

Preparing for Deployment

A Handbook for Military
Members & Families



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Introduction

Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed to assist military personnel and their families navigate the challenges of deployments or prolonged absences. You will find helpful information on how to prepare for deployment, maintain mental wellness, communicate effectively, and learn about how the PEI MFRC can support you through this process.

What is Deployment?

A deployment is anytime a military member is away from home for an extended period of time due to an operational commitment. Deployments are sometimes referred to as family separations or work-related absences. Examples of deployments include being away on a course, training exercises, imposed restrictions, or being away overseas, within Canada or the U.S.

When most people hear the word "deployment," they think of prolonged absences on operations overseas. However, some families experience longer but more infrequent absences, while others experience shorter, more frequent absences. All deployments, regardless of length and location, are demanding for military personnel and their families.

Introduction

What is a Military Family?

The PEI MFRC recognizes that military families are diverse and come in all sizes. A military family includes all Canadian Armed Forces personnel, Regular and Reserve Force, and their spouses, children, parents, relatives, or people who the military member self-identifies as part of their family. Family members and persons of significance to Canadian Armed Forces personnel who pass away while serving remain part of the military family community in perpetuity.

How Can My Family Access the PEI MFRC's Services?

When you arrive in PEI, please ensure that you complete our Family Intake Form so your family can access our services. If you are preparing for a deployment, you will also complete our Deployment Family Information Form so we can support your loved ones during your absence. To download a fillable PDF copy of these forms, visit www.PEIMFRC.org and select either "Family Intake Form" or "Deployment Family Information Form." If you need further assistance, please visit the MFRC or call (902) 892-8999.

Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Deployment Stress

Why Prepare for Deployment?

Deployments can cause physical and emotional stress for the military member and their family, most notably during the initial departure and reunion. There will also be a shift in family roles, responsibilities, and routines, especially if you have children. The best strategy to reduce deployment stress is preparation, and this cannot be overemphasized. Preparation means anticipating the changes and challenges and developing strategies to cope with each one. It is essential to consider all aspects of family life: psychological, spiritual, emotional, social, and physical health.

Regardless of the nature of deployment or absence that families encounter, several factors will affect deployment stress levels; factors related to the individual, separation, the type of deployment and other family factors.

Individual Factors of the Military Member:

- Physical and mental health
- Ability to cope with stress and uncertainty
- Previous deployment experience
- Attitude toward the assignment
- Confidence in self and unit
- Sense of security in family relationships

Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Separation Factors:

- Available preparation time
- Previous family separation experience
- Attitude of family toward assignment
- Important family events during separation
- Confidence in support available to family

Deployment Factors:

- Nature of the mission, especially if ambiguous
- Length of the mission, especially if uncertain
- Communication (mail, phone, e-mail) ease or difficulty
- Geographical location (terrain, weather)
- Living and working conditions
- Confidence in unit training and leadership

Other Family Factors:

- Age and number of children
- Family routines, and parental roles
- Childcare concerns
- Household income level
- Extended supports available to family



Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Families often experience a "cycle" of emotions during the deployment process. Understanding the different responses that may arise across the deployment cycle can assist you, your family and your friends to understand behaviour changes and emotional reactions. This model illustrates the various stages that you, your family and friends may progress through across the deployment.

The Emotional Cycle of deployment is based on experience and research with military families who have experienced a more traditional, long-term separation. Families find understanding and reassurance in this model and the suggested coping strategies, with the knowledge that many others share similar responses to this challenging experience.

Although there are timeframes listed, this will vary depending on the length of deployment, and families may spend more or less time in each stage. The model is designed to provide a general understanding, and not everyone will progress systematically through each phase. **This handbook will primarily address strategies to help families cope with stages 1 and 2.** As you will see in the following diagram, family stress levels tend to be highest in stages 3 and 5.

Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Pre-Deployment:

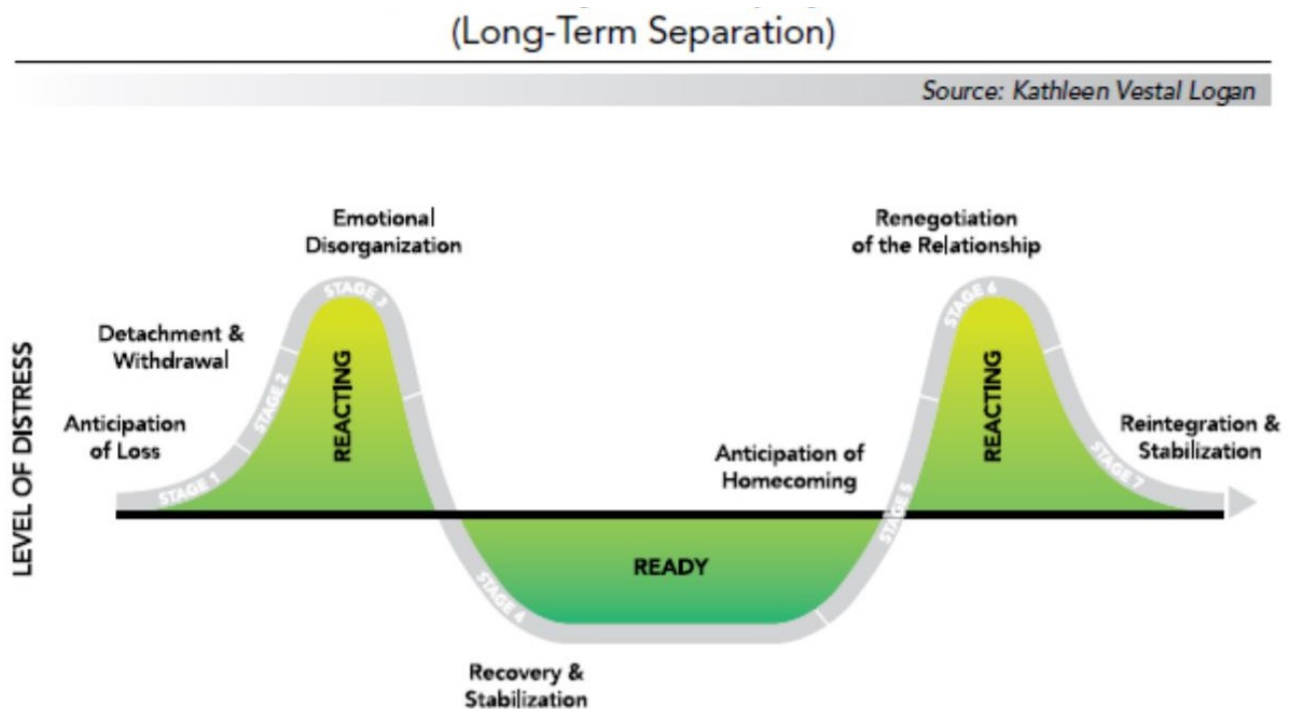
- 1.) Anticipation of Loss: 1–6 weeks before departure
- 2.) Detachment and Withdrawal: Last week before departure

During Deployment:

- 3.) Anticipation of Loss: 1–6 weeks before departure
- 4.) Detachment and Withdrawal: Last week before departure

Post Deployment:

- 6.) Renegotiation of Relationships: First 6 weeks home
- 7.) Reintegration and Stabilization: 6–12 weeks after returning home



Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Stage 1 – Anticipation of Loss

The “lead up” before you depart on deployment is both exciting and challenging. The prospect of putting your training into action and applying your knowledge to real operational demands is professionally rewarding and satisfying.

The pre-deployment stage begins with the warning order of deployment. Sometimes there is very little warning, and departure is imminent. In other circumstances, this period can extend from weeks to months. Both situations have advantages and disadvantages and can expose the deploying member and those remaining at home to a flood of emotions and reactions

Common Reactions:

- Fluctuations in energy level and mood
- Fantasizing
- Excitement or enthusiasm to put training into practice and to have new experiences
- Feelings of sadness, anger, restlessness, anxiety, tension, frustration, resentment, depression

Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

General Suggestions:

- Allow yourself to feel and express a full range of emotional responses. Work through any disputes that may arise.
- Encourage all family members to share their feelings.
- Consider keeping a daily journal to reflect on feelings.
- Reassure your partner of your love and commitment.
- Involve the whole family in preparing for the separation.
- Create opportunities for lasting memories before deployment.
- Try to see the deployment as an opportunity for growth.
- Remember that the deployment is not forever.
- Talk to your kids in advance to give them time to process emotions and think.

For the Military Member:

- Share honestly all you can about the deployment.
- Choose favourite family photos to take with you.
- Make a list of important family occasions and take cards with you.
- Participate in your unit's pre-deployment activities for self and family.

For the Partner at Home:

- Take photos of your partner doing routine activities.
- Build a solid support network for yourself through your partner's unit, community, the MFRC etc.
- Have written plans for a family crisis and/or emergency.

Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Stage 2 – Detachment and Withdrawal

This stage will generally occur in the final days before departure. Detachment and withdrawal is a normal process where we begin emotionally detaching from loved ones prior to deployment. It can ease the act of separation and minimize associated complications. For the deploying member, the feeling of withdrawal that accompanies detachment highlights that you are now shifting your focus to the job ahead.

It can be a challenging time, but most people manage this transition in the end. Be sure to maintain a good sleep routine and organize your time effectively to alleviate fatigue and emotional strain. Make the most of the time you have before leaving. **This can be the most difficult stage for some families.**

Common Reactions:

- Reduced emotional and sexual intimacy
- Feelings of despair, hopelessness, irritability, numbness
- Emotional detachment from your partner
- Excitement and anticipation (for the deploying member)



Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

General Suggestions:

- Accept your feelings as normal reactions to challenging circumstances, and not signs of rejection.
- Communicate as openly and honestly as possible.
- Be patient with yourself, your partner, and your children.
- Plan a fun family activity before you leave. Ex: movie night, game night etc.

For the Military Member:

- Complete your packing and preparation early so that the last day and evening can be family time.
- Accept your excitement about the assignment as natural and normal, without expecting your family to share your feeling. Let them know that while you are excited, it is still hard for you to leave them.
- Share all you can about your deployment. Give your family an idea of your daily schedule and the time zone difference.

For the Partner at Home:

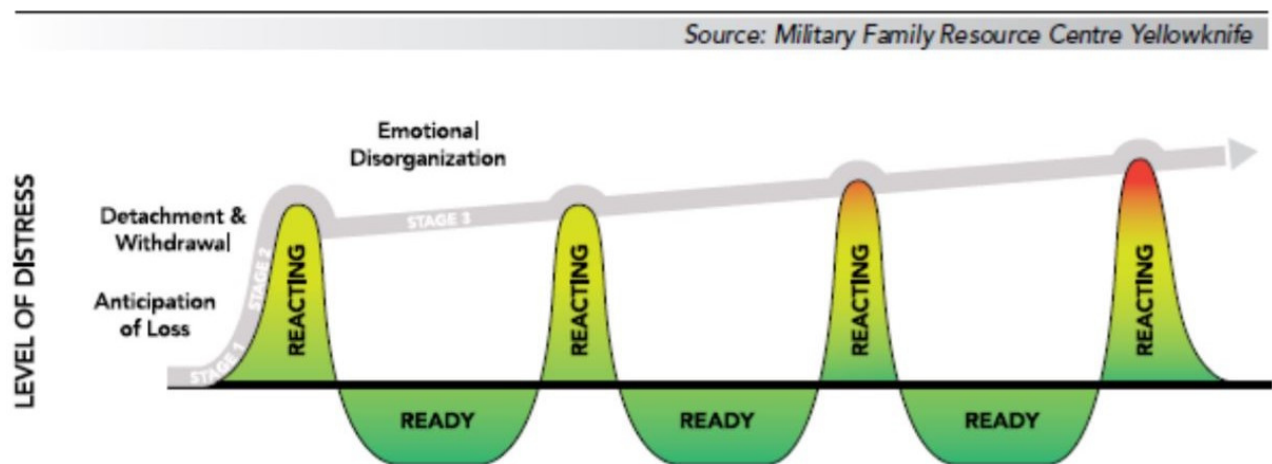
- Try to take good care of yourself — nutrition, sleep, exercise, hobbies, social support.
- Ignore rumours, try to rely on official sources of information concerning the department and the assignment.

Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Short-Term and Frequent Separations

Short-term deployments or absences that are more frequent and less predictable in nature can be just as disruptive and demanding on the family. Constant and continuous periods of separation and reunion may be more difficult to manage given the short period required to readjust from one absence to the next. Many families who experience frequent short-term separations and reunions experience an ongoing sense of emotional disorganization, testing their ability to act and react.

The challenge for families during these types of deployments is that they must constantly adjust and move through the stages at a much more rapid pace without the benefit of time to adjust emotionally. The general coping strategies provided in this handbook can help families deal with the absence of a loved one, regardless of the type of deployment.



Preparing the Military Member

Pre-Deployment Checklist

Preparing for deployment can seem like an overwhelming task and can add to the amount of stress that families experience. The following checklist can help ease the burden by adding structure to deployment preparations. It is non-exhaustive and easily customizable to your family's needs.

Ideally, the deploying member should complete this checklist with their partner well in advance of their deployment. Additionally, keeping important documents secure and organized can significantly decrease frustration, especially during a family crisis.

Important Information:

- Complete a Family Care Plan
- Complete the Family Registration form
- Complete mailing address and contact information for the ship/unit, including the deploying member's rank and service number
- Contact information for the PEI MFRC
- Contact information for SISIP Financial Services
- Inform your children's child care provider or teacher about the deployment. (Be sure to provide them with an updated family emergency contact list)

Preparing the Military Member

Communication:

- Know how to send mail/packages
- Know how to get updates & information about the deploying member
- Make a list of important dates and provide birthday and anniversary cards to deploying member for future mailing
- Have deploying member record bedtime stories (audio or video) to read to children during their absence
- Install up-to-date video chat software on your devices
- Have an international texting and calling plan

Financial:

- Assess the household and/or personal budget and identify all payments that need to be made
- Determine the location of safety deposit box and key
- Record all account numbers and credit card numbers
- Arrange military pay allotments through the base/wing pay office
- Know whom to call if problems arise with allotments etc.
- Record investment contributions (e.g. pre-authorized RRSP contributions)
- Assemble income tax return information
- Review insurance policies (life, home, auto, etc.)
- Acquire currency for country to be visited and any stopover countries

Preparing the Military Member

Home:

- Arrange mortgage/rent payments
- Duplicate keys
- Review utilities (date, amount, account numbers and payment method for each)
- Discuss security and maintenance (inside and outside)
- Plan for snow removal and lawn care
- Record contact information for base housing, landlords, plumber, electrician, auto mechanic, etc.
- Determine location of the electrical panel, water control valve, gas control valve
- Record the combination of any padlocks
- Record contact information for kennel for pets
- Make a secure list of passwords (voicemail, security systems, computer, software, email, etc.)

Health:

- Compile a supply of signed medical/dental insurance plan claim forms, as well as a letter authorizing payments to the spouse of the military member
- Health and dental records for each family member
- Record contact information for health care service providers (doctor, dentist, walk-in clinics, emergency rooms, etc.)
- Up-to-date provincial health card
- Up-to-date immunization record for each family member
- Discuss emergency child care plan with children

Preparing the Military Member

Vehicle/Transportation:

- Contact information for the company financing your vehicle
- Vehicle registration (Power of Attorney is required to renew registration)
- Review vehicle insurance policy
- Maintenance schedule & service records
- Know your driver's license renewal date(s)
- Know the renewal date for license plate tabs
- Duplicate keys
- Have a plan for emergency repairs (roadside protection plan)

Legal:

- Ensure all legal documents are current, including passports, and know their locations
- Ensure copies of current wills are accessible
- Birth certificates for all family members.
- Marriage certificate/common-law designation
- Complete Power of Attorney forms for both medical and financial matters

Travel:

- Obtain passport
- Obtain travel visa
- Confirm immunization requirements
- Letter of consent to travel outside of Canada alone with your child/children (travel.gc.ca)

Preparing the Military Member

General Tips for the Military Member:

- Involve the whole family in preparing for the separation.
- Complete the pre-deployment checklist and Family Care Plan with your partner.
- Participate in pre-deployment briefings and activities.
- Create opportunities for warm, lasting memories; take pictures.
- Set realistic goals for yourself for the deployment period.
- If applicable, discuss with your spouse how parenting may change while you are away (e.g. Who will be responsible for what household chores? What will the new after-school routine look like?)
- Discuss the household budget and how expenses may increase or decrease.

Creating a Family Care Plan

A Family Care Plan (FCP) is a mandatory Department of National Defence form that prepares families of Canadian Armed Forces members to be taken care of in case of unforeseen events, emergency callouts and planned deployment. By identifying primary and secondary caregivers who should be contacted in the event of an emergency or military tasking, your FCP supports your family in your absence. The FCP is a regularly updated exchange of information between your family and a Commanding Officer.

Preparing the Military Member

A completed FCP is designed to support individual and unit operational readiness. All Canadian Armed Forces personnel must complete FCP Declaration DND Form 2886. It isn't a legally binding document, but it is kept on the military member's file. Family Care Plans are protected under the Privacy Act.

When creating your FCP, think beyond your children and partner. Do you have pets? Who will care for them if your partner is unable? Do you have other relatives outside the home that rely on you for different things? Who will do those things while you are away?

