Preparation to leave

**Reassuring children**

Deployment is a stressful time for all family members, especially children. **Reassuring children** in many ways can help ease their stress.

*Use the checklist below as a guide for helping your children share their feelings about deployment.*

**As a parent, I:**

___ Remind my preschool children that they are not the reason I have to leave and that deployment is part of my job.

___ Reassure my children that they will be safe and cared for while I am away.

___ Tell my children I will do everything I can to return safely.

___ Show confidence in my children’s ability to manage while I am gone.

___ Give each child a “comfort item” to hold on to while I am away.

___ Give a picture of myself to each child for him or her to keep.

___ Reassure my children that I will stay in touch as much as possible.

___ Tell my children I will think of them at a special time each day.

___ Give each child lots of reassuring hugs.

___ Watch for signs of stress in my children (nightmares; excessive worry; anxiety about being away from home; anxiety about going to school or other activities; stomach aches, headaches; withdrawal; lack of interest; acting out; and sudden changes in eating or sleeping habits).

___ Seek professional help, if needed.

**As a family, we:**

___ Make childcare plans to reassure children that they will be safe and cared for while I am away.

___ Read books together about goodbyes.

___ Reassure one another that our family can cope with whatever changes we will face.