

BENEFITS OF THE OKLAHOMA *OPERATION*:  
*MILITARY KIDS* PROGRAM -- A DELPHI STUDY

By

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ABSTRACT:

Since the twin towers came crashing down on September 11<sup>th</sup>, there has been an essential need for military youth support programs. Operation: Military Kids (OMK) is one such support program that strives to provide additional support necessary for military youth. This Delphi study sought to identify the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program and how it has been beneficial to military youth involved.

The current research study involved three rounds of questionnaires. Twenty five military parents around Oklahoma who had a child or children involved in OMK the past few years were the Delphi experts in the study. Selected panelists were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements that they perceived as benefits of the OMK program.

There were thirteen different areas the selected panelists indicated were benefits of the OMK program, and results identified six of these benefits were strong throughout the program. Panelists spoke highly of the program and how it has been beneficial to their children. However, the seven remaining benefits that did not reach agreement reveal there are certain areas for improvement regarding military youth support programs.

This study holds potential to inform volunteers, schools, communities and employees of various support programs. Findings from this study will be instrumental for staff members with programs such as OMK to determine and improve program activities and events for military youth and their families.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Since the twin towers came crashing down on September 11, 2001, there has been an essential need for military youth support programs. Families have been trying to cope while their loved ones are deployed in another country, and the children suddenly become “military children” (Leonhard, 2007, p.1). “Since the start of the Global War on Terror, military children and families have faced multiple tests associated with unprecedented lengthy and multiple deployments; shorter stays at home between deployments; and greater risks for injury among service members” (Park, 2011, p. 65).

“War accounts for more death and disability than many major diseases combined. It destroys families, communities, and sometimes whole cultures” (Levy & Sidel, 2008, p. 3). Not only does war destroy the infrastructure that supports health, but it also limits human rights and may lead people to think violence is the only way to solve problems (Levy & Sidel, 2008). Millions of people in society have been psychologically damaged from wars, and many have been involved with being assaulted or assaulting others (Levy & Sidel, 2008). In the United States, an increasing number of military families have experienced multiple deployments since Operation Iraqi Freedom (Lester et al., 2010).

“Since World War II, military families in the United States have gone through the poignant stress of separation” (Edwin, 2007, p. 10). Not only do families face separation concerns, but they also fear the reality of wartime injury and death (Edwin, 2007). According to Edwin (2007), many studies and articles have stated that the family’s role in the military have a profound effect on the quality of their daily lives.

“Children are not the only ones who feel the effects of separation adjustment due to a family member deploying” (Marquis, 2008, p. 25). The parent who stays home with the children, many times the mother, has an important role in determining how the family copes during deployment (Marquis, 2008). Loneliness, financial concerns, and separation strain are a few of the frustrations that can have an impact on the household (Marquis, 2008). In a study by Marquis (2008), children reported that they did not want to share their feelings with their mother because they didn’t think she had time to deal with negative feelings or problems concerning the parent who was deployed.

“A parent’s departure to fulfill military duties in uncertain and dangerous circumstances, as well as the return and reintegration after deployment, represent significant challenges to children” (Lester et al., 2010, p. 310). Even though many youth adapt well during a parents deployment, the stress of numerous deployments during a war can begin to have negative effects (Lester et al., 2010). Lester et al., (2010) stated that there have been more than 700,000 youth experience one or multiple deployments since 9/11. Results from a research study by Lester et al. (2010) revealed approximately one-third of children affected by parental deployments showed significant symptoms of anxiety compared to an average youth not experiencing deployment.

“Children’s reaction to war is individualized and highly convoluted in aggregate. To disentangle their concerns is like trying to solve a giant puzzle” (Edwin, 2007, p. 9).

According to Marquis (2008), military youth choose not to share their feelings as a military kid at school because they are scared of being considered an outsider from the rest of their peers. When teachers, principals, and staff members are unable to identify or connect to a military child, problems arise and there is uncertainty about the proper support or help needed (Marquis, 2008).

“Military children of deployed parents go to bed thinking not of tomorrows’ test, their boyfriend or girlfriend, or the ballgame they will play the next day. Instead, they go to bed wondering if their military parent is alive” (Marquis, 2008, p. 1). It is important that program strategies are put together to meet the needs of military families and specifically children facing deployment (Edwin, 2007). Through programs such as *Operation: Military Kids* (OMK), youth have the opportunity to build a network of support while a parent is deployed (Edwin, 2007).

### Background of OMK

“OMK is a partnership supported military program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and United States Department of Defense (USDoD) designed as a result of the ongoing war on terrorism” (Edwin, 2007, p. 44). The OMK program is the U.S. Army’s collaborative effort with American communities to support youth of the National Guard, Army Reserve and Active Duty families impacted by the Global War on Terrorism (Leonhard, 2007).

Because children may feel isolated during times of deployment, the main goal of OMK is to connect military children and youth with local resources to achieve a sense of

community support and enhance their well-being (Operation: Military Kids, 2012). Through OMK, Military Youth meet others who are experiencing deployment and participate in a variety of social, educational and recreational programs (Operation: Military Kids, 2012). Children who participate are likely to gain leadership, organizational, and technical skills. The mission of OMK is to educate the public about the impact of the deployment cycle on soldiers, families, kids and the community (Leonhard, 2007).

Program areas of OMK are used to support military children, which helps foster networks and friendships. One of these support programs is called the Ready, Set, Go Trainings (RSG!). The RSG! community trainings are intended to increase non-military youth workers, educators, counselors and other members in the community to understand the different issues faced by military children, the deployment cycle, and the military culture (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).

Hero packs are another expression of thanks for military youth. These backpacks are filled with items to help connect children with their deployed parent and provide them with fun activities. In the hero packs, there are a variety of items from different OMK partner agencies and other items such as disposable cameras, paper, writing utensils, crayons and stuffed animals. The packs are filled by non-military youth from communities and are designed to help keep military children connected with their parent who is deployed (Operation: Military Kids, 2012). Hero packs serve as a token of appreciation for military children who are experiencing deployment of a loved one (Operation: Military Kids, 2012). Handwritten letters from non-military youth are put into the recipient's hero packs to let them know they are not alone.

Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK) generates community awareness of issues faced by youth of military families (Leonhard, 2007). Military youth involved in SOMK will “speak out” and create videos, presentations, public service announcements, or speeches that will help them share their experiences with others in their community (Leonhard, 2007). SOMK is a core program element of OMK, and youth who participate help raise community awareness of the issues they face (Huebner, 2005).

The MTL, or Mobile Technology Labs, are used to make connections between deployed soldiers and the children left behind (Leonhard, 2007). The MTL is a portable and internet ready lab that can be used for a variety of purposes, and it provides military children opportunities to communicate with their deployed parents, and learn about technology (Operation: Military Kids, 2012). The mobile technology labs include computers, digital and video cameras, and video/photo editing programs (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).

As noted, there are several areas of support within the OMK program; however, limited research has been conducted regarding the benefits of the OMK program. Although there have been support programs for youth in the past, literature about the perceptions of war-affected children related to government programs is limited (Edwin, 2007). “Little is known on how children cope with the situation of the behavioral adjustments they undergo” (Edwin, 2007, p. 14). To determine which components of the OMK program need improvement for future purposes, research needs to be conducted about the benefits of the program.

#### Statement of the Problem

The OMK program appears to be a beneficial program that has impacted military children all around Oklahoma; however, there is little research to support what aspects of

the program are most beneficial and what aspects of the program need improvement as perceived by parents or caretakers.

#### Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this research study was to determine the parents' perceptions of the overall benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program.

#### Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided this research study:

1. Describe characteristics of selected parents whose children participated in the Oklahoma OMK program.
2. Describe perceptions of selected parents regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program on military youth who have attended OMK events.

#### Scope of the Study

This study included one panel of experts who were very familiar with the Oklahoma OMK and the way it has been beneficial to their military children. The selected panel included parents of military children who have been involved with the Oklahoma OMK program the last two years.

#### Significance of the Study

The overall purpose and mission of the Oklahoma OMK program has focused on creating networks of people, delivering a wide range of educational programs, acknowledging the strengths and sacrifices of military youth, supporting military children when parents are deployed, and educating communities about the impact a deployment has on families as a whole. Military families are likely to face challenges that put them at higher

risk for distress and health problems, which reveal that their needs are greater than ever (Park, 2011).

### Definition of Terms

Several key terms used throughout this document are defined below as they were used in this study:

- Operation Military Kids (OMK): The U.S. Army's joint effort with communities in America to support military youth that are impacted by deployment. Whether the families have only experienced deployment one time or multiple times, the main objective of OMK is to unite military children and youth with local resources to achieve community support (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).
- Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK): This program is OMK's community outreach program that connects military and non-military youth to help raise community awareness of the issues military youth face during times of deployment. In SOMK, youth participants have the opportunity to become involved with speaking and presentation skills, as well as gain valuable leadership and organization skills (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).
- Mobile Technology Lab (MTL): The MTL is as mobile computer lab that is used for multiple purposes. This lab provides ways for youth to connect and communicate with their loved ones who are deployed. Youth also learn about technology, develop their educational experiences, and make videos to send to their deployed loved one (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).
- Ready, Set, Go! Trainings (RSG!): These trainings are organized to increase non-military youth workers, educators, counselors and other members in the community



to better understand the issues faced by military youth, their culture and the deployment cycle (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).

- Pre-Deployment: “This phase begins with the notice that the family member will be deployed to another location. This could be within the U.S. or abroad” (NC Supports Military Children).
- Deployment: “Deployment is the movement of an individual or entire military unit to an overseas location to accomplish a task or mission. The mission may be as routine as providing training or as dangerous as a war” (NC Supports Military Children).
- Post- Deployment: “Debriefings, administrative tasks and full reintegration of individuals into their families and communities” (Allen et.al, 2010, p. 9).
- Hero Pack: “Hero packs serve as a tangible expression of support for Military families from their communities and OMK Partners. Hero Packs are filled by non-military youth and community organizations with mementos and items designed to help keep military kids connected with their deployed parent” (Operation: Military Kids, 2012).
- Delphi: “The Delphi technique is a method widely used and accepted method of gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p.1).

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

#### Theoretical Framework

“Child development that occurs from birth to adulthood was largely ignored throughout much of history. Children were often viewed simply as small versions of adults and little attention was paid to the many advances in cognitive abilities” (Cherry, “Child Development Theories”, 2012, para. 1). Ultimately, researchers became progressively concerned about different influences relating to child development (Cherry, “Child Development Theories”, 2012, para. 2). According to Cherry (2012), an understanding of child development is necessary because it allows adults to recognize the growth children experience from the time they are born to the time they reach adulthood. This study focused on the following research theories.

#### Attachment Theory

The main theory behind the research over the Oklahoma OMK program is called the Attachment Theory. “Attachment is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure” (Cherry, “Attachment Styles”, 2012, para.1). John Bowlby, who devoted much time to research directly dealing with the concept of attachment, shared the vision that early experiences as a child have significant influences on

development and behavior later in life (Cherry, “Attachment Styles”, 2012, para.2).

“According to Bowlby’s theory, children, over time, internalize experiences with caretakers in such a way that early attachment relations come to form a prototype for later relationships outside the family” (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 226).