For more information about the FCP, contact Family Information Line at 1-800-866-4546 or visit WWW.CAFConnection.ca

Emergency Child Care Plan

While the FCP resides within the military member's file, an emergency child care plan will assist an alternate caregiver in the event of an emergency. An up-to-date emergency child care plan lists the names and contact information of your preferred caregivers and provides useful child care information. An emergency child care plan lists detailed personal instructions about your child, including medical information, bedtimes, bus stop times, and favourite foods, to minimize the stress placed on your child when you are not with them.

Preparing the Military Member

Single Members

Single members encounter unique challenges when preparing for deployment. It is not uncommon for single members to live a great distance from their immediate family and, as such, often have the additional burden of finding a reliable individual to handle their personal affairs while they are deployed. Plans may need to be made to store household goods and vehicles, finance and bills need to be organized and mail redirected; perhaps you need to organize someone to water your plants and care for any pets.

If you are in a relationship, you are likely many of the reactions and concerns detailed earlier when discussing the emotional stages of the deployment cycle. Unlike a married couple, however, you may have concerns about whether your relationship has the commitment to survive the separation; you may be worried about who your partner socializes with while you're away, what if they meet someone else, etc. Take the time before the deployment to discuss your concerns openly and honestly.

Common Thoughts and Feelings:

- Where am I going to store all of my stuff?
- Who is going to look after my car?
- I can't wait to get over there!
- Do I need to disconnect my cellphone?
- Will my boyfriend/girlfriend/partner be there when I get back?

Preparing the Military Member

Friends

The pressures and rush of the pre-deployment phase may mean few opportunities before departure to make contact with family, let alone friends. Make plans to contact or see friends before you go, as you would your family. If you would like a farewell party, for example, organize it together with your friends. You may be disappointed if you are anticipating a surprise party.

Take the responsibility for initiating and maintaining contact. Try as best you can to simply 'touch base' by phone, email, or letter with your friends. During the deployment, you may find that some of your friends reduce their contact with you as they focus on their own lives. Try to understand that they may not appreciate what a military deployment involves or means to you. Keeping in contact will make it easier to fit back into your social circles on your arrival home.

Considerations for Single Members:

- Have you arranged to have someone take care of your vehicle and home? Paperwork, payments and insurance? Make sure that things like insurance, registration, etc., do not expire while you are away.
- Have you had your mail forwarded to an alternate address, cancelled subscription services, etc.?
- Does your bank, credit card companies, landlord, etc., have an address where they can contact you while away?
- Have you arranged accommodations for your pets?

Preparing the Military Member

Parents

Do not be surprised if strong emotions arise during a family farewell. Parents, in particular, may display 'out of character' heightened emotion and open displays of affection. This may seem embarrassing but try to understand that they are still concerned and worried about your safety and welfare despite your age and independence.

Elderly Parent Care

As parents grow older, adult children/caregivers are presented with challenges and concerns that they may not know how to handle. If your parents are elderly, ill or require full-time care, you may be extremely anxious about the deployment, thinking "What if something happens while I'm away?" Keep your adult loved one informed of family and caregiving changes, and reassure them that the situation is temporary. Your parents may have their own anxieties about your deployment, and in particular, your safety.

You may need to consider arrangements for someone to check on or care for your aging loved ones. For occasional caregiving assistance, consider supportive services, such as home delivered meals, chore maintenance, or visitor companion services. DSGs and the PEI MFRC may be able to guide you through what services are available in your area. If not, the town or city, will be able to provide you with information on the services available in that community.

Preparing the Military Member

If your loved one needs direct care, contact home healthcare and/or employment agencies to inquire about professional in-home caregivers who can assist them. If your loved one is in a long-term care facility, inform them and the facility of your plans and arrange for friends, family members or professionals to check on them regularly.

Elderly parents have experienced war (either indirectly or directly) having lived through or served during armed conflicts. Like you would with your children and partner, talk openly with your parents about your deployment, concerns and anxieties. Include your parents in your welfare arrangements (e.g. including them in unit activities, if in the local area, and providing them with ship, unit, wing, base, DSG and MFRC contact details.

Single Parents

Deployment is a stressful time for all families, but when single parents or both parents are deployed, there are some extra challenges and an increased level of uncertainty both for the parent and the children. Without a spouse or partner to stay behind, single parents must ensure their children will be cared for during deployment. The issue of most concern will be the organization of full-time care arrangements for your child/children. Call on family members and trusted friends. Financial, legal matters and your family's medical needs will all need to be discussed with the caregiver.

Preparing the Military Member

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Have your children spend time with the caregiver before your deployment. Talk about and practice new routines that will occur during the deployment. Ex: your children may be walking home from school instead of you meeting them each day. Discuss discipline and roles/responsibilities children have in the home to help maintain a routine in your absence.

Make plans on how to communicate with the caregiver and your children while you're away, and provide the caregiver with suggestions for talking with your children about you, your absence and your return.

Have a 'backup' plan should the caregiver's circumstances change while you are deployed. Have someone who can 'step in' should the caregiver not be able to fulfil their responsibilities or need support. All these suggestions will provide some peace of mind for you while deployed and ease separation difficulties for both you and your child/children.

Information to Provide Your Child's Caregiver:

- Daily schedule, location, and phone numbers of schools
- Before and after school care locations, sporting commitments etc. (with contact numbers)
- Description and location of a child's comfort object (e.g. Stuffed animal or blanket).
- Names of medications, doses, and locations
- Special needs or requirements
- Location of important documents – insurance, birth certificates, will, etc.
- Contact numbers for their doctor, pediatrician, etc.
- Contact numbers for your base/unit and the MFRC

Preparing Children

Whether expected or unexpected, short or long, deployment is particularly tough for children. However, there are positive benefits to separation. Military children often take on additional responsibilities in a parent's absence, opening up the opportunity to develop new skills and hidden interests and abilities. In this changing environment, children tend to learn the importance of flexibility in dealing with everyday life. Deployment prepares children for separation in their lives. Not only do children learn how to say goodbye, but also how to develop emotional maturity. Deployment can strengthen family bonds. Families need to make adjustments during the absence that often lead them to discover and utilize new sources of strength.

During the separation, children need added support and attention. **Perhaps the most critical step to minimize adverse effects on children is to keep the absent parent part of the family's emotional life.** Don't be afraid to talk about the separation or the missing parent with the kids — it can sometimes make the separation more keenly felt, but it tends to make the reunion stage go much more smoothly.

Children also like to be involved in discussions which allow them to provide input on which chores they would like to help with and what they see as their responsibilities during the deployment. This can help the deployment transition run a little smoother and help them feel important and responsible.

However, you must make it clear to your children that during the deployment their primary responsibility is to continue to be a kid and not to take the place of the absent parent.

Tips to Prepare Children for Deployment:

- **Give them time to adjust:** Provide as much notice as possible before deployment, allowing for children's questions, concerns, and emotional reactions.
- **Provide details:** It is helpful for children to know the location, duration, and purpose of the deployment. When possible, use a map and provide interesting facts about the country such as language and special holidays. As dates of departure and return change constantly, be careful about giving absolute dates to children to avoid disappointment.
- **Notify teachers, child care providers, and activity leaders:** Providing information to child care staff and teachers about the deployment, such as location and return dates, can help providers assist your child. Having an open line of communication can ensure that your child is coping well with the deployment and school/childcare. In preparation for the deployment, revisit childcare plans. Details may have changed, or other family and friends may need to be added to the plans.
- **Make a communication plan:** Come up with ideas on how to keep in touch as a family and how often you will communicate. You have many options, including letter mail, email, parcels, and phone/video calls. It is important not to set strict expectations on communication. Disappointing interruptions can be caused by communications lockdowns, busy schedules, or a simple glitch on the internet. Talking about the plan in advance will reassure children that they will keep in contact with their parent.

Preparing Children

- **Provide reassurance:** Reassurance can be as simple as a special hug or a special moment spent together. Set aside time with your child regularly to provide them with an extra sense of security.
- **Talk regularly about the deployment:** This will allow them to express their feelings and ask questions.
- **Discuss changes in routines and expectations during the deployment:** Talking in advance about missing special moments like birthdays, Easter, or Christmas and discussing how you will uniquely celebrate these moments can help lessen the sadness children may be experiencing. Be creative in new ways to celebrate these moments. Whether it is planning to have a special present arrive, arrange to Skype on that day, or plan to have a special day when mom or dad returns.
- **Include children in the preparation and packing:** Ask children how they would like to spend the last night before their parent leaves. If old enough and if they want to, have them help you pack your luggage so they can feel involved and helpful.

Media Coverage and your Child

During deployment, it is very important to know what your child is watching or seeing and how they are interpreting the information they hear. While some reports are purely to educate and provide information, others are designed to sensationalize world events with the primary goal of maximizing viewers. Be aware of the many forms of news sources that your child may be exposed to; research what you have seen and talk about it

Preparing Children

Other Tips for Communicating With Your Children:

- Tell your children honestly, and in a language they can understand, that they may be sad when you leave and miss you while you are away.
- Allow children to express and name their emotions.
- Be patient with emotional outbursts.
- Hiding things or lying will only confuse them and lead them to conclude the worst.
- Spend quality time individually with each child before deployment – time that is special and just for them
- Children take emotional cues from their parents and other adults around them. You need to remain calm and respond to your child's concerns in a controlled manner.

