

Frequently Asked Questions....



Who is eligible to participate in the program?

OMK is open to all youth under the age of 19 who have a parent or legal guardian serving in the U.S. military regardless of rank or military affiliation. Our Speak Out for Military Kids program is open to both military and non-military youth in 8th-12th grades. Individuals can contact the OMK Central Office for information on programming in their area.

Pennsylvania does not have many military installations so how can there be a need for OMK in Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania is home to about 32,000 military children. Pennsylvania may only have a few small military installations, but it is home to the nation's third largest National Guard.

How is Operation: Military Kids funded?

Operation: Military Kids is a nationwide program currently funded by the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project. The program is implemented in Pennsylvania by Penn State Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program.

How can I help?

There are several ways to support OMK in Pennsylvania. You can establish a community of support with RSG! Training, help fill Hero Packs, write letters of support to the children, be a mentor for a SOMK group, organize events, and become a screened volunteer. Please contact the OMK State Office, or visit the OMK web site at www.operationmilitarykids.org. for information on becoming involved.

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Penn State Extension

Operation: Military Kids Pennsylvania



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Operation: Military Kids (OMK) is the U.S. Army's collaborative effort with America's communities to support the children and youth of National Guard, Reserve, and Active Duty families.

When military parents living in civilian communities are mobilized, their children have unique needs for special support services. These youth need to connect with other youth in similar situations. They seek friends and adults who can empathize and help them cope with their new world. It is the mission of OMK to support these individuals by:

- *Creating networks of people, organizations, and other resources that can offer support
- *Delivering a wide range of recreational, social, and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities
- *Acknowledging the strengths and sacrifices of military kids as everyday on the home front
- *Supporting military kids coping with the stress of knowing their deployed parents may be in harm's way
- *Educating the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on service members, families, kids, and the community as a whole

National Partners Include:



OMK in Pennsylvania was implemented in 2007 and is managed by Penn State Extension. The OMK State Team in Pennsylvania consist of representatives from the following agencies:

- 171st Air Refueling Wing, PA Air National Guard, Airman & Family Readiness Program
- 911th Airlift Wing, Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station
- American Legion Auxiliary
- Army Reserve
- Carlisle Barracks Child, Youth, & School Services
- Center for Safe Schools
- Defense Logistics Agency Installation Support at Susquehanna, Child & Youth Development Services
- Easter Seals of Central Pennsylvania
- Harrisburg Army Recruiting Battalion, Family Programs
- LutherCare, CCIS of Lebanon County
- Penn State Cooperative Extension/4-H
- Pennsylvania Council on Boys and Girls Clubs
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Pennsylvania National Guard Child & Youth Program
- Recreation, Park & Tourism Management Student Society at Penn State University
- Red Cross

In addition to the state team, regional teams have been developed to focus on specific needs of military youth in Pittsburgh/Western PA, Harrisburg/Central PA and Philadelphia/South Eastern PA. Both state and regional teams strive for increasing community awareness of issues, both physical and emotional, faced by these youth. In addition to connection events, here are some of the other programs offered.



Ready, Set, Go! (RSG!) Training

offers communities insight into military culture and the deployment cycle. It also increases understanding of the unique issues facing military youth. Participants obtain an introduction to the military and its customs and culture, the seven steps of the deployment process, dealing with the media, fostering resilience in young people, and building a community capacity to support military kids.



Speak Out For Military Kids (SOMK)

is a youth-led, adult-supported project that generates community awareness of issues faced by youth of military families. Youth form speakers bureaus and develop presentations, public service announcements, videos, and other materials. They actively seek opportunities to share their experiences with others in the community (e.g., school assemblies, service club meetings and events, city council meetings, fairs, community activities, and teacher in-service programs).



Mobile Technology Lab (MTL)

are provided to OMK state teams for use with a variety of programs in support of military youth. The lab is used as a means for youth to stay connected to their parents during deployment. A child is able to record a message, burn it to DVD, create a card, and package the entire production for mailing. These labs contain laptops, printers, scanners, laminators, DVD burners, digital cameras, and video cameras, as well as a variety of software packages.



Hero Packs

are backpacks filled with items designed to help connect kids with their deployed parent. In addition, information is provided to the "stay-at-home" parent or guardian regarding local support programs. The backpacks are filled by volunteers in a valuable community service effort. The Hero Packs are then distributed to military youth as a way to say thank you for the sacrifices they make. It shows them support from their communities and OMK partners.