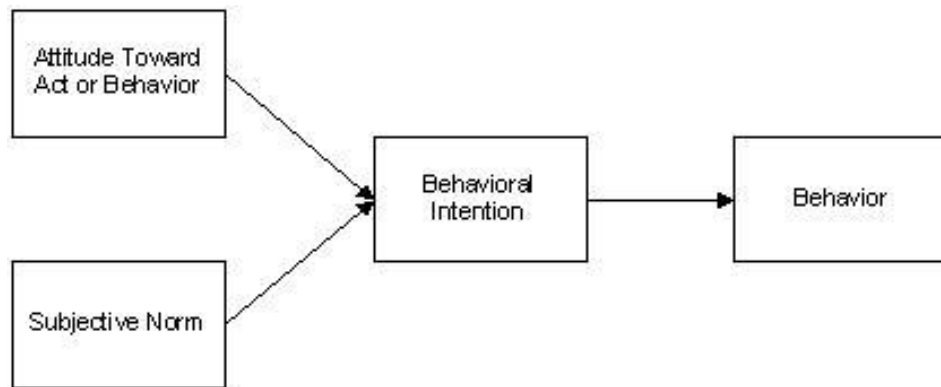
Bowlby acknowledged there were four characteristics relating to attachment. One out of the four characteristics is called proximity maintenance, which is the need to be around people we are attached to (Cherry, “Attachment Styles”, 2012, para.3). The second is safe haven, which means returning to the attachment figure to receive comfort and safety in the face of a fear (Cherry, “Attachment Styles”, 2012, para.3). The third characteristic is secure base, which deals with attachment figures who act as a base of security from which youth can discover their surroundings (Cherry, “Attachment Styles”, 2012, para.3). Finally, the last characteristic called separation deals with anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure (Cherry, “Attachment Styles”, 2012, para.3).



*Figure 1.* Attachment theory model: Retrieved from Cherry, K. (2012) About.com Guide

## The Ajzen Expectation Theory

The Ajzen Expectation Theory, also known as the theory of reasoned action, was the second theory used to expand on the Attachment Theory. The theory of reasoned action states that behavioral intentions are a function of information or beliefs about the possibility of performing a certain behavior leads to a particular outcome (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). “Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) divide the beliefs antecedent to behavioral intentions into two conceptually distinct sets: behavioral and normative” (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992, p. 3). The behavioral beliefs are assumed to be influential on a person’s attitude toward performing a certain behavior, and the normative beliefs influence the person’s subjective norms about carrying out this behavior (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). Therefore, information has an effect on intentions and behavior through attitudes and subjective norms (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992).



*Figure 2.* Source: Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior : An introduction to theory and research.* Reading, Mass. ; Don Mills, Ontario: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

## Sociocultural Theory

The last theory used to support the Attachment theory is called the Sociocultural Theory. “Sociocultural theory is an emerging theory in psychology that looks at the important contributions the society makes to individual development. This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live” (Cherry, “What is Sociocultural Theory”, 2012, para.1). This theory emerged from the psychologist known as Lev Vygotsky, and he believed parents, caregivers, or even peers were responsible for the development of higher order functions (Cherry, “What is Sociocultural Theory”, 2012). According to Vygotsky, all functions in youth’s cultural development emerge twice. The first is on a social level and the second is on the individual level (Cherry, “What is Sociocultural Theory,” 2012, para.3).

“Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact how instruction and learning take place” (Cherry, “What is Sociocultural Theory”, 2012, para.5). One concept under the sociocultural theory is called the zone of proximal development. Basically, the zone of proximal development contains all of the knowledge or skills an individual cannot yet comprehend on their own but is capable of learning with assistance (Cherry, “What is Sociocultural Theory”, 2012, para.6).

### Supporting Military Youth

“Throughout history, military children and families have shown great capacity for adaptation and resilience. However, in recent years, unprecedented lengthy and multiple combat deployments of service members have posed multiple challenges for U.S. military children and families” (Park, 2011, p.65). “The forward deployment of service members to

active war zones, which involves the issues of separation, time away from home, and eventual reunion, increases the vulnerability of these families to multiple, negative short-term and long-term effects” (Huebner, et al., 2009, p. 216). Therefore, it is crucial to find support for families and children who are facing difficult times.

“In recent years, the military services have discovered the broad power of community—as both encompassing and distinct from the formal human service delivery system—as a resource for supporting military families and helping them cope effectively with adversity and positive challenges” (Huebner et al., 2009, p. 216).

Not only does research indicate there is a need for multicomponent family support programs to incorporate civilian and military support systems, but all things being considered, the solution to developing a reliable support system is the willingness of communities to participate and form partnerships in response to these issues (Huebner et al., 2009, p. 218). Other researchers who have studied the effects of war on youth have stated a strong community helped children buffer the negative experiences during war (Jensen & Shaw, 1993).

There are factors within a community that can help children and their families manage war related stress. “First, the historical and cultural characteristics of the community, as well as its previous experience with such trauma, may shape its reactions to subsequent traumas” (Jensen & Shaw, 1993, p. 704). Second of all, community features such as leadership and communication can play an important part, especially during or after stressful situations (Jensen & Shaw, 1993). “Third, the community’s specific anticipatory responses to the possibility of the occurrence of such traumatic events likely shape responses during and after the traumas” (Jensen & Shaw, 1993, p. 8). Therefore, it is likely the way a community

responds to children who are associated with the military may shape future outcomes (Jensen & Shaw, 1993).

“Community level interventions draw on the premise that the breakdown of social structure may be a critical factor in determining the overall impact of war traumas on children and families” (Jensen & Shaw, 1993, p. 705). Jensen and Shaw (1993) describe how communities and schools could become active in “therapeutic teaching” during war, and this would involve selecting books with war related themes to conduct classroom discussion. Koubovi (1982) suggested including an approach using literature would promote intellectualization, cognitive reappraisal, reassurance of positive outcomes, and avoiding the harmful feelings.

“Educator awareness of the factors impacting the adjustment and resiliency of deployed reservists’ children, their unique needs, and academic, emotional, and behavioral supports can ensure these children’s educational success” (Harrison & Vannest, 2008, p. 17). Harrison and Vannest suggested how school wide, teacher-focused, student-focused, and family-focused supports were ways to positively impact military children. In 2003, Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense, John Molino stated “Educators, counselors, and mental health workers associated with public schools are generally not aware of the unique issues and challenges that confront military dependent students” (Harrison & Vannest, 2008, p.17).

