



Research & Policy Brief



Purpose and Scope

Researchers at RTI International and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health conducted a study comparing the rates of child abuse and neglect among nearly 2,000 Army families with confirmed incidents of child abuse or neglect. Researchers compared rates of abuse while enlisted soldiers were at home and while they were deployed for combat operations between late 2001 and the end of 2004.

The study was published in the Aug. 1 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Key Findings

- The overall rate of child abuse and neglect was more than 40 percent higher while a soldier-parent was deployed for a combat tour than when he or she was at home.
- Civilian mothers whose soldier-husbands were deployed showed the greatest increase in the rate of child abuse and neglect during deployment, with their rate of child physical abuse being nearly twice as high during deployments and their rate of child neglect, in which parents do not properly care for their children, being nearly four times higher during deployments.

Report Sponsor

The study was funded by the Army Medical Research and Materiel Command.

About RTI International

RTI International is an independent nonprofit research organization based in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, that provides research and technical solutions to governments and businesses worldwide in the areas of health and pharmaceuticals, education and training, surveys and statistics, advanced technology, democratic governance, economic and social development, energy, and the environment. For more information, visit www.rti.org.

RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

Combat-Related Deployments Responsible for Increased Child Abuse, Neglect Among Army Families

What the Study Found

Confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect among Army families significantly increase when a parent is deployed to a combat zone.

Results of a new study found that the overall rate of child abuse and neglect was more than 40 percent higher while a soldier-parent was deployed for a combat tour than when he or she was at home.

The findings were consistent regardless of parents' age, rank or ethnic background, indicating that deployments are difficult for all kinds of families.

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Because this study measured incidents of child abuse and neglect within individual families during times of deployment and non-deployment, the authors report that the evidence is fairly strong that combat-related deployments are responsible for the increase.

The study confirms that supportive services are needed for families of deployed soldiers and that those services need to be provided in a way that encourages parents who are having difficulties to take advantage of them.

According to the authors, the Army is aware of these issues and is working to support families during deployments.