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# Operation: Military Kids

State Team Member

## Ready, Set, Go! Training

Read Ahead Materials

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Dear OMK Team Member:

Thank you so much for making the personal commitment to participate in Operation: Military Kids and the OMK Ready, Set, Go! (RSG!) Training.

Operation: Military Kids is a collaborative effort with America's communities to support military kids impacted by Overseas Contingency Operations. We are proud to have your organization as an active participant in the implementation and execution of Operation: Military Kids throughout your state. As a member of your OMK State Team, you connect to other professionals and assets in your organization, attend state OMK team planning meetings, and initiate OMK support services in coordination and cooperation with other state and local OMK partners. These efforts will build the capacity of local communities in your state to address the many issues that the children and youth of military families face.

This read ahead packet will provide background information on the history of OMK, explain the implementation framework of OMK, guide you to gather pertinent information before departing for Denver, CO to make your training experience more valuable, and give you an outline of what to expect during the Ready, Set, Go! Training.

As a participant at the RSG! Training you will gain knowledge and insight to the following:

RSG! Learning Objectives:

- a. Develop a clear understanding of what OMK is and how it operates
  1. Build Relationships with your teammates
  2. Create and/or enhance a State Team Action Plan
  3. Learn strategies to operationalize OMK at state, regional, and local levels
  4. Understand the existing "Networks" and new resources that are available to you
- b. Understand the emotional cycle of deployment and its impact on youth
- c. Identify issues that arise as a result of deployment of a loved one

We look forward to working with you and your team as you design and implement Operation: Military Kids to support the military children and youth of our nation. See you very soon in Denver!

Thank you for your support of Operation: Military Kids.

Sincerely,

*Operation: Military Kids Management Team*

 **Please print this document and bring it to the training session.**

## **Background: 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP)**

### *The Foundation of Operation: Military Kids*

The U.S. Army Family & Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Command (FMWRC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) share a common mission of providing positive youth development programs to build the skills and competencies youth need to live productive, healthy, and self-sufficient lives wherever they live. These two federal agencies have created a partnership, the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP), to accomplish their common mission and make efficient use of public resources.

USDA/NIFA's 4-H National Headquarters provides leadership for 4-H youth development programs in Land Grant universities in each state and 3,150 U.S. counties as part of the Cooperative Extension System. Youth aged 5–19 participate in a wide variety of 4-H programs led by youth development professionals and volunteers across the country. FMWRC provides leadership to the Army's Child, Youth & School Services (CYSS) programs. CYSS Programs provide quality childcare and youth recreation services on Army installations worldwide for children and youth ages 4 weeks through 18 years.

The 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP) assists Army CYS Service to provide predictable, quality youth programs by introducing 4-H to military and non-military youth on installations and in communities worldwide. The YDP also makes significant contributions to:

- Mission readiness—Soldiers focus on their mission, knowing their children are in safe and supportive environments with caring adults.
- Reaching new audiences—4-H reaches a new audience of youth not previously served.
- Wise use of public resources—Federal agencies partner to improve programs and use tax dollars effectively.

The successful partnership is due largely to the following contributions:

- NIFA has Cooperative Agreements with five universities to implement YDP. Through the agreements, faculty from multiple universities are contracted to administer programs, develop educational materials, conduct trainings, and to provide technical assistance for Army youth and technology programs.
- 4-H Youth Development and Technology Specialists are on loan from their universities for assignments at seven Army Regional offices to work directly with Regional Child, Youth & School Services staff to assist installations in their Region.
- Each state has identified one State 4-H Military Liaison to coordinate military support efforts in their state.

Army CYSS staff have positively embraced the benefits of the partnership and opened the doors for programming to be administered on installations around the world. This support has resulted in the establishment of over 320 4-H clubs at 125 CYSS program locations worldwide; enrollment of over 11,600 new 4-H members; and involvement of almost 1,000 Army staff in implementing 4-H clubs.

## **Expanding the 4-H/Military Partnership...Operation: Military Kids (OMK)**

The OMK initiative builds on the existing partnerships between 4-H, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines and the established infrastructure of the State 4-H Military Liaisons. The State 4-H Military Liaisons or OMK Project Directors serve as the central point of contact for OMK State Teams, comprised of Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve components, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the Military Child Education Coalition, The American Legion, Schools, National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), and other Community Organizations. State Teams are joining Army Child, Youth & School Services to build local community support networks designed to reach out to military youth...before, during, and after their parents are deployed.