“Understanding the factors affecting adjustment and the unique needs of children and reservists deployed in wartime will help public educators support military families in a time of crisis” (Harrison & Vannest, 2008, p. 19). In the school environment, supports focus on creating a stable and supportive climate that maintains the normal routines for ideal learning (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). “Supporting families during deployment requires

helping teachers understand the experience of students whose parents are deployed to a war zone” (Harrison & Vannest, 2008, p. 21).

Teacher-focused supports educate teachers about deployment and present them with the expertise needed to assist their military students (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). By conducting trainings for educators to maintain normalcy in schools, an atmosphere will be provided for students who need additional support. (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). By integrating topics such as deployment into the curriculum at schools, educators can provide support and still continue to instruct all students in the core academic areas (Harrison & Vannest, 2008).

Student focused supports within schools include individual or group counseling, social skills training, or various support activities (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). “Children often experience anxiety and bewildering emotions during periods of crisis and, without effective social skills, find it difficult to understand and express their feelings and the feelings of others” (Harrison & Vannest, 2008, p. 21). For that reason, student activities alleviate youth’s sense of social isolation and help them focus academically (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). Harrison and Vannest (2008) discussed certain activities such as buddy programs with other schools or homework tutoring groups that would connect military with non-military youth.

“Communities and school districts should honor the sacrifices of these children and their families by providing just-in-time or as-needed services during this time of deployment, remembering that children also serve” (Harrison & Vannest, 2008, p. 22). Support for service members and their families is an area of high interest, and in general people benefit from social supports (Marek et al., 2011). “Clearly, building community capacity to support



military families is on the agenda of a number of local, state, and national organizations” (Huebner et. al, 2009, p.226).

“All things considered, military families on average have done well and show resilience during peace and even war” (Park, 2011, p. 68). Although many families are able to adjust while their loved ones are away, the well-being of military children should not only be approached at individual levels but also in terms of larger social systems (Park, 2011). These social systems include schools, neighborhoods, support programs, and even extended family. “More family support programs that address strengths as well as problems are needed. Existing programs need not be replaced but expanded’ (Park, 2011, p. 4).

#### Programs for Military Youth

There are many youth organizations today that promote positive development for children in America. “Although each branch of service has its own program, all are based on the same DoD instructions, which set out the requirements and standards for care of infants, toddlers, and preschool and school-age children” (Military OneSource, 2005, para. 4).

Huebner et al., (2010) stated how youth were aware of several support programs and they made use of these programs for social, psychological, and family support when their loved ones were away. “Adolescents reported that involvement with such programs often helped them adjust to and cope with a parent’s absence during deployment” (Huebner et al., 2010, p. 17). There are multiple programs available to youth that are advantageous to military children and their families. According to an anonymous military child in a research study conducted by Huebner et al., (2010), family programs such as OMK are great to become involved with, and youth have developed great friends from various events. The youth involved with these programs have also said they want influential programs that are useful

and help them feel like they belong (Military OneSource, 2005). The overall satisfaction from those involved with programs, services, and activities is high (Marek et al., 2011).

#### Extension and 4-H

“Operation: Military Kids (OMK) is one such support system that is reaching out to military youth through local 4-H Youth Development programs operated by the Cooperative Extension Service” (Edwin, McKinley & Talbert, 2010, p. 2). “One component delivered by OMK is Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK), an educational program designed to raise awareness of the unique stressors and challenges youth face when their parents are deployed during times of conflict and war” (Edwin, McKinley & Talbert, 2010, p. 2).

Kraft and Lyons (2009) conducted a study that initiated a youth/adult partnership to support SOMK. In this study, the teens challenged themselves to gain new communication and technology skills, in which all reported the training changed the way they think and act, and they plan to use what they learned in the future (Kraft & Lyons, 2009). According to a self assessment the youth completed after the experience, they reported some of the highest skills gained were working with a team, voicing personal experiences and increasing understanding of emotional challenges (Kraft & Lyons, 2009).

In a study conducted by Edwin, McKinley, and Talbert (2010), survey results indicated Speak out for Military Kids (SOMK) was an effective tool to utilize and reach out to military youth. The study sought to identify the participant’s perceptions of the program and their future plans within the SOMK program (Edwin, McKinley, & Talbert, 2010). Therefore, the results of this study serve to inform a plethora of youth programs, organizations, and communities that programs for military youth have an effect on their well

being. “There is an urgent need for better understanding of both the challenges and the strengths and assets of military children and families to help them not only survive but also thrive” (Park, 2011, p. 71). Building healthy and resilient military families will bring benefits not just to the military families, but also to all Americans (Park, 2011)

“In 2011, over 103,000 youth participated in experiences conducted by State OMK Teams in 49 states and the District of Columbia. Nine Hundred Forty Five Community members representing over 43 national, state and local organizations worked together utilizing core OMK program elements” (Operation: Military Kids, 2012, para. 2).

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) have developed partnerships with the Army, Air Force and Navy to help support military youth and family programs on installations around the United States (USDA, 2011). “With the support of 4-H extension professionals, military staff provide strong educational programs so that military men and women can pursue their critical, high risk assignments knowing that their children are in safe and nurturing environments” (USDA, 2011, para. 1).

“The State 4-H Military Liaison is a 4-H Youth Development professional designated by the State 4-H Leader to serve as a liaison between Army, Air Force, and Navy installations, National Guard and Reserve Units, county 4-H Staff, and NIFA” (USDA, 2011, para. 2). These liaisons put together 4-H support for military youth around the state and also work with staff to connect the military youth to 4-H clubs in different communities (USDA, 2011). The 4-H clubs provide educational experiences for military youth, as well as predictability and stability throughout the military child’s life (USDA, 2011).

## FOCUS

“Families overcoming under stress (FOCUS), a family-centered evidence-informed resiliency training program developed at University of California, Los Angeles and Harvard Medical School, is being implemented at military installations through an initiative from Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery” (Lester et al., 2011, p. 19).

