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Description: The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University has created a virtual forum, called Deployment Diary, where military families can record their thoughts and experiences during the deployment of a loved one.

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WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University has created a virtual forum, called Deployment Diary, where military families can record their thoughts and experiences during the deployment of a loved one.

The online diary, located at <http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/pages/military/board.html>, was launched April 29 in an effort to gather information from the immediate families of those serving in the military. The information collected will guide the institute's development of upcoming research.

"We want to develop projects that examine issues military families are facing right now," said Shelley MacDermid, co-director of the institute and professor of child development and family studies. "This Web site allows families to share with us what they are experiencing as they experience it, which enables us to incorporate current family issues into our projects in a timely manner."

MacDermid said this is the only site of its kind to collect and utilize this type of data in a research environment.

The Web site is designed as a message board that allows users to log in anonymously to read and post comments about families' experiences during deployment. The goal is to generate a virtual dialogue among military families and the institute's research team in order for common themes to emerge. The discussion board is lightly moderated to filter out any sensitive information families may inadvertently share, MacDermid said.

Howard Weiss, co-director of the Military Family Research Institute and professor of psychological sciences at Purdue, said this type of family input allows research teams to understand the different ways deployment affects military families. In addition to shaping the future of research projects at the institute, the board also enables users to connect their experiences to those of other families in similar situations.

"Not only is this affecting the development of our research projects, but the online deployment diaries also demonstrate to military families that they aren't alone," Weiss said. "During times of deployment, military families benefit from all forms of support. This discussion board is one way for families to relate with others in similar circumstances."

The Web site also provides information about deployment and general military family support resources.

The Military Family Research Institute is a cross-departmental research program at Purdue and is funded by the Office of Military Community and Family Policy at the Department of Defense. The institute's mission is to conduct interdisciplinary, multilevel research that provides insight into the impact of quality of life factors on military members and their families. Areas of interest are satisfaction, retention, readiness and performance. The goal of the Military Family Research Institute is to use this research to improve military policies and practices focused on improving military quality of life.

apn/MacDermid.website

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Related Web site:

Military Family Research Institute Deployment Diary:
<http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/pages/military/board.html>

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