Positive Aspects of Separation:

Many parents worry about the negative impact family separation will have on their children; however, deployment offers many growth opportunities to all family members, with children in particular. Despite the challenges of separation, many children make significant developmental gains.

- **Fosters maturity:** Military children experiencing deployment encounter more situations and may have broader and more varied experiences than other children.
- **Facilitates personal growth:** CAF children learn about the world and how it functions as a community at an earlier age. Assuming responsibilities in a parent's absence provides a chance to develop new skills and may bring out hidden interests and abilities.

Preparing Children

- **Encourages independence:** Children experiencing deployment are sometimes required to be more independent and resourceful.
- **Encourages flexibility:** In an ever-changing environment, military children learn the importance of flexibility in dealing with day-to-day life, especially while their parent is away.
- **Strengthened family bonds:** Military families make emotional adjustments during a separation, leading them to discover new sources of strength and support within themselves.

Family-Friendly Activities to Try

The following list will give you activity ideas to do with your children in the pre-deployment phase.

Deployment Map:

- Print off a map of your deployment location and place it in the home where everyone can see it. Research the region as a family and teach your children about its culture, language, traditions, etc.
- Consider tracing the route you will be travelling so your children can visualize the journey.

Pre-Mailed Letters:

- Have each family member write and send letters ahead of time. The deployed parent will have mail when they arrive at their destination.

Preparing Children

To Open When Notes:

- These are small messages intended to support loved ones during an absence. They can be written for the person staying at home, for the children or for the deployed member. Think about the different times that could be challenging for your loved one. Let your creativity flow and have fun in the process!
- Add a picture, a drawing of a small gift. What is important is to think about the other person and what can make them feel good!
- **Here are some examples:**
 - To Open When you feel lonely.
 - To Open When you need to laugh.
 - To Open When you need motivation.
 - To Open before your exam.
 - To Open When you don't feel like making supper.

Pre-Recorded Bedtime Stories:

- The departing parent can pre-record audio clips or videos of them reading their child's favourite stories so the parent at home can play them during the deployment. This is very helpful for younger children who will want to hear their absent parent's voice.

Photo Albums:

- Print photos of the family for the deployed parent to take with them and create an album. They will always have pictures to look at, even when they do not have access to a smartphone or laptop.

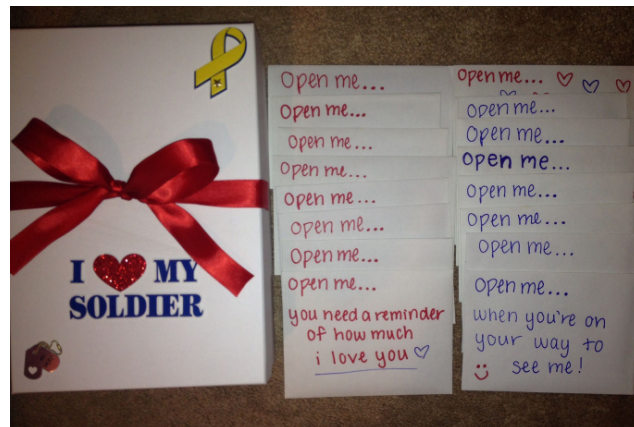
Preparing Children

Surprise Gift:

- Create a small craft or gift and place it into the deployed parent's luggage as a surprise, such as a handwritten card or drawing.

Pre-Deployment Family Night:

- Spend the last night before the deployment as a family. Consider doing a fun activity you do not normally do, such as cooking a meal together, watching a favourite movie, or going bowling. Make sure the deploying parent has all of their packing done in advance!



Preparing The Partner At Home

Deployment may be the first time that you find yourself solely responsible for raising the children, managing the family budget, and the general running of the household. Your partner's deployment can bring out a range of strong emotions, and some of them may seem in direct conflict with each other. You may miss your partner terribly, yet at the same time resent their freedom from family responsibilities.

Common Thoughts and Reactions Include:

- Is my partner really going to leave me with all of this?
- My partner is happy to go, but I'm angry about it.
- My partner won't talk to me properly about the separation.
- Where is my partner going exactly? How safe will it be?
- How am I going to cope?

These are normal things to be thinking and feeling at this time. Feelings of restlessness, anger, depression, and resentment, are common reactions that people experience when they begin to prepare for their partner's departure. It's essential to communicate and be open about how you're feeling.

Your deploying partner will also be experiencing various emotions, and it may be a relief if you face these feelings and thoughts together. Even the most independent person is likely to experience a feeling of uncertainty.

Preparing The Partner At Home

Consider and Discuss Reallocating Tasks While your Partner is Deployed:

- What jobs can safely be left for the duration of the deployment?
- What tasks can be allocated elsewhere? Ex: Arranging for a contractor to mow the lawn or paying for snow clearing services.
- What new tasks will you need to take on?

Suggestions to Prepare the Partner at Home

Build a Support System:

It is much easier to cope during deployment if you have an established support network before your partner leaves. Your motivation and desire to socialize may diminish while your partner is away, leaving you at risk of social isolation. You can prevent this by having a strong peer network of both military and non-military friends in advance. There are several ways you can enhance your current support system:

- **PEI MFRC:** Reach out to the MFRC before your partner's deployment and get involved in our community. Many military partners find it helpful to connect with other peers in military relationships who have similar experiences.
- **Social Groups:** Stay or get involved in activities that you enjoy. Perhaps you are a member of a book club or you attend group fitness classes. Whatever hobby you enjoy, keep involved in your social groups to combat isolation.

Preparing The Partner At Home

- **Online Forums/Groups:** While online relationships are no substitute for in-person relationships, social media and online discussion forums can be a great way to connect with other military spouses.

Ask for Help in Advance & Be Specific:

It can be hard to reach out for help when we need it the most. Contact your close friends and family members before your partner deploys and let them know you will need their support. Be specific with the kind of help you will need. Perhaps you want to meet with a friend once per week to chat over coffee, or you may ask your parents for occasional childcare help.

Whatever you need, ask your support network in advance, so they have enough time to consider and accommodate the request. Often, friends and family will say, "Let me know if you need anything!" but they actually do not know what you need. Being specific ensures that people know the best ways to support you during your partner's absence.

Think About Security:

- Don't tell everyone that your partner is going to be away for a long time, and refrain from posting about the absence on social media.
- Discuss with your children what they will say to others about their parent being away, especially when answering the door or talking to people they do not know well.
- Make sure emergency numbers are visible at all times.

Maintaining Mental Wellness

The Mental Health Continuum

It is critical for military families to maintain their mental health during the pre-deployment phase. The mental health continuum model explains the spectrum of how well someone may be coping with life stressors. The left side represents mental wellness and strong coping strategies, while the right side represents mental illness and an inability to cope. Ideally, one would recognize when they are slipping into the "reacting" zone and implement the proper skills and support before becoming injured or ill.

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL



Maintaining Mental Wellness

Recognizing Signs of Stress:

We all experience stress in our life; at our work, at home, when we play sports, etc. It is not necessarily a bad thing; we all need a certain amount of stress in our lives to motivate and increase performance. It is important to identify when stress is becoming problematic so you can take action. As previously discussed, military members and their families will likely experience intense emotional responses and high-stress levels before deployment. Therefore, It is imperative to recognize your individual signs of stress. Read through the list below and notice how your body and mind respond to stress.

Physical:

- Nausea
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbances
- Digestion issues
- Excessive sweating
- Changes in appetite

Behavioural:

- Social withdrawal/isolation
- Increased substance use
- Problems dealing with others
- Overreacting
- Increased risk-taking
- Increased spending
- Neglecting responsibilities

Emotional:

- Fear
- Rapid changes in mood
- Low motivation
- Irritability/short temper
- Anger
- Sadness/apathy

Thinking:

- Poor judgement
- Trouble concentrating
- Lowered self-esteem
- Memory problems
- Anxiety/worry
- Impaired decision-making skills

Maintaining Mental Wellness

Stress Management Strategies:

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Focus on eating a few servings of fruits and vegetables each day and limiting excess fast food.
- Exercise regularly and move your body each day. Do a form of exercise you enjoy and try to get outside whenever possible. Even a few minutes can make a difference!
- Get enough sleep. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours per night.
- Practice time management by prioritizing tasks, avoiding procrastination, and using your rest time for leisure, not work.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco intake.
- Talk to family, friends, and colleagues to vent or to help develop a solution to a problem.
- Keep a journal to write about your thoughts, feelings, and stress triggers.
- Use humour to ease tension. Watch a funny video or laugh with friends.
- Set aside personal time to yourself to partake in hobbies you enjoy.