This program provides education and skills training which is designed to enhance coping during deployment experiences (Lester et al., 2011). FOCUS includes evidence-based preventive interventions that were adapted to help military families dealing with combat stress associated with war (Lester et al., 2011). This program is accessible to all active duty families who are interested, and it is based on creating communication and understanding within the family (Lester et al., 2011).

In a study conducted by Lester et al., (2012) there were 488 families enrolled in a FOCUS training from July 2008 to February of 2010. “Family members reported high levels of satisfaction with the program and positive impact on parent-child indicators” (Lester et al., 2012, p. 48). Change scores also showed considerable improvements in many different areas for service members, parents and their children (Lester et al. 2012). “Evaluation data provided preliminary support for a strength-based, trauma-informed military family prevention program to promote resiliency and mitigate the impact of war deployment stress “(Lester et al., 2012, p. 48).

## KUDOS

The Kids Understanding Deployment Operations (KUDOS) educates youth and spouses about the various stages of deployment from beginning to end (Stuart, 2010).

During KUDO's events, youth will view the same rooms and experience similar briefings as their as their deployed parents would (Stuart, 2010). Theresa Solberg, with the 72<sup>nd</sup> Logistics Readiness Squadron, was deployed three times. She mentioned that her two children have seen her deploy, and they weren't really able to see what was going on (Stuart, 2010). But because of KUDOS, they were able to experience what their mom was going through, and they had a better understanding of what it was like (Stuart, 2010).

At an event at Tinker Air force Base in September 2011, 400 children came with their parents to the KUDOS 7<sup>th</sup> annual event and learned about the process of deployment (Stuart, 2010). According to Colonel Labrutta, KUDO's is a terrific program and is a way to take great care of families, especially military children. There was no doubt in his mind that Operation KUDOS was one a program necessary for future purposes (Stuart, 2010). Colonel Labrutta also mentioned these events would not be possible without the support of local community members and volunteers (Stuart, 2010).

#### Air Force Youth Programs

“Air Force Services Child and Youth Programs offer a number of activities to educate, guide, and entertain the young” (AFYouth Programs, 2012, para. 1). Many of the programs offered throughout the year at different installations provide great opportunities for military youth (AFYouth Programs, 2012).

The Air Force has a program called the Air Force FitFamily. Within this program, there are resources, ideas and goal setting tools to help military families make healthy nutrition choices, which helps promote overall wellness (AFYouth Programs, 2012). The Air Force Child and Youth Programs also offer guidance to youth through a program called One Page at a Time. “This program provides a structured self-improvement activity that

supports children education and leisure skills development” (AFYouth Programs, 2012, para. 2).

## MCEC

According to Park (2011), the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) programs which support military youth are worthy of attention. The MCEC program has worked directly with different branches of the military, school districts, and parents to help military children transition (Park, 2011). This support program offers regular training for school counselors and teachers and includes training for non-military students. “Underlying all of the MCEC programs is the assumption that military families are resilient and resourceful, but that accessible information, consistent school rules, and support help reduce the annoyances associated with school relocation” (Park, 2011, p. 68).

“The Student 2 Student program of MCEC is a unique student-led, school-based program for transitioning students from military families” (Park, 2011, p. 68). Under this program, social and instrumental support is provided for students relocating from school to school (Park, 2011). Another program under MCEC, “Living in the New Normal: Helping Children Thrive through Good and Challenging Times,” unites the entire community (Park, 2011). “It is designed to reach everyone involved with military-connected children” (Park, 2011, p. 69). This program provides resources and trains adults to assist youth with deployment related issues (Park, 2011). “The MCEC programs stand in contrast to many other interventions for military families, which are often brief and highly targeted, because they involve large social units (schools and communities) and an ongoing basis” (Park, 2011, p. 69).

## Boys and Girls Clubs of America

“Since 1991 when the Persian Gulf War erupted, Boys & Girls Clubs of America has partnered with the U.S. military to provide youth development programs and activities to the children of military personnel, giving families the vital support they need” (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2012, p. 1). Today, almost every military youth center has a connection with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and around 458,000 youth in 387 centers receive the same programs and curriculum as the traditional clubs (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2012).

“More than 70 percent of military families live outside military installations” (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2012, p. 2). Because the armed services are able to provide funding, military youth have access to a one-year, no cost membership (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2012). With that being said, more than 15,300 military youth are served at 1,216 traditional Boys & Girls Clubs of America (Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 2012).

## The American Legion

“The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness” (The American Legion, 2012, p.1). Heroes to Hometown, a program under the American Legion, connects local legionnaires with recovering warriors and their families, and the legion also raises millions of dollars to help support military families on the local, state and national level (The American Legion, 2012). Success of the American Legion depends on active membership, participation and also volunteerism within communities (The American Legion, 2012). “The organization belongs to the people it serves and the communities in which it thrives” (The American Legion, 2012, p. 1).

## SOFAR

“Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists (SOFAR) is a pro bono outreach program serving families with soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait” (Darwin & Reich, 2006, p. 481). The program’s components include prevention, intervention, and the main goal of SOFAR is to provide support and treatment to military families (Darwin & Reich, 2006). SOFAR strives to create resiliency, treat secondary traumatization, and prevent other suffering in military families (Darwin & Reich, 2006).

According to Floyd and McKenna (2003), youth organizations in the United States such as 4-H, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Future Farmers of America, have a long and storied history of promoting positive growth in youth around the world. However, families and youth still face major challenges as they adjust and experience drawn out separations from loved ones (Stafford & Grady, 2003).

### Challenges Faced by Military Children

“A common saying in the military is that when one person joins, the whole family serves” (Park, 2011, p. 65). Not only do children with parents in the military have to face multiple deployments, but they deal with relocation and other daily stresses while their loved ones are away. “Parental deployment can affect physical health, academic performance, behavior problems, depression, and anxiety of military children” (Park, 2011, p. 67). As a result of a war, many military families have to experience emotionally the effects of mobilization (Edwin, 2007).