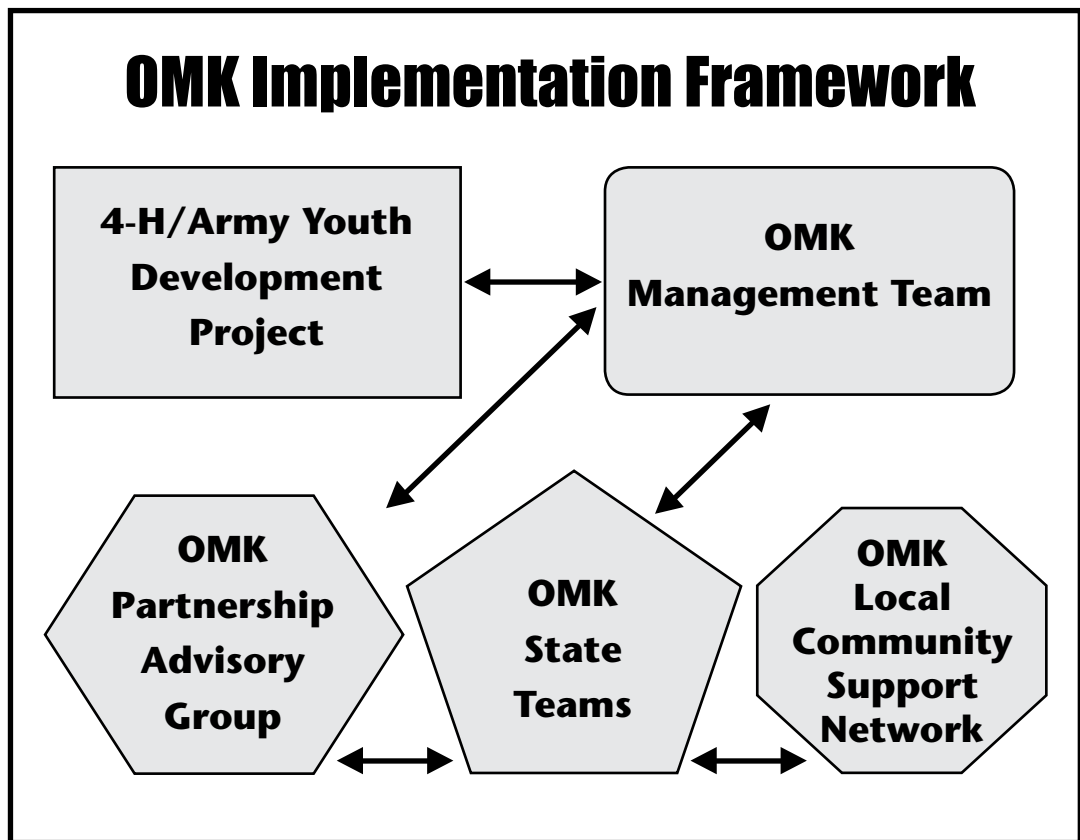
Operation: Military Kids focuses on those young people whose parents are active duty, National Guard and Reserve who are being deployed in increasing numbers for extended assignments in support of the Overseas Contingency Operation. While these youth may not relocate, their lives are changed dramatically when a parent is mobilized or deployed and leaves the family for potentially dangerous assignments. Families may not live on military installations but are dispersed throughout the United States in rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and cities. In addition, many of these families live 50–100 miles away from any other military families and from the normal military support mechanisms. Therefore, they may be isolated from other families and youth who are experiencing similar deployments and separations. Until deployment, these families have typically been civilians with little or no experience dealing with military culture. Clearly, they now face new challenges and risks.

The goals of Operation: Military Kids are to:

