands still the longer we have to wait
Please God show me how to be patient
I can't wait til "then" turns to "now!"

To listen to this song go to:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_goM-FRoZQ

<http://www.nationalguard.com/events/qaddis-sisters>

Questions and Reactions?

Thank you for your service and for inviting me to join you today.

Questions?

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, users can visit www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org to take a screening online, or via the phone at 877-877-3647

To learn more about who we are, please visit: www.MilitaryPathways.org



www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Part Two

Family Resiliency Kit Overview

**Kerry O'Connell-Vale, MS
Military Program Manager
Screening for Mental Health, Inc.**

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

What is the purpose of the kit?

- Help family members cope with stress of deployment
- Build resiliency
- Support children
- Recognize the symptoms of mental health problems
- Learn how to access behavioral health services

Who Should Use the Kit?

- Mental Health professionals, guidance counselors
- Chaplains
- Family readiness group leaders
- Military Resource Personnel
- Commissioned and non-commissioned officers

What is in the kit?

- Family Resiliency Kit Guide
- The Video, A Different Kind of Courage
- Educational materials on family resiliency
- Educational materials on mental health
- Promotional materials
- Screening forms

How is the kit used?

- Video presentation of “A Different Kind of Courage” with a follow up discussion
- Video presentation of the Sesame Street DVD at a family event
- Self help resource for individuals- Dvd and workbook
- Mental health and alcohol screening events
- Display table with educational materials

To order a Family Resiliency Kit, a SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Kit, wallet cards, or for more information about Military Pathways:

- ❑ Email Military@mentalhealthscreening.org
- ❑ Or visit us online at www.mentalhealthscreening.org/military

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

Upcoming Events

- ❑ SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Training Webinar on September**
- ❑ Webinar on PTSD, speaker Dr. Terry Keane**

Questions?

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, users can visit www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org to take a screening online, or via the phone at 877-877-3647

To learn more about who we are, please visit: www.MilitaryPathways.org



www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org

For More Information About Military Pathways®

**Kerry O'Connell-Vale, MS
Military Program Manager
781-239-0071 x117**

koconnell@mentalhealthscreening.org

www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org