## Relocation

“Most children in military families will have attended several different schools before they graduate from high school, often in different states and different countries as well” (Stafford & Grady, 2003, p.111). “These frequent moves require military families to continually cope with the reorganization of daily living, as well as the cultural adaptation often faced with moves to international sites” (Drummet et.al, 2003, p. 280).

According to Cornille (1993), in general few children experience negative long term effects regarding relocation, but a stressful adjustment phase before a move and ongoing stress for a certain time after a move is common. “The adjustment period begins as children anticipate their new home and school environment, grieve losses related to their familiar school and community, and fear the unknown” (Drummet et.al, 2003, p. 280). The emotional confusion builds up directly after the moves, since they have not had time to find a new group of friends (Drummet et.al, 2003). “What may trouble children the most during the adjustment period, however, is the lack of control they have over their environment” (Drummet et.al, 2003, p. 280).

“Other factors affecting children’s adjustment to relocation include the frequency and distance of moves; this is especially problematic for military children, who move more frequently and over longer distances than most children” (Drummet et.al, 2003, p. 280). “Military families should be assisted in making relocation decisions, such as living on or off base, choosing schools, and maintaining family boundaries” (Drummet et.al, 2003, p. 285).

Regardless the age of a military child, they do not get a choice in deciding whether or not their family relocates (Drummet et.al, 2003). Although children do have ways to communicate with their deployed soldier, families often have negative reactions due to

disturbing news reports or a lack of communication to their deployed loved one (Edwin, 2007).

### Communication

“Soldiers and families have done their best to reduce that sense of isolation by communicating as best they could under the circumstances that prevailed during each conflict” (Schumm et al., 2004, p. 649). The different options of media communications to military personnel allow families and children who are far away to stay in touch with each other (Greene et al., 2010). “However, the various forms of media are likely to have different perceived benefits dependent on their speed, privacy, ownership, and ease of access” (Greene et al., 2010, p. 745).

Service members and their families back at home often have high expectations when it comes to the availability of communications media (Greene et al., 2010).

“Furthermore, expectations over access to various types of communications media, from the perspective of the service member and their families, may impact on the method and frequency with which they communicate with each other and how they cope with being apart” (Greene et al., 2010, p. 745).

Military communities are often filled with rumors, especially in combat situations, which can frustrate and affect military families (Drummet et.al, 2003). Families have reported they want increased communication with their deployed soldier, and also with the chain of command (Greene et al., 2010). “Methods of communication that promote family cohesion and provide honest, direct communication with families and between families and military representatives are essential during separation” (Drummet et.al, 2003, p. 284).

## Separation/Behavior

“The major challenge for military children and families during war is a lengthy deployment of the uniformed family member to a combat zone” (Park, 2011, p. 67). Youth not only miss their parent, but they go through uncertainty about his or her wellbeing (Park, 2011). Since separations often take place unexpectedly, families are emotionally unprepared and also financially unprepared (Drummet et.al, 2003).

“In the United States, more than 1.2 million children have an active duty parent, with more than 700,000 children experiencing one or more parental deployments since September 11, 2001” (Lester et al., 2010, p. 310). The impact of deployment on military children and their parents is an issue, and research conducted since Operation Iraqi Freedom showed the risk of adjustment problems in children during deployments (Lester et al., 2010). “School-aged children displayed emotional dysregulation and academic difficulties, and anger and defiance were pronounced in adolescents with a deployed parent” (Lester et al., 2010, p. 311). A recent report specified that anxiety was higher in children of deployed parents, and the risk increased as the duration of deployments increased (Lester et al., 2010).

According to a study conducted by Lester et al. (2010), results indicated school-aged boys and girls react differently behavior wise during and after deployments. Girls showed increased externalizing symptoms when their parent was deployed but not so much when their parent returned. In contrast, boys possibly have trouble adjusting to reduced independence when the parent returns home from deployment (Lester et al., 2010). Furthermore, there are several factors relating to separation which can cause military families to stress. Four of these different areas regarding separation are care of children, relationship maintenance, boundary negotiation, and also media coverage (Drummet et.al, 2003).

Frequent separations may result in a parent being gone for a major portion of the child's life or at important stages in development (Lester et al., 2010). "Several authors have reported that separation from family is one of the main reasons that personnel leave the military" (Greene et al., 2010, p. 748). Different challenges military children face can be aggravated by family or even the community's unawareness of the support and assistance needed (Park, 2011).

### The National OMK Program

The national OMK program has specific goals and objectives which serve as a guide for each state that coordinates an OMK program for military youth and families. According to the OMK Training and Resource Manual (2010), the main goal of the program is to support military youth who have been affected by deployment. Additionally, there are specific objectives to be met by each state with an active OMK program. These objectives include: Raising community awareness of military kids, creating local support networks, implementing outreach support services, and providing a core set of tools for local communities such as hero packs and SOMK (Allen et.al, 2010).

### Use of the Delphi Technique for Operation: Military Kids Research

Not only is the Delphi technique an accepted method for gathering data from a panel of experts in a specific topic area, but the technique is designed as a group communication process to achieve a convergence of opinion on a real-world issues (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Dalkey (1969) used the quote "two heads are better than one" which describes the Delphi technique and the features it includes. "One of the major advantages of using a group response is that this diversity is replaced by a single representative opinion" (Dalkey, 1969, p. 10).

“Delphi has been applied in various fields such as program planning, needs assessment, policy determination, and resource utilization” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 1). The Delphi technique also includes three different features which are 1) anonymity 2) controlled feedback, and 3) statistical group response (Dalkey, 1969). In this research study, all three features of the Delphi technique were utilized. The panelists who filled out the questionnaire in each round were kept anonymous and the rounds were completed in a sequence where the panelists were provided summaries of the results before completing the instruments.