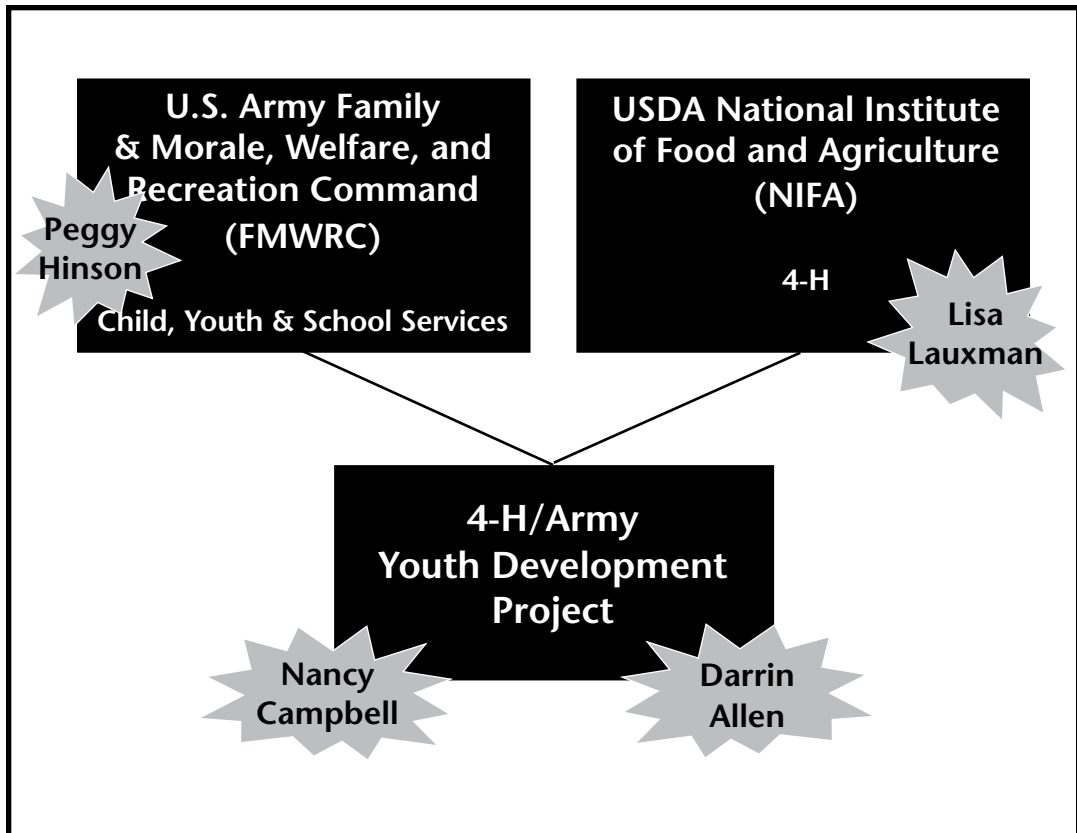
- Create community support networks for military youth “in our own backyard” when Soldier parents are deployed.
- Deliver recreational, social, and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities.
- Support military kids coping with the stress of knowing their deployed parents may be in harm’s way.
- Collaborate with schools to ensure that staff is attuned to the unique needs of military students whose parents are deployed.
- Educate the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on Soldiers, families, kids, and the community as a whole.
- Incorporate military families into ongoing Partner Programs offered by 4-H clubs, Boys & Girls Clubs, The American Legion, schools, etc., in the communities where they live.

OMK has three major components: (1) Building Infrastructure Support, (2) Implementing Educational/Support Program Options, and (3) Operation: Military Kids—Ready, Set, Go! Training.

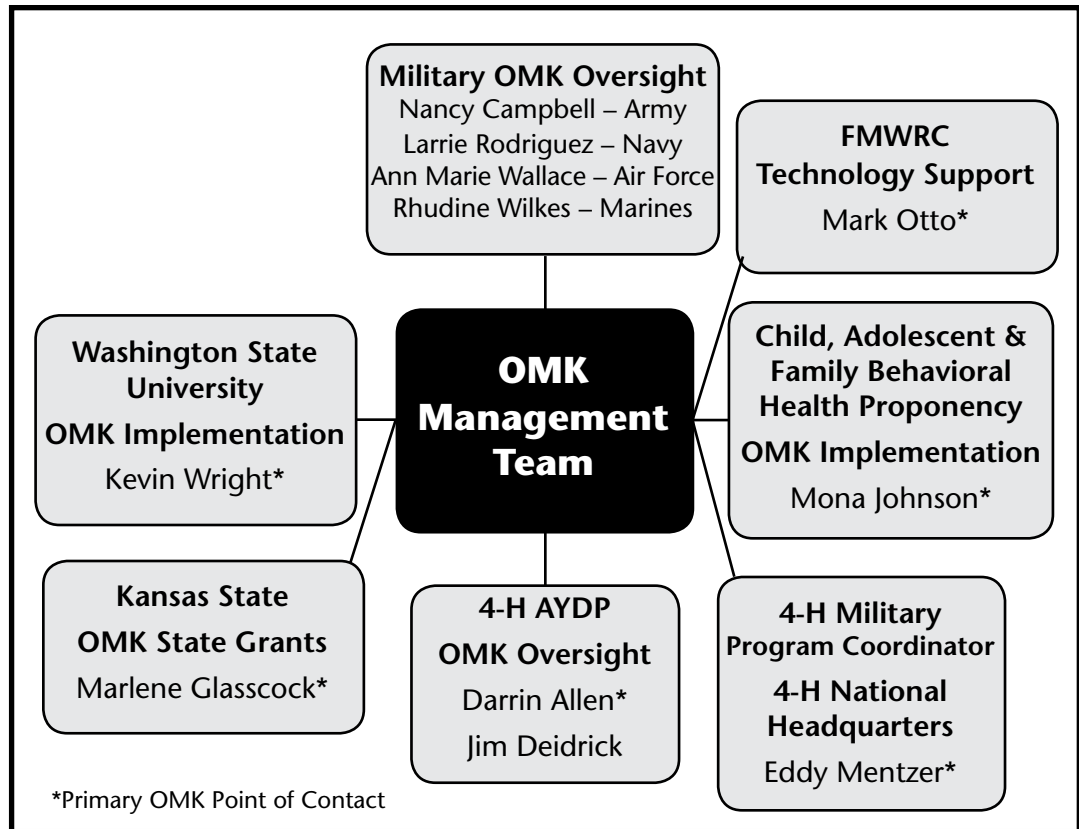
Building infrastructure or building community capacity to address issues that confront military children and youth who are geographically dispersed away from military installations is a major focus of Operation: Military Kids. The following short PowerPoint presentation gives you a visual picture of the OMK Implementation framework.