Relaxation Techniques

Regularly practicing relaxation techniques is very beneficial in helping you cope with the stress of day-to-day life. Relaxation techniques are not mysterious, and you do not need specialist qualifications to carry them out. Anyone can practice relaxation just about anywhere and at any time. The key to practicing relaxation techniques is that they can be self-administered and, with a little practice, most people find them easy to master.

Maintaining Mental Wellness

Abdominal Breathing:

The level of tension carried in your body is reflected in the way that you breathe. If you are tense, your breathing tends to be shallow, rapid and occurring high in the chest. If relaxed, your breathing tends to be fuller, deeper, and from your abdomen. It is difficult to be tense and to breathe from your abdomen at the same time.

- 1.) Take a moment to note how tense you are feeling, then place one hand on your abdomen just beneath your rib cage.
- 2.) Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into the 'bottom' of your lungs – send the air as low down as you can. If you are breathing from your abdomen, your hand should rise. Your chest should move only slightly.
- 3.) When you've taken a full breath, pause for a moment and then exhale slowly through your nose or mouth. Make sure you exhale fully. As you exhale, try to relax your body fully.
- 4.) Now do ten slow, full abdominal breaths. Keep your breathing slow and smooth. It may help to count to four on the inhale (1-2-3-4) and then again on the exhale. Remember to pause briefly at the end of each inhalation.

If you begin to feel light-headed during the exercise, stop for 15–20 seconds and then start again. With practice, you may be able to do several sets of ten full abdominal breaths. Five minutes of abdominal breathing can have a very beneficial relaxing effect.

Maintaining Mental Wellness

Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

Progressive muscle relaxation (with tension) works on the theory that a muscle can be relaxed by first tensing it for a few seconds and then releasing it. Tensing and releasing various muscle groups throughout the body can produce a deep state of relaxation. The idea is to squeeze each muscle group hard (not straining, however) for about 10 seconds and then let it go suddenly. You then give yourself 15–20 seconds to relax, noticing the difference in the muscle relaxed, as opposed to when you tensed it, before going on to the next muscle group.

You can also practice progressive muscle relaxation without tensing and releasing the muscles. The idea is basically the same. You work your way progressively through the different muscle groups in your body, consciously relaxing each one as you go. The only difference is that you do not tense and release each muscle group. It may help to say to yourself something like “I am relaxing” or “Letting go” during each relaxation phase between muscle groups. Maintain a focus on your muscles during the exercise and stay keenly aware of your bodily sensations.

The following general guidelines apply:

- Make sure you are in a quiet, comfortable setting.
- Tense each muscle group for 7–10 seconds vigorously without straining, then release suddenly,
- Allow all other muscles in the body to relax and focus on one group at a time.

Maintaining Mental Wellness

- If a muscle group feels particularly tense, you can tense and release it 2–3 times if necessary. Just make sure to rest for 20–30 seconds between each cycle.
- The entire sequence should take about 30 minutes to complete the first time. As you get better, you may find you can work through it quicker.

Seeking Mental Health Assistance

There are times when we can't do it alone in regards to stress and stress management. Seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness but rather a recognition that the situation is beyond our normal resources to cope. At the end of this handbook, you will find information about mental health and addictions services located in Charlottetown. The following list is not exhaustive but is indicative of circumstances suggesting that you may need to seek assistance with stress management. The following list is not exhaustive but is indicative of circumstances suggesting that you may need to seek assistance with stress management:

- You are experiencing ongoing signs of stress.
- Ongoing sleep disturbances or nightmares.
- If you have no one with whom you can talk
- Your work and social relationships appear to be suffering
- You are having frequent accidents and difficulty concentrating
- You have noticed changes in your emotions or behaviours that are worrying you.
- You are having suicidal thoughts or urges to self-harm.

Importance of Communication

Good communication is the key to maintaining mental wellness in military relationships. Discussing roles and responsibilities across the period you are deployed provides clarification and assurance (both for yourself and those remaining at home). In the pre-deployment phase, discuss expectations of each other during deployment, freedom to make independent decisions, going out with friends, budgets, etc.

Be Honest About the Conditions

Remember that your partner and family may also be thinking of the danger of you being on operations – the possibility of you being injured or even losing your life. Treat these fears with care and do not brush them aside as being ridiculous – they are very real concerns. It is only natural that the thought of death is a major concern to loved ones, particularly when considering that deployed members may face possibilities of unsafe deployment environments.

Experience has shown that an honest appraisal of the threats to your life should usually be given to adult family members. Either exaggeration or understatement of the dangers of your deployment should be avoided – even in jest. Discussing these issues with older children provides an opportunity to recognize their fears.

Pre-Deployment Communication Tips:

- Allow yourself to feel and express all emotional responses.
- Talk openly about deployment – what you are feeling, your hopes, goals and fears.

- Encourage all family members to share their feelings and express their emotional responses.
- Try communicating in a variety of ways: Tell your partner how you feel, write them a note, or do something special.
- Set expectations for how often you will talk or email each other how and when. However, know that regular communication may not always be possible depending on the nature of the deployment.

Empathetic Communication:

Demonstrating empathy is a cornerstone of healthy communication. Empathetic communication allows the other person's ideas and feelings to be heard and validated. **The key to empathetic communication is understanding the other person's perspective and emotions without passing judgment.** This takes practice, but it becomes easier with time and will improve how you communicate in all relationships. There are several techniques you can use to practice empathetic communication with your partner:

- **Active Listening:** Listen to understand what the other person is saying rather than thinking about your response. Show your partner you are listening by using subtle non-verbal and verbal cues, such as nodding your head and saying "uh-huh" or "I see." Avoid interrupting and wait for your turn to speak.
- **Open body language:** Maintain eye contact, keep an upright posture, unfold your arms, and slightly mirror the other person's positioning and movements.

- **Paraphrasing:** Rephrase what your partner has said to show them you are listening and you understood what they said. Ex: "It sounds like adjusting to a new routine has been frustrating for you." When someone hears a restatement of what they just said, they feel heard and are encouraged to expand on what they were saying.
- **Open-questions:** Questions that invite discussion usually begin with "what," "how," or "why." Asking questions that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" is a good way to understand your partner's perspective and draw out details. Ex: "What do you think about talking on the phone twice per week while you are away?"
- **Thank them for sharing:** Affirm your partner when they open up about emotionally difficult topics or start hard conversations. Ex: "I know that takes a lot of courage for you to talk about" or "Thank you for confiding in me."

Problem-Solving & Assertive Communication

Why Do We Argue Before We Separate?

Pre-deployment preparation may bring about arguments within the family; this can be upsetting. However, these arguments can provide a way of allowing emotional distancing to occur between those remaining and the member who is about to leave. These behaviours are part of preparing for the separation, and they should be considered natural coping strategies. During this time, it is sometimes difficult to be loving, and things may be said that reveal anger or resentment about the separation.

Remember that arguments are common at this stage and do not necessarily indicate that something is drastically wrong with your relationship(s) but are a typical side effect of the additional stress that you or others around you may be encountering at this time.

Problem-Solving

Work towards resolving any problems or family conflicts before departure so that they don't develop into bigger problems that are harder to solve while you're away. Problems are seldom as bad as they appear once you have discussed them. Often the hardest part is sitting down and facing them. Agree to discuss a hot topic with a cool and clear head. Schedule a time that you can set aside for a conversation. Seek professional advice (e.g. from a financial advisor, a teacher, or other professional) if you are worried or are having difficulty reaching an agreement about an area of concern.

Steps to Effective Problem-Solving:

- Realize that some problems can't be solved but may be managed.
- Clearly and specifically, 'Define the Problem.' What is the problem, and who does it affect?
- Determine what you would like to occur.
- Generate possible and realistic solutions.
- Evaluate options and decide on the best solution(s) – look at the benefits and disadvantages for yourself and others.
- Choose a solution – make sure that your solution is realistic and headed towards your goal.

- Develop a flexible plan of action and contingency plans.
- Put your plan into action.
- Monitor your progress and evaluate the results of the solution(s).

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication will help you manage conflict and solve problems in your relationship. Practicing assertive communication means that you clearly state your opinions, feelings, and wants without violating the rights of others. The underlying assumption is, 'You and I may have our differences, but we are equally entitled to express ourselves to one another. The major advantages include active participation in making important decisions, getting what you want without alienating others, the emotional and intellectual satisfaction of respectfully exchanging feelings and ideas, and high self-esteem.