Throughout the Oklahoma OMK program study, the researcher attempted to reach agreement in each round of the Delphi process. “In the first round, the Delphi process traditionally begins with an open-ended questionnaire” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p.2). When the responses are received, the researcher develops round two based on the answers the panelists provided from the first round. “In the second round, each Delphi participant receives a second questionnaire and is asked to review the items summarized by the investigators based on the information provided in the first round” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 2). In following and final rounds, the panelists will receive a questionnaire which includes items summarized from previous rounds, and then are asked to revise their statements once more (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

“The Delphi technique provides those involved or interested in engaging in research, evaluation, fact-finding, issue exploration, or discovering what is actually known or not known about a specific topic” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 5). Using the Delphi technique has and will continue to be an important data collection methodology and can provide real-time and real world knowledge (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

## Summary

Extensive literature describes outreach programs such as FOCUS, KUDOS, and MCEC which have evolved over the years to support military families during difficult deployments. “Programs exist that are intended to help, but their effectiveness is largely unknown” (Park, 2011, p. 65). Military youth and their families also experience challenges during deployment relating to communication, relocation, and separation. To provide proper support for military youth, a better understanding of the challenges and strengths faced by these families is essential and thorough research is lacking (Park, 2011).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the various components developed and procedures used to conduct this study. Topics addressed in this chapter include: institutional review board, research design, selection of panel, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

#### Institutional Review Board

Research studies that use human subjects necessitate review and approval before the study can begin. At Oklahoma State University, the Office of University Research and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) conducted the proper review to protect the rights of the human subjects who participated in this research study. The request for University approval to conduct this study occurred during July and August 2012. Appropriate forms were completed and given to the Institutional Review Board for approval for use in this study (Appendix A).

A modification of the original IRB request was sought and approved and the final documents based on this modification can be found in Appendix B. In agreement with the IRB, the researcher requested the received approval for the second and third round

instruments of the study as they were developed. These approvals can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively. Appendix E is the phone script reminder, which was done as a follow up to the e-mail in each round.

### Research Design

This study was descriptive in nature and focused on a survey research design using the Delphi technique (Sackman, 1975). In the 1950s, two research scientists developed the Delphi technique as a tool to predict future events using questionnaires with opinion responses (McCampbell & Hemler, 1993).

“Linstone and Turoff (1975) characterized the Delphi technique as a communication process that is structured to produce a detailed examination of a topic/problem and discussion from the participating group, but not one that forces a quick compromise” (Ramsey, 2009, p. 50). According to Linstone and Turoff (1975), the first phase allows panelists to contribute information they believe is correct, and the second phase aims to establish how the whole group views a certain concern. The third phase looks at the disagreement between panelists, and the final phase evaluates the information collected (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Stitt-Gohdes and Crews (2002) stated that the selection of the study participants is the “keystone to a successful Delphi study” (p. 60).

### Selection of Panel

Creswell (2011) defined a population as “a group of individuals who have the same characteristic” (p. 142). The target population for this research study included the parents of military youth who have participated in Oklahoma OMK activities during the last two years.



These children, whose parents have been chosen to participate, must have attended at least one week-long OMK camp and various day events in the past two years.

According to Weaver (1971), the Delphi technique focuses on the thought that “several heads are better than one in making subjective conjectures about the future . . . and that experts will make conjectures based upon rational judgment rather than merely guessing” (p. 267).

To that end, 30 military parents in Oklahoma were asked via e-mail to participate in the Delphi process. The 30 parents chosen to participate were selected from registration lists collected at past Oklahoma OMK events. The researcher chose a population size of 30 because there was a possibility the panelists could potentially drop out of the study or decide not to complete the questionnaires. Starting off with 30 panelists was a reliable number to achieve the intended results for this Delphi study.

This particular population was chosen for multiple reasons. The parents of these military children know and understand their children better than the OMK staff, and they were able to provide answers, which exhibited how the program has benefited their lives on a daily basis. The panel of experts were with these military children before and after all Oklahoma OMK events and represented a reliable source for collection of data about the benefits of this program on military youth.

Of the 30 parents, 25 agreed to complete all three rounds of the Delphi. Instruments sent to the panel of experts were to be filled out by a parent or a caretaker of the child(ren). The families represented all areas of Oklahoma and had experience with the military way of life.

### Instrumentation

The two forms or approaches that exist in the Delphi technique are the conventional paper-pencil form and the Delphi Conference form (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). “The conventional paper-pencil Delphi technique involved sending a round of questions (or statements) to the expert panel, and based on their responses, developing a second instrument to be sent to the same panel of experts” (Ramsey, 2009, p. 54). Until group agreement is reached on the items presented, this procedure is continued. “In recent years, researchers have used a modified Delphi technique” (Ramsey, 2009, p. 54). In particular, Ramsey (2009) used three rounds instead of four. Custer, Scarcella, and Stewart (1999) stated that three rounds are often ample for collecting the needed information and reaching level of agreement.

This research study used a modified Delphi technique much like the technique used by Ramsey (2009). The instruments used in all three rounds were developed by the researcher to address the two research objectives. Additionally, this study used a modification of the paper-pencil form of the Delphi technique. As Dillman (2000) noted, open-ended questions tend to receive more complete responses via online or electronic instruments. As such, the researcher conducted each round of the Delphi study in an online format. Panel members received an e-mail at the beginning of each round of the study, which included information regarding the study and how to access the online instrument for that round (i.e. a hyperlink was provided).

The first round included questions seeking basic demographic information from the panelists along with an open-ended question regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program. Demographic information included statements such as the panelist’s sex, age, and

ethnicity. The open-ended section of the first round included one question which was, “How has the Oklahoma OMK benefited your child/children?” The second round included items developed from responses to the round one instrument. The third and final round addressed those items that had not reached agreement in round two. The researcher was seeking agreement from the panelists on the statements they considered benefits of OMK.

