



## Background on Children in Military Families

March 17, 2009

- There are 97,000 Texas children with one or both parents deployed in the military.<sup>1</sup>
- More than half of all deployed U.S. military forces have children.<sup>2</sup>
- The Army Task Force on Mental Health found in 2008 that children in military families had especially limited access to mental health resources, particularly in rural areas.<sup>2</sup>
- A greater portion of the deployed military are parents now than for any other conflict, reported the Pentagon, because more women are serving and because more of the troops serving are members of the National Guard.<sup>3</sup>
- Nationwide, more than 315,000 parents have been deployed twice or more.<sup>3</sup> More than 2,700 U.S. children have lost a parent in Afghanistan or Iraq.<sup>4</sup>
- Experts have called for more research into the effects multiple deployments, combat injuries, and PTSD have on children of soldiers.<sup>5</sup>
- In an anonymous survey of returning National Guard troops, more than 1 in 4 service members reported difficulties relating with their children; nearly 1 in 3 spoke about feeling “numbness” that interfered with family relations. Troops with PTSD were more likely to report that their children seemed afraid of them or distant. Some children show signs of PTSD themselves in what’s known as “secondary traumatization.”<sup>2</sup>
- The only military base in the country with two divisions deployed at once is Fort Hood in Killeen. Operation Home Front, through Scott & White Healthcare, was set up to help address mental health issues faced by military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families in the Killeen area.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Help from the Home Front,” *The Catalyst*, Winter 2009

<sup>2</sup> *Invisible Wounds: Serving Service Members with PTSD and PTI*, National Council on Disability, March 2009

<sup>3</sup> “Coping with Their Parents’ War,” *Washington Post*, 7/17/08

<sup>4</sup> “Military Mental Health Under Stress,” *Time*, 2/26/07

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<sup>5</sup> “Experts Watching Mental Health of Army Children,” *Army News Service* 10/16/08

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