



## ENHANCING RESILIENCE IN MILITARY LGBTQ YOUTH: TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Military youth are generally resilient. However, multiple parental deployments, injury, illness and/or death associated with the ongoing wars have led to increased stress reactions among some military youth. Military lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) youth are at high risk for experiencing traumas related to their sexual orientation or gender identity, such as bullying, hate crimes, or family rejection. Here are ways parents can help:

I want you to know that:	You can help me when you:
1. Since moving, so much has already made me feel like I don't fit in. Now it might be even harder for me to come out.	1. Listen to my concerns about not having friends or fitting in.
2. It may be harder for me to come out because I'm afraid I won't fit in or be accepted by other military families.	2. Tell me I have an important place in our family. Spend time doing things with me that are important to me.
3. I may delay coming out because I'm worried that it will put more stress on my family, like if my Service parent is deployed, has PTSD, TBI or if there is domestic violence in my family.	3. Reassure me that it's okay for me to still be a kid; although you appreciate me being responsible, I don't need to act like a parent. Tell me that it's important that we each take care of ourselves. Get help for yourself if you need it.
4. As a military LGB kid, I am a common target of bullying at school, including cyberbullying, mean rumors, sexual jokes, and being offered illegal drugs <sup>1</sup> .	4. Ask me if kids are threatening me in person or on the internet. Talk to me about staying safe and offer to advocate for me at school. Support me in finding allies at school (e.g., friends, teachers, Gay Straight Alliance).
5. As a military LGB kid, I'm also in more danger of experiencing physical violence at school, like being pushed, shoved, hit, attacked, or threatened with a weapon <sup>1</sup> .	5. Ask me if I'm being hurt at school, and if so, advocate for me with the proper authorities. If necessary, help me explore alternative educational opportunities. Assure me that you are committed to keeping me safe.
6. As a transgender military kid I am at even higher risk for experiencing violence at school <sup>1</sup> .	6. Ask me what my life is like at school. Understand that I can adjust well with your support.



I want you to know that:	You can help me when you:
7. When I don't feel safe at school, I am at higher risk for taking a weapon to school <sup>1</sup> .	7. Work with me and advocate for me to help me feel safe at school Strategize with me and school authorities about how to stop bullying so I don't feel the need to carry a weapon. Keep weapons at home locked and secure.
8. When I feel very isolated, alone, or hopeless after being bullied or after being rejected by my family, I may think about suicide or self-harming behavior.	8. Ask me directly if I am thinking about hurting myself. Tell me you love me no matter what. If I am thinking of hurting myself, get me professional help.
9. Your acceptance, understanding and love are still central to my wellbeing and can go a very long way to keeping me safe <sup>2</sup> .	9. Ask me about my experiences and show interest in me as a person. Tell me you accept me as I am. Understand that you don't have to agree with my sexual orientation or gender identity to accept me

1 De Pedro, K.T. & Shim-Pelayo, H. (2017). *School victimization and weapon carrying among military-connected lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in California schools*. Presentation at the 2017 American Educational Research Association Conference, San Antonio, TX.

2 The Family Acceptance Project at <https://familyproject.sfsu.edu>.

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