

Staying or Moving When Your Service Member Is Deployed

Overview

Weighing the pros and cons of staying near the installation or moving closer to family when your spouse is deployed.

- Deciding what's right for you
- Advantages of remaining on the installation
- If you decide to move closer to family
- Resources

When your service member receives orders to deploy, your first impulse may be to pack up your belongings and move back “home” to more familiar surroundings, especially if you haven’t been married for long. While there are advantages to being among family and old friends while your spouse is away, there are many benefits to staying in your military community. Before making a decision, it’s important to think through the pros and cons of staying or moving.

Deciding what’s right for you

The decision to stay or leave is a personal one that will depend on a number of factors, including:

- *Your ties to the community where you live.* If you have lived on or near the installation for awhile, you’ve probably developed support systems that can help you while your spouse is away. You may belong to a faith community, you may be close with your neighbors, and you may have made friends with other military spouses. The people in these communities should be able to help you with any challenges you encounter during the deployment.
- *Your children.* It’s easier to pick up and move if you don’t have children. But if you have a baby or toddler, you may want to live with relatives who can help you care for them. If your children are older, moving may be too disruptive, especially if they are in school and involved with sports, lessons, or other organized activities. Keep in mind that just as your friends provide support to you, your children’s friends can provide support for them.
- *Whether you have a place to move to.* If you plan to move back in with a parent or other relative, how do they feel about sharing their home with you and perhaps your children? Although moving back home may be done with the best of intentions, it can also create added stress. Your own expectations as well as your family’s may have changed since you have been out on your own.
- *Your finances.* Moving means paying transportation costs for you and your children twice -- once when you leave, and again when you return to the installation. You will also have to pay to transport or store your furniture and other possessions.
- *Your willingness to spend the time before your spouse deploys preparing to move.* If there’s enough notice before the deployment, you and your spouse may want to take a last-minute vacation or just be together without the distraction of packing up your home, canceling services, and looking for a new place to live.

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- *Your housing situation.* If you will be paying rent in a new location, it may not be covered by your base housing allowance (BAH). BAH is based on the housing market in the region where the installation is located. If rent is more expensive back home, then you'll have to cover the difference yourself. If you live in government quarters, you may not be able to keep your housing if you leave. Check with the housing office to find out whether you can leave your place vacant until you return after the deployment.
- *Your need for special medical treatment.* If you have a child in the Exceptional Family Member program, the special care he or she receives may not be as readily available in your new location.

Advantages of remaining on the installation

Your reasons for wanting to move back home when your service member deploys are good ones. You may need a break from the military lifestyle and the constant reminders of the deployment by others. You may look forward to the love and support that your extended family and old friends can give you. Or you may be able to save money by moving in with family. Before you make up your mind, it's important to consider the advantages of remaining at the installation until your service member comes home.

- *Access to installation services.* If you stay on or near your installation, you'll have easy access to the commissary, exchange, recreational activities, family and community support, legal assistance, and other services.
- *Family readiness and unit activities.* Many installations have special activities and programs for family members of deployed service members. This is a good way to meet others in your situation and to stay connected with your spouse's unit.
- *Medical care.* If you need to see a health care provider while you're living away from the installation, you may not be able to find a preferred provider. Therefore, you will be expected to pay for the treatment yourself.
- *Other military families to turn to for support.* At the installation, you're not the only one dealing with the deployment of a spouse. It can be comforting to be with people who share your experience or have already been through a deployment. Friends and family back home may not understand the military lifestyle or the unique circumstances of a deployed service member. They may question why your spouse doesn't write or call more often, and even wonder why he or she has to be away for so long.
- *Safety and security.* You and your service member will have peace of mind knowing that you're in the safe environment of a military installation.
- *Keeping children's routines intact.* Your children may enjoy visiting their grandparents or other relatives, but leaving home to move in with them -- even temporarily -- will disrupt your children's normal routines.

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- *A chance to settle in.* If you recently moved to the installation, you can start putting down roots while your service member is away. His or her transition back home after deployment will be easier if routines have been established and the family is settled.

If you decide to move closer to family

- *Give your contact information to your spouse's unit.* Though it sounds obvious, be sure to give your spouse your new address and phone number.
- *Notify installation housing or your landlord that you will be moving out.*
- *Change your address at the post office.* Otherwise your mail won't be forwarded.
- *Keep in touch with the family support center, family readiness group, ombudsmen, or Key Volunteers, depending on your branch of service.* Visit the Web site of the unit to stay connected.
- *Look for ways to connect with other military spouses and support programs in your area.* Your local Red Cross chapter or the nearest National Guard facility is a good place to start.

Resources

Your military support services

Each service branch sponsors information and support programs for service members and their families. You can call or visit any installation Army Community Service Center, Marine Corps Community Services, Fleet and Family Support Center, or Airman and Family Readiness Center regardless of your branch affiliation.

If you aren't near an installation, National Guard Family Assistance Centers are available in every state. The Local Community Resource Finder on the National Guard Family Program at www.guardfamily.org will identify your closest center.

Military OneSource

This free 24-hour service is available to all active duty, Guard, and Reserve members and their families. Consultants provide information and make referrals on a wide range of issues. Up to six free face-to-face counseling sessions are also available. Call 1-800-342-9647 or go to www.militaryonesource.com. Provided by the Department of Defense.

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