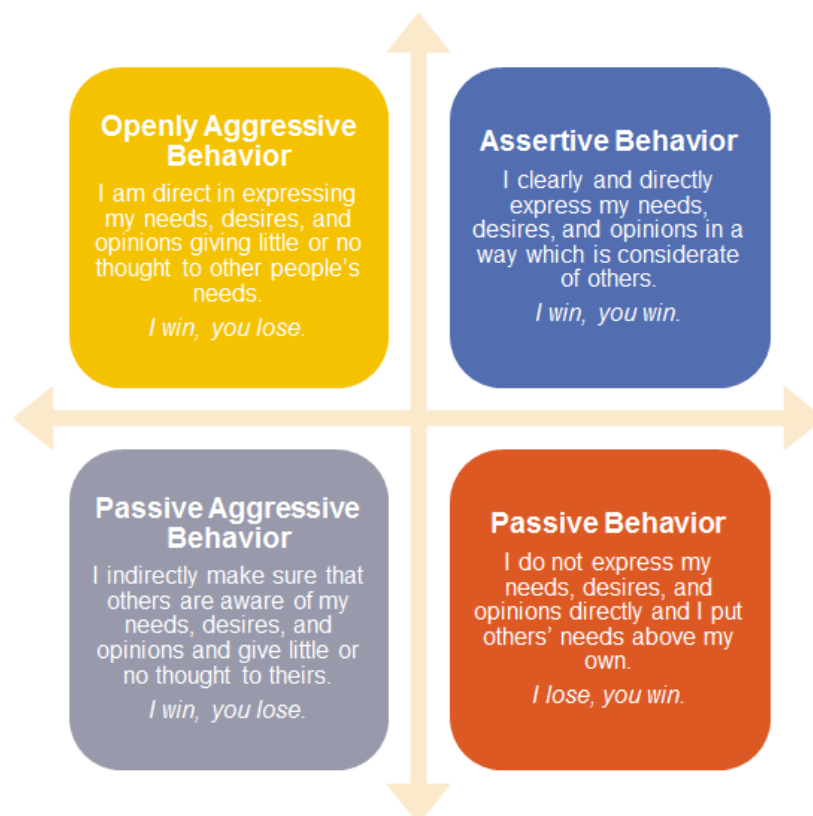
Assertive messages are characterised by the use of the three F's: facts, feelings, and fair requests:

- **Facts** – The first component of an assertive statement is an objective description of what you observe. It presents the facts, as you perceive them, without making judgments, trying to place blame, or guessing at the intentions of the other person. For example: "I notice that the sink is full of the dirty dishes from last night's dinner."
- **Feelings** – The second component acknowledges your honest reaction and personal feelings using 'I' statements. It lets the other person become aware that their behaviour has affected you. It is important to state this in a way that avoids making the other person feel defensive.

- For example: "When I come home from work and find dirty dishes in the sink, I feel frustrated."
- **Fair Request** — The last and most important part of the assertive statement is making a fair request. This is basically saying what you want. The request must be specific and realistically achievable. Make one request at a time aiming at achieving a behavioural change as opposed to a change in attitudes, values, or feelings. For example: "Would you wash the dishes directly after every meal."

Now, putting it all together:

"You spend a lot of time at work, and even bring more work home with you to do on the weekends. **(Facts)** I feel lonely and miss our intimate times together. **(Feelings)** I would like to make a date with you for a quiet, romantic dinner this weekend." **(Fair request).**



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

PEI MFRC Services

The PEI MFRC offers many services and programs to support military members and their families during all phases of deployment. The best way to stay informed about our current events is to **follow our website, Facebook page, and subscribe to our newsletter**. Our services include:

- **Helpful resources** on military lifestyle topics.
- **An on-staff registered social worker** who can provide counselling on individual, couple, and family challenges related to the military lifestyle.
- **Social opportunities** for military families.
- **Information briefings** to military organizations, community groups, and family members.
- **Satellite offices** in Summerside, Cardigan, and Alberton.
- **Volunteer opportunities** to support the PEI military community.
- **Respite and emergency childcare services** for family members of a service member who is deployed or on extended training.
- **Monthly coffee time** where staff, military members, families, and volunteers can socialize.
- **Assistance and referrals** for military spouses looking to gain skills and/or employment.
- **Mental health** and stress management resources.
- **Training for military units** on communicating with military families.
- **Virtual programming** for PEI's military families.

How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Deployment Services Coordinator

Our Deployment Services Coordinator provides outreach, information, support, and assistance to military families experiencing separations over 24 hours due to CAF operational requirements (e.g. Courses, training, taskings, IR postings, and overseas deployments.) We help families prepare for deployment, to stay busy during deployment, and provide support throughout the reunion process. For more information, contact our Deployment Services Coordinator at Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org or call (902) 892-8999

Services May Include:

- Support for immediate and extended family
- Warm line calls
- Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) Program
- Respite child care
- Social support and gatherings
- Free Morale Mail program
- Emergency support

Warm Line Calls

Warm Line Calls are telephone outreach calls provided by PEI MFRC staff to the family members of deployed military members. It is a way for us to stay connected, provide information on upcoming events, activities or services, and check in to see how you are coping. It is also a way for us to provide you with referrals to other areas within the PEI MFRC to support you the best way we can.

How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

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Deployment Dinner and Chat

Open to parents, spouses, and loved ones of a CAF member away on a training or deployment. This is a great opportunity to meet other parents/families and learn more about the MFRC. Most importantly, we want you to have social support while your loved one is away. Sometimes we even host our dinners potluck style! Pre-registration is required, and these dinners are free to attend. Contact Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org or follow our Facebook page to find out when we are hosting our next Deployment Dinner and Chat!

Newsletter and Social Media

For information on social events, satellite hours, and our monthly coffee time, subscribe to our newsletter by visiting this link: <https://mailchi.mp/be028943c224/pei-mfrc-newsletter> or calling the MFRC at (902) 892-8999. You can also follow the PEI MFRC on Facebook and Twitter to stay informed about our current events.

Information Briefings

Our staff is available to talk to military family members about

- The MFRC and our services.
- Ways to support the troops
- Communicating with military families
- Communicating with CF members about supporting their families
- Local initiatives hosted by the MFRC.
- The military in PEI.

How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Road to Mental Readiness Program (R2MR)

R2MR is a program we can offer to families who may, who are, and have experienced a deployment. The program helps to build resiliency in military families to better cope with separations due to deployments, training courses, or IR postings. This program mirrors the training our CAF members receive when they prepare for deployments.

R2MR will help you by providing the following:

- Recognize and understand the different phases of deployment and what you can expect during each phase.
- Identify some challenges you may encounter before, during, and after a deployment.
- Learn about the Mental Health Continuum.
- Give you new tips, tricks, and tools to manage stressors that may arise.
- Talk about how to support children through a deployment.
- Provide information about additional resources available.
- Remind you to also have FUN!

You can download the R2MR App from the Google Play Store or Apple Store to browse at your leisure and to see what some of the topics are! If you want more information on R2MR, please contact Tammy@PEI-MFRC.org or call (902) 892-8999.



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

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Morale Mail

Morale mail is a Department of National Defense program providing free one-way mail service to deployed soldiers from their families and friends. Sending a package to your loved one overseas is a great way to keep in touch, show you care for your loved one, and satisfy your need to “do something” to show your support to the deployed member. Bring your parcel to the PEI MFRC, and we can help get it wrapped up and addressed, including the Canada Post mailing label that you must attach. Make sure to have a list of contents and the approximate value of the items included. We have all the wrapping and labelling supplies available for you!

Please remember that the items are not trackable, and delivery timelines are not guaranteed. Morale Mail schedule will depend on operational tempo. Please contact us at (902) 892-8999 or Info@Pei-Mfrc.org to find out how often morale is being sent from the MFRC. **It may take up to six weeks for parcels mailed overseas to reach their destination.** Please review the link below for Morale Mail Guidelines.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/contact-us/write-troops/instructions-for-mailing-overseas.html>



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Emergency Child Care

You may access our Emergency Child Care Service if your spouse is deployed, either on course or overseas, and your regular caregiver is unavailable. Our Emergency Child Care is there to offer assistance in highly stressful situations. We can also help you fill out an Emergency Child Care Plan.

Our Emergency Child Care Service is designed to help Canadian Forces families on a short-term basis to bridge the gap between having no child care provider and having a regular child care provider. Please understand that there are limitations to the Emergency Child Care services that we can provide.

What Circumstances Constitute an Emergency?

- A Canadian Forces member is away on duty, and their spouse/caregiver is unavailable due to illness or family emergency.
- A Canadian Forces member is required to report for duty on short notice, and the spouse/caregiver is unavailable.
- The caregiver is a single parent or both parents are Canadian Forces members, and duty requirements are such that the regular childcare provider is unavailable.
- A child is ill, and the parent cannot access their usual child care arrangement when the Canadian Forces member's presence at work is critical to the military operation.
- Other circumstances not covered above, but where emergency child care is deemed necessary.

How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Respite Child Care

Respite childcare supports families of deployed members and relieve some of the stressors of parenting alone during a deployment. If a situation arises that is not considered an emergency but child care is essential for the family's continued health and well-being, a period of respite may be available for military families.