This slide shows the OMK infrastructure designed to support the OMK local Community Support Networks.

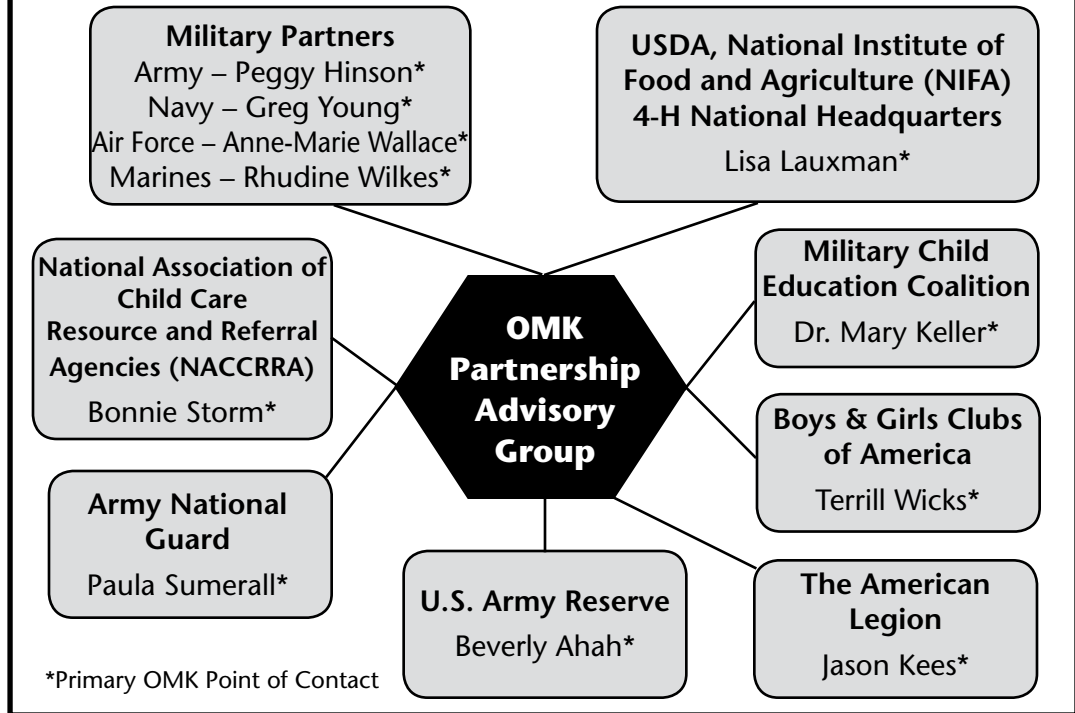


This slide, representing the 4-H/Youth Development Project, illustrates the strong partnership between the U.S. Army's Family & Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Command Child, Youth & School Services and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 4-H. The project's primary role in coordination with the OMK management team (next slide) is to secure funding for OMK grants, develop the OMK state request for proposals, and approve submitted state OMK proposals.



