

# MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

AAPD ENews

by Sheteka Ross-Goodlett

## CELEBRATING THE MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD IN DENTAL PRACTICES

Approximately 1.6 million military-connected children will be celebrated this April during the Month of the Military Child. Join the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry in recognizing their contributions, unique needs, and experiences.

Children from military families represent the legacy of the Airman, Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers. Although their caregivers volunteer to serve, the children do not. These children and their families make unique sacrifices for our nation.

As an Army pediatric dentist, I have dedicated my career to treating children who have made immense sacrifices for our country; and, as a military spouse, my children and I have experienced first-hand the challenges that come with saying goodbye to a loved one, worrying about their safety, and welcoming them back home after a long deployment. Each child reacts differently to these situations, but they can impact behavior, relationships, and perceived fears.



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## “Celebrating the Month of the Military Child in dental practices begins by thanking military children for their service.”

Service members often start a family at a young age while serving on active duty or in a reserve status. These men and women represent a diverse population with differing backgrounds and unique experiences. Like their parents, military children are also a diverse group that is often misunderstood.

Due to their unique circumstances, military children have the potential to experience vulnerabilities and rich opportunities to build resilience. Despite the challenges military children face, they are often proud to be part of the military community.

The average military child moves every 2-3 years, accounting for 6-9 moves from kindergarten to high school. Because of the nomadic lifestyle, simple questions like “Where are you from?” or “Where did you grow up?” can be challenging to answer. However, with bases scattered across the globe, military children can gain experiences and an appreciation for a myriad of different communities and cultures.

With only a few exceptions, the U.S. military relies on dentists from local communities to provide oral health care for family members and beneficiaries. Pediatric dentists honor service members by welcoming military families

into their practices.

Dentists near military installations should be prepared that military children may have come from a non-fluoridated community or lacked a consistent dental or medical home. Therefore, these children may have a high caries risk or require follow-up on dental or medical treatment recommendations.

Asking questions about a parent’s training or deployment or getting information about when they are scheduled to move – or PCS (permanent change of station) – can be helpful for treatment planning purposes. Since military families frequently relocate, it is also beneficial to have a quick and easy way to share dental records and imaging.

Celebrating the Month of the Military Child in dental practices begins by thanking military children for their service. Pediatric dentists can recognize that the military experience is unique for every child.

Welcoming military-connected children into your practices will help them feel more engaged with the community in which they live. Showing military families support and encouragement goes a long way, especially during challenging times.

### References

- 1.U.S. Department of Defense. Month of the Military Child. Available at: “<https://bit.ly/4a31GRO>”.
- 2.Military Child Education Coalition. Month of the Military Child. Available at: “<https://bit.ly/3PxNFma>”.

## PURPLE UP! FOR MILITARY KIDS

Celebrate the Month of the Military Child every April. As part of your celebration:

- Designate a “Purple Up!” Day to wear purple to show support and thank military children for their strength and sacrifices.
- Give out Month of Military Child certificates.
- Create a world map for kids to answer, “Where Have You Lived?”

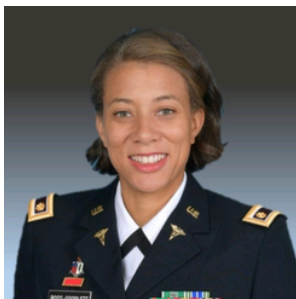
## How Dentists Can Support Military Families

Offer information about the community in the dental office.

Make record transfer as easy as possible.

Share a discounted fee for military families without insurance.

Accept Tricare dental insurance.



LTC Sheteka Ross-Goodlett is an Army pediatric dentist, military spouse and mom with two young children. She takes care of military kiddos at Fort Liberty, NC.