For more information on our child care services, contact (902) 892-8999 or Info@Pei-Mfrc.org

Emergency Cell Phone: (902) 314-9860

Social Events and Programs

It is important to stay connected to a community of peers while your military member is deployed. One of the main ways we support military families in PEI is by offering an outlet for fun, family time. We host various family events throughout the year, such as a holiday party in December, summer BBQs, and bowling nights. Here at the MFRC, we realize that you often face challenging times, and we want to provide a way for your military family to connect with others in similar situations. Plus, we like to laugh and have fun, too!



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Child and Youth Drop-In Socials

It is also critical for your child to keep busy during a deployment to minimize social isolation, sadness, and separation anxiety. We regularly offer drop-in socials for youth aged 8+. These events allow kids to connect with other military youth, play games, do crafts, and enjoy time with one another. Drop-in socials are free to attend, but we ask that parents register their children by emailing Registration@Pei-Mfrc.org or by calling the office at (902) 892-8999. Follow our Facebook page or newsletter to find out when we are hosting our next youth drop-in social!

Parent and Child Drop-In Socials

We also host drop-in socials for parents/caregivers and their children! Children can have fun playing and learning together while parents can chat and socialize with their peers. These events, are free and pre-registration is not required.

Monthly Coffee Social

Join us for coffee, cookies, and great conversation! Free to attend and open to all military members, Veterans, RCMP, and families.



**MONTHLY COFFEE
SOCIAL FOR
MILITARY MEMBERS,
VETERANS, RCMP, +
FAMILIES!**



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Mental Health Services & Counselling:

Your mental health needs to be a top priority throughout all stages of deployment. The PEI MRC offers short-term intervention and crisis counselling to military families. We provide confidential support for any topic you need to discuss, and we assure complete discretion. We can connect you to the resources you need through referrals to community and military support agencies. To access our counselling services, email Mary-Jane@Pei-Mfrc.org or call the Centre at (902) 892-8999.

Our social worker can offer:

- Marriage/couple/family counselling.
- Depression/anxiety disorder treatment and recovery.
- Adjustment to life transitions (e.g. relocations or deployments).
- Self-esteem and communication skills for successful relationships.
- Childhood anxieties, behavioral, and attentional difficulties.
- Blended families, divorce/separation, support for children.



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is a social worker who supports military families by advocating on their behalf and helping them navigate community resources. **Our FLO can help your family prepare for deployment by providing mental health support.** You can also request a referral to a social worker in the community through the CAF Members Assistance Program at 1-800-268-7708. To contact our FLO, email Mary-Jane@PEI-MFRC.org or call the MFRC at (902) 892-8999.

Our Family Liaison Officer Can Provide the Following Services:

- Confidential, short-term counselling.
- Crisis support.
- Assistance for families with an ill or injured CAF member.
- Follow-up and ongoing support.
- Personal growth and wellness activities.
- Self-help and peer support groups.
- Referrals to community resources.
- Help families to navigate through relevant programs and services.
- Assistance in developing positive coping strategies using a strengths-based approach.
- Help families access emergency housing.
- Advocate on behalf of families.

How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Employment Services

Looking for employment as a military spouse or family member can be challenging. In partnership with PEI Career Development Services (CDS), the PEI MFRC can help you find employment.

CDS is a confidential, free and welcoming space where you can:

- Search for a new job & prepare for job interviews.
- Get help with your resumé and cover letter.
- Learn about different careers & the local labour market.
- Explore training & funding opportunities.
- Discover your skills and abilities.
- Request career counselling.
- Access free internet, computers, printers, and photocopiers for job searching.

For more information or to request services, visit the CDS website at www.CdsPei.ca or contact one of their offices.

Charlottetown Office: 160 Belvedere Avenue, (902) 626-2014 or Chtown@CdsPei.ca

Summerside Office: 674 Water St. E. (902) 436-0706 or Sside@CdsPei.ca



How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

Second Language Training & Rosetta Stone

We strive to provide second language training (SLT) to military dependents and give them opportunities to learn either of Canada's official languages. To do so, the PEI MFRC has Rosetta Stone licenses available to CAF family members. Rosetta Stone's simple and intuitive approach allows participants to learn a new language using a method that combines listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Learning a new language is a great hobby to try while your military member is deployed, and you can do it online!. For more information, contact the MFRC at (902) 892-8999 or Info@Pei-Mfrc.org

Virtual Programming and PEI MFRC YouTube Channel

We connect Canadian Forces families in Prince Edward Island with those around the globe through virtual programming and video resources. You can access information on topics relevant to military families from the comfort of your home. Topics may include:

- Supporting children through deployments
- Scholarships
- Budgeting
- Military discounts
- Online job networking
- Other financial, social, and employment-related topics



To learn more, visit our website at WWW.PEIMFRC.ca or subscribe to our YouTube Channel called "PEI CAFConnection."

CAF Supports

The Canadian Armed Forces offers many services to assist military personnel and their family experiencing deployments.

Family Information Line

The Family Information Line is a bilingual service offering support, information, referrals, reassurance, and crisis management to the Canadian Armed Forces community, including families (immediate and extended), military members, veterans, and the extended military community. You will connect with empathetic, experienced professionals who are well versed in the CAF community and the programs, services, and general information you may need. Counsellors can also connect you to helpful local and national resources. Family Information Line counsellors are available 24/7. **Call 1-800-866-4546.**



The graphic is a vertical rectangular advertisement for the Family Information Line. It features a dark blue background with a light blue wave at the bottom. At the top center is the 'Family Info Line' logo, which includes a red maple leaf and a red circle with '24/7'. Below the logo is the phone number '1-800-866-4546'. Underneath the number are three circular icons: a telephone, an envelope, and a video camera. The text 'ANY TIME FOR ANY REASON' is centered below the icons. Further down, it says 'Connect with the Family Information Line to access personalized support' and 'INFORMATION • REFERRAL • EMOTIONAL SUPPORT'. At the bottom, it lists the website 'FIL@CAFconnection.ca', 'Virtual sessions (contact us to book a time)', and 'International 00-800-771-17722'. A red maple leaf is positioned on the left side of the wave. At the very bottom, there is a logo for 'Morale & Welfare SERVICES' and 'Bien-être et moral SERVICES' with a red maple leaf.

Strongest Families Institute

The Strongest Families Institute helps military families through the challenges associated with military life, such as deployments and postings. They offer support in the comfort and privacy of your home (online and telephone coaching) at convenient times. Strongest Families offers programs for depression, anxiety, behavioral issues, and bedwetting. Contact the MFRC Mental Health Team, who can refer you to the Strongest Families Institute. Call (780) 973-4011 ext.6300.

Crisis Text Service for Kids of CAF Families

The Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone is confidential and available day or night. Children, youth and young adults from military families can access free mental health and well-being support by texting the keyword **CAFKIDS at 686868** for service in English. Kids from military families might need help with feelings associated with:

- Relocating
- Changing schools and leaving friends behind
- Moving to a new home
- Separation when their parents are deployed

Support our Troops Grants and Services

Support our Troops meets the needs and special challenges faced by members of the CAF community as a result of military service. This includes providing financial assistance to promote family resiliency and supporting members who may have an illness or injury through various grants and programs. For more information, visit www.SupportOurTroops.ca

Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program

The Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program (CFMAP) is a 24/7 toll-free telephone advisory and referral service for all CAF personnel and their families. The program provides short-term, confidential, external counselling for those in need. CFMAP can assist with a wide range of individual or family issues, including:

- Marital and family
- Interpersonal relations
- Personal and emotional
- Stress and burn-out
- Work-related
- Harassment and sexual assault
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Finance
- Parenting

Contact the CFMAP by calling 1-800-268-7708 or by visiting the website <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/programs/member-assistance.html>

Military Chaplains and Padre

Military chaplains provide non-denominational pastoral care and counselling and contribute significantly to the spiritual and mental health of military members and their families. Chaplains are available to support members in need 24/7 and provide free guidance and advice. Please contact the MFRC or call 1-866-502-2203 to learn how to speak with a chaplain.

Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS)

Unfortunately, military members who are deployed may develop an occupational stress injury. Being with someone who has an operational stress injury can be difficult. Family members may feel guilt or frustration because they cannot help with physical or mental health concerns or their use of alcohol or drugs. They may end up neglecting their own needs and feel very alone.