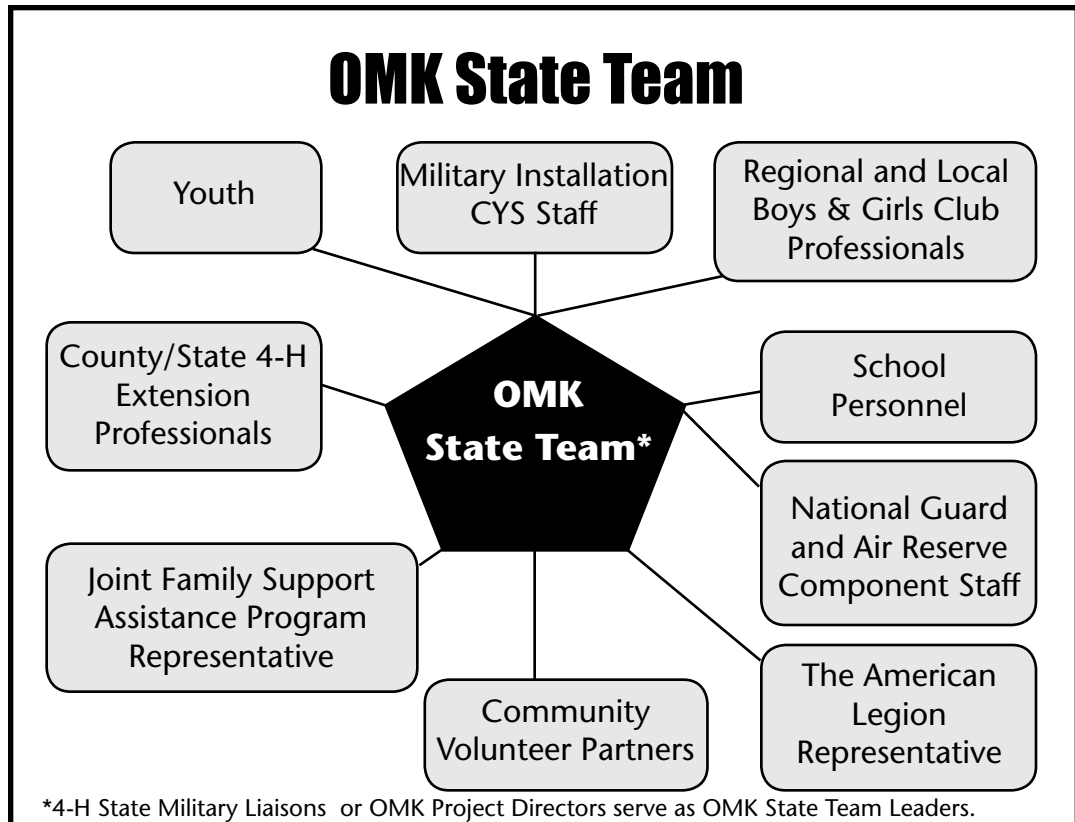
The OMK Management Team consists of staff persons from the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project partnering with Universities and Military Child, Youth & School Services. The OMK Management Team is responsible for managing the OMK state grants, providing OMK program and marketing resources, providing technical assistance to OMK State Teams, and providing State Teams with the Operation: Military Kids—Ready, Set, Go! Training.

# OMK Partnership Advisory Group



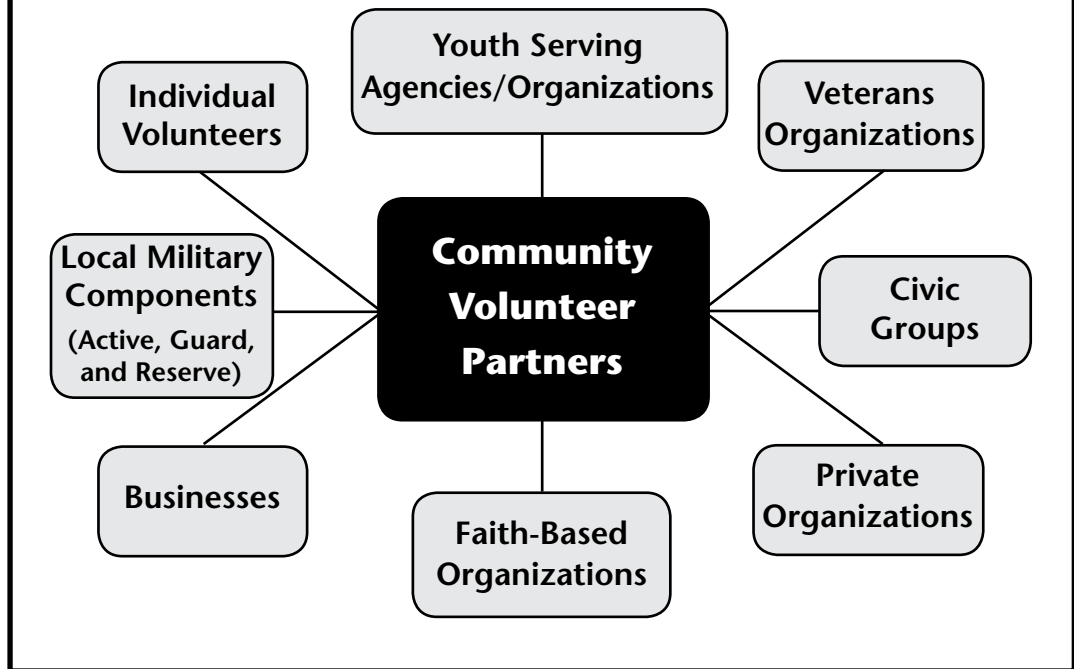
The OMK Partnership Advisory Group is made up of representatives of all the core National OMK Partners. The primary responsibility of this group is to help OMK State Teams connect with the core partners at the state and local levels, promote OMK to key personnel in partner organizations, and develop partner program materials for use with OMK states.