An OSISS Group can offer support, hope and acceptance from someone with first-hand experience in such a situation. Call 1-800-883-6094 to learn more about OSISS or visit their website www.osiss.ca

SISIP Financial Services

With SISIP Financial Services, military members and their families are assured that from posting to posting, their files will follow them in a seamless process, with no new registrations and minimal paperwork required. SISIP offices at major bases/wings/units across Canada ensure a standardized process and optimal service delivery of the following programs, products and services:

- Financial Counselling
- Term Life Insurance Plans
- Financial Planning
- Canadian Forces Group Retirement Savings Plan



To learn more about SISIP Financial or find a representative in your area, please visit their website at <https://www.sisip.com/en/>

Military Family Doctor Network

In partnership with Calian Health. This program aims to improve access to quality health care for dependents of serving CAF members by expediting the process of obtaining a physician and reducing the number of military spouses and children without a family physician. A representative from Calian's team will contact you to review your requirements and work with you to help you find a family physician. Physician availability will vary by location, and it may take 2–3 weeks for a representative to contact you.

You can access the program in one of the following ways:

- Fill out the online form and email it to MFDN@Calian.com.
- Print out the online form and fax it to 1-888-511-0219.
- Call Calian's team at 1-877-633-7722 Ext. 550.

Military Spousal Employment Network

The MSEN is free to join for military spouses. You'll get access to a list of dedicated national employers who are ready to provide you with equal employment opportunities and be able connect with these employers directly. You'll also be able to search the national employers' job openings through the MSEN job bank. The MSEN also offers virtual and in-person career fairs in multiple locations across Canada. Visit [www.https://msen.vfairs.com](https://msen.vfairs.com)



Community Resources

Below you will find a list of community and government resources and supports located in Charlottetown and Summerside.

Mental Health and Addictions

Mental Health and Addictions 24/7 Line: Calls answered by a mental health professional. 1-833-553-6983

24/7 Crisis Intervention Island Helpline: 1-800-218-2885

Mobile Mental Health Response Service: 1-833-553-6983 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Provides in-person care when situations require more than phone-based support.

Mental Health and Addictions Patient Navigator:
MHAPatientNavigator@ihis.org

PEI Gambling Support Line: 1-855-255-4255

Smoker's Helpline: 1-877-513-5333

Community Mental Health Intake: Referrals to mental health programs for all ages.

- Charlottetown – McGill Community Mental Health, 55 McGill Ave. 902-368-4911
- Summerside – Prince County Hospital, 65 Roy Boates Ave. 902-888-8180

Richmond Centre Metal Health Walk-In Clinic:

(Tuesday & Thursday 10am–6pm & Friday 12pm–4pm)

1 Rochford St. Charlottetown 902–368–4430

McGill Centre Mental Health Walk-In Clinic:

(16+, Saturdays & Sundays 1pm–5pm) 55 McGill Ave.

Charlottetown 902–368–4911

Prince County Hospital Mental Health Walk-In Clinic:

(Monday & Wednesday 9am–5pm) Summerside 902–888–8180

Student Well-Being Teams for Youth: 902–368–5868 or

SWT@gov.pe.ca

PEI Health Addiction Services: (Withdrawal management, opioid treatment program, and referrals to other addictions programs)

- Charlottetown – Provincial Addictions Treatment Facility, 2814 Rte. 215, Mount Herbert 902–368–4120 or 1–888–299–8399
- Summerside – Prince County Hospital 902–888–8380

Addiction and Substance Use Walk-in/Call-in Clinics:

Immediate 45 to 60 minute session with a counsellor without requiring an appointment.

- **Charlottetown Provincial Addiction Treatment Facility:** 902–368–4120, Wednesday 9am–12pm & Thursday 1pm–4pm.
- **Summerside:** 902–888–8180, Tuesday 1 pm–4pm & Thursday 9am–12pm.

Other Supports

Alcoholics Anonymous Charlottetown: 902-892-210

Al-Anon: 1-888-425-2666

Narcotics Anonymous: For meeting information visit www.Carna.ca or call 1-800-205-8402

Sexaholics Anonymous: 902-812-5563

Smart Recovery PEI: 902-330-4357

Open Door Outreach for Women: 2-30 Brackley Point Rd
Charlottetown 902-628-6826 or Office@OpenDoorPei.ca

Native Council of PEI: 6 FJ McAulay Court, Charlottetown
902-892-5314 or Admin@NcPei.com

Canadian Mental Health Association Charlottetown: 178
Fitzroy St. 902-566-3034 or Division@CMHA.pe.ca

Family Service PEI Community Counselling:

- Charlottetown: 155 Belvedere Ave. Suite 6, 902-892-2441
- Summerside: 902-436-9171

Bridge the GAPP: An online resource designed to support mental wellness. <https://pei.bridgethegapp.ca/>

Wellness Together: www.WellnessTogether.ca Free, virtual mental health and substance use support available 24/7 for all people in Canada.

Medical Services

811 Telehealth: Non-emergency health information 24/7 from a registered nurse. Dial 711 (TTY) if you have a hearing impairment.

Virtual Health Care Information:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/virtual-health-care-for-islanders-without-a-primary-care-provider>
1-833-710-1456 or HealthPEIMaple@ihis.org

PEI Patient Registry List: For residents seeking a family physician. 1-855-563-2101 or
<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/patient-registry-program>

PEI Health Card Information: 902-838-0900 or
<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/pei-health-card>

Patient Navigator: Assistance with navigating PEI's health services. 1-844-882-3141 or PatientNavigator@gov.pe.ca

Public Health Nursing:

- Charlottetown - Sherwood Business Centre, 161 St. Peters Rd. 902-368-4530
- Summerside - 205 Linden Ave. 902-888-8160

Pap Screening Appointments: 1-888-561-2233

Breast Cancer Screening Appointments: 1-888-592-9888

Other Supports

Downtown Walk-in Clinic: Boardwalk Professional Centre,
220 Water St. Charlottetown 902-367-4444

Sherwood Walk-in Clinic: Sherwood Medical Centre, 15
Brackley Point Rd. Charlottetown 902-628-8900

Stratford Walk-in Clinic: Stratford Medical Centre, 13
Stratford Rd. Charlottetown 902-892-2111

Central Street Walk-in Clinic: 434 Central St. Summerside
902-724-3210

Sexual Health Clinic: Prince County Hospital, Summerside 1-
844-365-8258 or WomensWellnessProgram@ihis.org

Child Care, Youth, and Family Services

PEI Child Care Registry: <https://peichildcareregistry.com/>

Boys and Girls Club:

- Charlottetown: 35 St. Peters Rd. 902-892-2223
- Summerside: 364 Notre Dame St. 902-436-9403 or
BGCSummerside@gmail.com

CHANCES (Caring, Helping, And Nurturing Children Every Step): 77 Upper Prince St. Charlottetown 902-892-8744 or
Chances@ChancesFamily.ca

Other Supports

Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre: 158 St Peters Rd.
Charlottetown 902-892-0928 or Mfrc.Pei.Aibn.com

Family Place: 75 Central St. Summerside: 902-436-1348 or
FamilyPlace@Eastlink.ca

Violence Prevention & Support

PEI Family Violence Prevention Services:

- Charlottetown Office – 902-894-3354, ext. 221 or
Admin@FVPS.ca
- Summerside Outreach Coordinator – LeeAnne@FVPS.ca or
902-888-3310
- Men's Services – Charlottetown & Summerside:
Tim@FVPS.ca or 902-626-5585

Anderson House Shelter – Charlottetown: 902-892-0960
(Emergencies)

PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre: Offices in Charlottetown
and Summerside: 902-566-1864 or Admin@Peirsac.org

National Sexual Assault Support Line (24/7): 1-877-392-
7583

Victim Services:

- Charlottetown: 902-368-4582
- Summerside: 902-888-8218

This handbook was written and compiled using information from other MFRCs in Canada, including Halifax, Montreal, Greenwood, London, and Bagotville. Please check out other MFRCs for additional resources that will be helpful during your military journey! The complete list of sources that were consulted is as follows:

- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/Greenwood/Adults/Deployment-Support/Deployment-FAQs.aspx>
- https://www.halifaxmfr.ca/assets/docs/CAN_preparing_for_deployment_stress.pdf
- https://www.halifaxmfr.ca/assets/docs/HR_MFRC_MILITARY_101_Guide_16.pdf
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/a15aba23-3563-4252-901a-ebb2f844185a/Deployment.aspx>
- <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/fullscreen/58546131/how-to-better-cope-with-a-prolonged-absence-a-guide-for-families>
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/266fc799-dcc1-4efd-b6fa-763dd385c546/Family-Information-Booklet.pdf.aspx>
- https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/20b2f162-0828-4a8a-af68-968fe386993a/CF_Deployment_Guide_e.pdf.aspx
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5d8caf66-d97f-4f59-b444-e0aa98404501/A-Family-Guide-E.aspx>
- https://www.halifaxmfr.ca/assets/docs/HR_MFRC_Deployment_Checklist_28129.pdf
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5c0fcc9e-22a0-4fb8-b4e4-d7090c6236d3/GMFRC-Deployment-Handbook-bilingual.pdf.aspx>
- https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5e1e582e-117d-4748-9476-c0720f17aa94/Homecoming-Handbook_v4.aspx

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