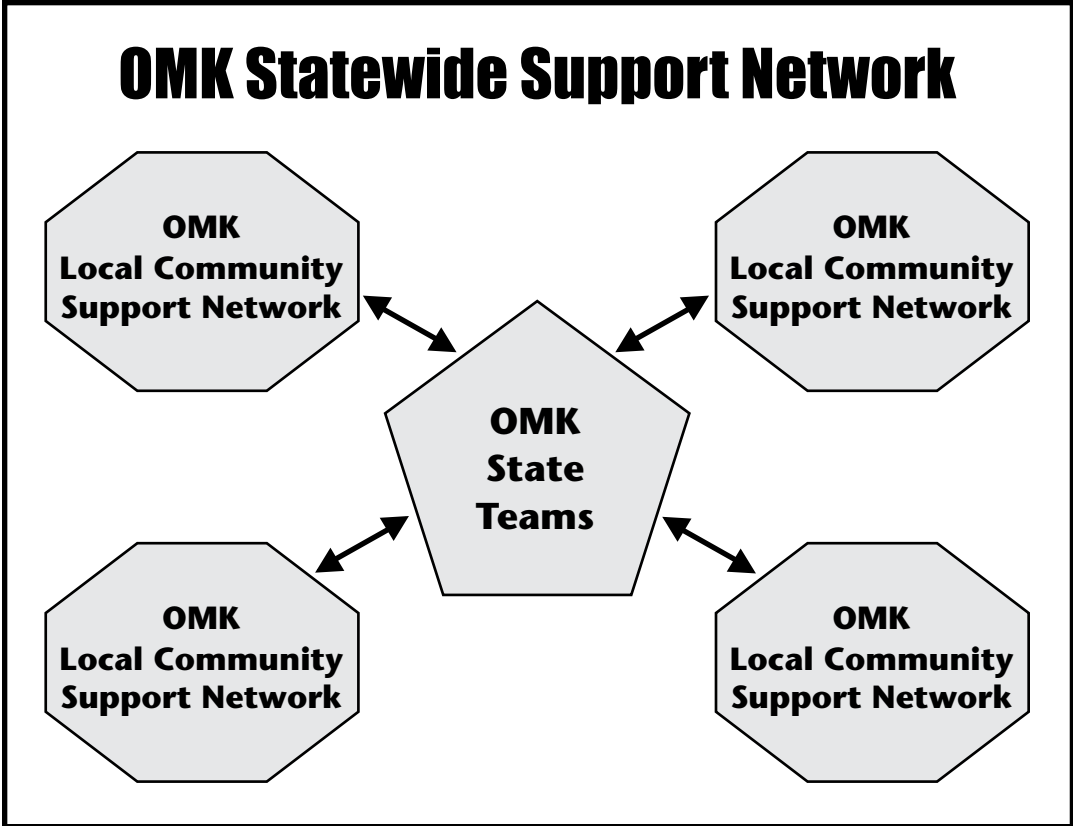


The OMK State Team is comprised of representatives from all the OMK National Partners and any other agencies/organizations/people in the state that have resources to contribute to OMK. The OMK State Team’s primary responsibilities are to create **local community support networks throughout the state**, provide OMK—Ready, Set, Go! Training to state and local OMK partners, coordinate the **implementation of the “Speak Out for Military Kids” program**, deliver youth outreach services through partner organizations, **coordinate the use of the Mobile Technology Lab (MTL)**, **document OMK efforts and activities** in monthly and annual OMK reports, and market programs to military youth through the National OMK web site and other media outlets.

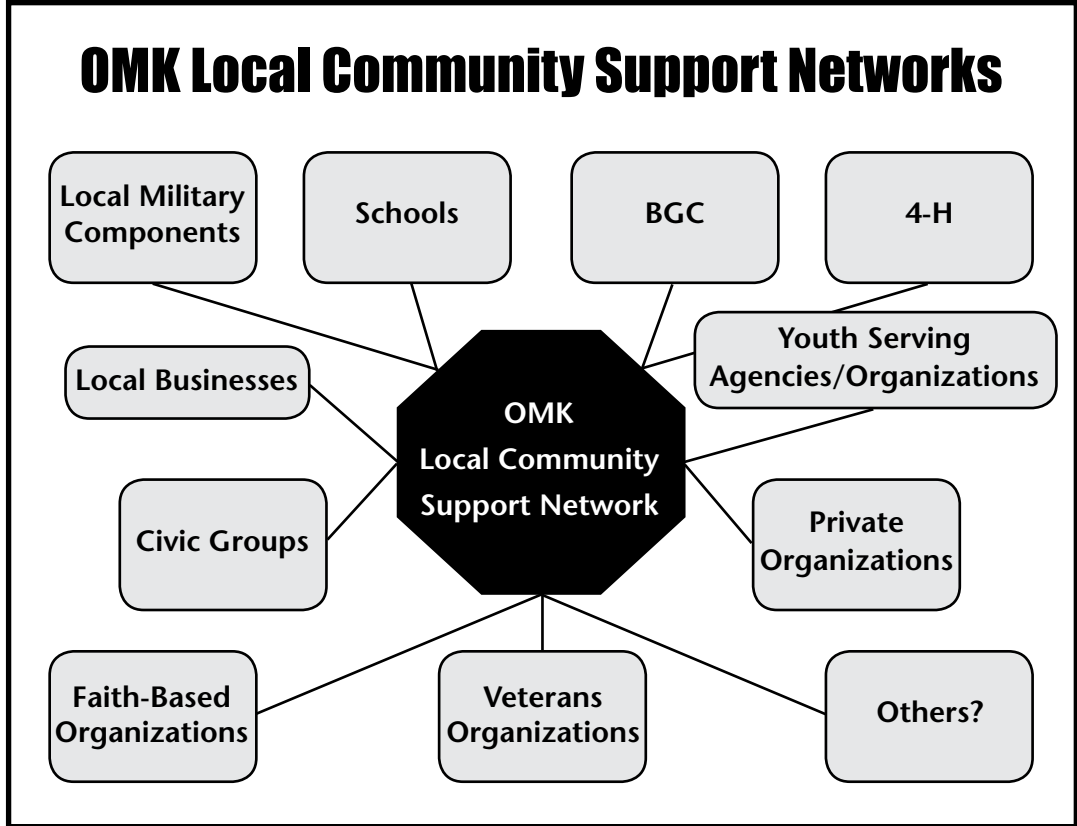
# OMK Community Volunteer Partners



This slide represents potential members of your State Team. The goal is to have a committed and diverse group representing OMK at the state and local levels.



Creating local support networks is the key to making OMK a success and is the OMK State Team's primary responsibility. This involves leveraging resources in local communities to provide support services to assist military kids in communities where they live.



This slide illustrates that local support networks are made up of a wide variety of organizations, agencies, and volunteers who provide the resources and have a desire to support military children and youth.

## Joint Programming Efforts

Operation: Military Kids programs should be delivered in collaboration and co-operation by multiple state and local partners. Ongoing communication among the OMK Management Team, Partnership Advisory Group, and OMK State Teams is critical to create successful local community support networks! Frequent State OMK team conference calls, email discussions, and submission of OMK State Team monthly reports will ensure that information flows to the people who can keep OMK moving forward. Below is a brief synopsis of the major program elements of Operation: Military Kids that State Teams will need to implement upon their return home from Denver.

### A. Ready, Set, Go! Training

The Operation: Military Kids (OMK)—Ready, Set, Go! (RSG!) Training & Resource Manual was developed for distribution to state, regional, and local teams as well as key military, school, and community stakeholders. Coordinated regional and local training efforts are needed to increase understanding of the unique issues facing military youth who are dealing with the deployment or reintegration of a parent or loved one.

Anticipated outcomes from use of this manual and accompanying training include:

- Providing participants with hands-on practical information to assist them in building community capacity and educating community members about:
  - issues that military youth face
  - ways that they can support military kids who are currently coping with the stress of knowing their parents or loved ones are in harm's way
- Supporting participants with planning, implementation, and facilitation of training at the state, regional, and local levels to increase understanding and support for National Guard, Reserve, and other military youth impacted by the current Overseas Contingency Operation.

**Some of the topics that will be covered during the RSG! Training include:**

- ✦ Exploring Military Culture
- ✦ The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Mobilization and Deployment
- ✦ The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Homecoming and Reunion
- ✦ Stress and Coping Strategies
- ✦ Impact of Grief, Loss, and Trauma
- ✦ Fostering Resilience in Children and Youth
- ✦ Building Community Capacity to Take Action

These training sessions will give the State Teams the tools they need to return home and begin creating and training local community support networks.

## **B. Speak Out for Military Kids**

One of the issues facing military youth and families is the lack of community awareness of the unique stressors and challenges they face during times of conflict and war. This lack of understanding by the general public can make military youth feel isolated and misunderstood. These issues are particularly important for youth from National Guard and Reserve families who may be geographically isolated from other military youth and who may not be familiar with or have access to traditional military support systems.

Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK) is a youth-driven community outreach initiative associated with OMK. It is designed to raise awareness of issues facing military families and foster community activism to address the challenges faced by military youth and families. SOMK is a core program that every OMK state agrees to execute. Both military and non-military youth can be involved. Through youth-led simulations, interviews, and research, participants learn about the experiences of military peers and families.

SOMK participants form speakers bureaus whose participants develop lectures, public service announcements, videos, and other materials. They share their experiences with others in the community (e.g., at school assemblies, Rotary clubs, city council, teacher in-services, etc.) In addition to building public awareness and support about issues facing military families during mobilization and deployment, SOMK provides youth participants with the opportunity to gain valuable leadership, research, organizational, technology, and public speaking skills.

## **C. Hero Packs**

A Hero Pack is a tangible way to hand-deliver a salute to military children and youth for their strength and sacrifices while parents are deployed. A Hero Pack serves as an expression of support for military children and youth from their communities and OMK Partners. Hero Packs are a community service program that builds awareness and fosters community support for geographically dispersed National Guard and Reserve children and youth. Hero packs come in two versions: one for children ages 3–7 and one for older youth.

Hero Packs consist of three components: an appreciation component, a content component, and a support component.

Any group that wants to get involved in OMK can assemble and distribute Hero Packs, e.g., Boys & Girls Club members, an American Legion baseball team, 4-H members, a chess club from school, a church group, etc.

The goals of the Hero Pack project include:

- Recognize the strengths of military-connected children and youth.
- Connect military families to local youth programs.
- Provide a symbol of thanks to children and youth for the sacrifices they make when their parents are deployed. Create a personal connection

between non-military and military youth.

- Provide the tools to help military children and youth connect with their absent parent.
- Educate the non-military community about the challenges that military families are facing to support the Overseas Contingency Operation.

#### **D. Mobile Technology Labs**

Each OMK state will receive a 10-station Mobile Technology Lab (MTL)\* to support OMK programs throughout the state. The lab will have two pods of three cases, which will hold five laptops, one external DVD recorder, one printer, one digital camera, one digital video camera, one scanner, three pelican cases for storage and transport, DVD media (writable/rewritable), and power strips/extension cords. Included with the equipment is an MTL inventory list and instructions on how to set up and take down the equipment. The software packages will include Pinnacle 9.0, QuickTime Pro 6.0, DVD or CDROM burning software, Photoshop Elements, FrontPage, Macromedia Flash, BGCA Digital Arts Suite, KidPix, Hallmark Card Maker, MS Publisher, and Encarta. The hardware and software packages are designed to give the lab a variety of options for activities and programs that will help children and youth connect to their deployed parent. All OMK partners will have access to the Mobile Technology Lab and will be encouraged to use it!

### **Information to Gather Before You Attend RSG!**

The Ready, Set, Go! Training will be an intensive, interactive, and fun training where participants will:

- Gain an understanding of the military deployment process.
- Explore issues that arise because of deployment of a loved one.
- Receive tools to train and equip individuals, agencies, and organizations with knowledge that will help them to support children and youth of National Guard and Reserve families more effectively.
- Create comprehensive action plans to make OMK operational at state, regional, and local levels.

The following tasks to complete **before** attending RSG! Training will:

- Allow participants to be fully engaged in the RSG! Training.
  - Help State Teams create solid action plans to execute when they return home.
1. Please bring with you a list of meetings that your organization currently has scheduled in the upcoming year (including dates, times, locations). It is our hope that you will use the planning time provided during the training to identify specific dates, times, and locations that you and your team members can work together to promote OMK at the state, regional, and local levels.

*\*Receipt of the MTL is contingent on available funding.*

2. Schedule a time with your supervisor and/or your organization's key stakeholders to back-brief them on your experience at RSG! Training as well as inform them of future plans to implement OMK at the state, regional, and/or local levels.
3. Bring a list of key contacts throughout your organization that you think might need to be briefed on OMK or whose support you know you will need to secure.
4. Obtain and read the state OMK grant proposal from your State 4-H Military Liaison. It is important for you to be familiar with the proposed plan and realize that this plan will be built upon during your participation in RSG! Training and beyond. The OMK proposal is a working document and will be refined over time.
5. Be prepared to discuss your organization's ongoing programs that might be able to be integrated into OMK. (Be prepared to share dates, times, locations, and a brief description of the activity or program so your team can work together to assist you with integration.)
6. Explore partner websites for background information on National OMK Partners:
  - Military Child Education Coalition—<http://www.militarychild.org>
  - The American Legion—<http://www.legion.org>
  - 4-H—<http://www.4husa.org>
  - Boys & Girls Clubs—<http://www.bgca.org>
  - U.S. Army MWR—<http://www.armymwr.com/portal/family/childandyouth/> and <http://www.myarmylifetoo.com>
  - National Guard Family program—<http://www.guardfamily.org>
  - Army Reserve Family Program—<http://www.arfp.org>
  - OMK—<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>
  - Air Force—<http://www.afyouthprograms.com/>
  - Navy—<https://qol.persnet.navy.mil/CYPWeb/Web/Home/Home.aspx>
  - Marines—<http://www.usmc-mccs.org/Family/>

## **What to Expect at OMK RSG! Training in Denver**

- ✦ Participate in a fast-paced, interactive, and fun training.
- ✦ Meet a new team of people committed to working together on this exciting initiative!
- ✦ Please be prepared to take back a 3-inch three ring binder that is full of valuable information.

Again, we would like to thank you for becoming part of a dynamic and innovative outreach initiative. We look forward to meeting you in Denver and working with you and your team to fully implement OMK across your state. If you have any questions about Operation: Military Kids or the Ready, Set, Go! Training, check out [www.operationmilitarykids.org](http://www.operationmilitarykids.org) or please feel free to contact your State's 4-H Military Liaison, or call Darrin Allen at 703-681-4848 or Nancy Campbell at 210-424-8362.