Validity is very important when conducting survey research. Validity is concerned with the data collection process. Specifically, does the instrument measure what it is intended to measure and are the results in a format that is adequate for analysis of the scores (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). Moreover, the researcher was concerned with face and content validity of the instrument. Face validity refers to the appearance of the instrument in regards to measuring what it intends to measure; content validity should be reviewed and deemed appropriate by content experts (Gay et al., 2006). As such, a panel of experts consisting of faculty members at Oklahoma State University along with those involved with the Oklahoma OMK program established both face and content validity for the instruments used in this study.

Reliability is defined as “the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is measuring” (Gay et al., 2006, p. 139). Earlier work completed by one of the first research scientists who created the Delphi technique acknowledged that reliability of .7 or greater could be achieved when the panel includes 11 members or more (Dalkey, 1969). According to Dalkey, et al. (1972), a group size of 13 was necessary for reliability with a correlation coefficient of .9. For that reason, a group size of twelve to fifteen panelists was ideal (Dalkey et al., 1972).

Sutphin (1990) recommended that the panel should be big enough to collect the expertise needed to complete the research study efficiently. Nonetheless, the sample size of the panel of experts should be held to a minimum to maintain low costs and avoid an excess amount of data. Since this study employed an online data collection process, the cumbersome nature of the data was limited in scope and in cost. Thus, the researcher chose to include all 25 who agreed to participate.

### Data Collection

The Delphi method uses “rounds of written questionnaires and guaranteed anonymity with summarized information and controlled feedback to produce group consensus on an issue” (Beech, 1999, p. 283). Data collection was conducted using an online instrument distributor called *Qualtrics*. The researcher sent out an e-mail before each round with instructions and a link to the instrument. After panelists received the e-mails, they completed the instrument and waited for another e-mail from the researcher.

Instruments were collected through *Qualtrics* and the panelists were given two weeks to fill out the instrument for each round. The researcher sought to determine the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program based on the perceptions provided by the parents/caretakers.

The following describes the procedures used in each round of the data collection process.

### Round One

The first round instrument sent out on July 11 examined personal and professional characteristics (Appendix F). The characteristics investigated were sex, age, and race/ethnicity. Specific questions such as the participant’s relation to the military child,

current stage in deployment, identification of relationship to deployed person, and branch of service were also included in this round. The initial question in round one for research panelists was “How has the Oklahoma OMK program benefited your child/children?”

July 18<sup>th</sup>, approximately one week after the first instrument was sent through e-mail, the researcher placed a reminder phone call to the panelists who had not yet completed the instrument for round one.

### Round Two

The second round instrument (Appendix G) requested panelists to rate their level of agreement on statements regarding the benefits of the OMK program. The round two instrument was created based on the results the panelists provided from the first round instrument. The panelists received the round two questionnaire through e-mail on July 26<sup>th</sup>, and were asked to rate their level of agreement for 13 benefits they perceived were beneficial to their child/children throughout the Oklahoma OMK program.

Panelists were asked to use a six-point response scale to rate the benefits of the OMK program: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree (Shinn et al., 2009, Ramsey, 2009; Jenkins, 2008). Statements that received a score of “5” (Agree) or a “6” (Strongly Agree) by 75% of the panelists represented level of agreement (Shinn et al., 2009). Statements that less than 51% of the panelists scored the item a “5” (Agree) or “6” (Strongly Agree) were eliminated from further consideration as a benefit in this study.

In this research, the specific percentages were used regarding the level of agreement because previous studies conducted using these percentages under the Delphi method

proved to be successful, such as in Ramsey's (2009) study. On August 2nd, one week after the second instrument was sent out, the researcher called via telephone the remaining parents who had not filled out the instrument reminding them to do so.

### Round Three

The third round instrument sent to the panelists on August 13<sup>th</sup> sought to meet agreement for the statements that did not make the cut of 75% or higher in round two but did not fall below the 51% level of agreement. The third instrument (Appendix H) focused on developing level of agreement for the remaining seven statements, which did not reach agreement regarding the Oklahoma OMK program benefits in round two. The round three instrument incorporated the percentage of the panelists who specified a "5" (Agree) or a "6" (Strongly Agree) for that statement in the second round. A reminder phone call was conducted on August 20<sup>th</sup> to the panelists reminding them to complete the final instrument.

### Data Analysis

Data were examined for this research study using Microsoft Excel® 2007. Personal characteristics of the panelists were examined using percentages and frequencies. The frequency distribution percentage was used for each statement in the second and third round to establish if the statement reached level of agreement or lacked agreement and should be removed from further consideration in the study (Buriak & Shinn, 1989).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and included a search for patterns that appeared from the qualitative portion of the first round instrument (Daly, Kellehear, & Gilksman, 1997). This process started in round one when the researcher asked the initial question of "How was the Oklahoma OMK program been beneficial to your child/children?" After these data were collected, the researcher identified patterns that

appeared from the initial question by organizing the responses received by the parents. According to Boyatzis (1998), themes are patterns that describe observations, or help in understanding parts of the overall trend. In this research study, themes were repetitive words, as well as recurring thoughts or viewpoints provided by the Delphi panel.

In round two, 5 out of 13 statements regarding the OMK program received a score of “5” (Agree) or “6” (Strongly Agree) by 75% of the panelists and were considered statements that reached level of agreement. In addition, one statement for which less than 51% of the panelists scored the statement a “5” (Agree) or “6” (Strongly Agree) was eliminated from the research process and did not move on to round three.

Round three of the study included 7 statements for which greater than 50% but not more than 75% of panelists had indicated “5” (Agree) or “6” (Strongly Agree) for the statements included in round two (Ramsey, 2009).

In round three, 75% of the panelists agreed or strongly agreed with one statement, so it met the level of agreement and was then considered an additional benefit of the program. The remaining 6 statements in round three fell under the 75% pass rate. Therefore, these six statements were not included as benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter reports the results from the research study over the Oklahoma OMK program. From the analysis of the three rounds of questionnaires using the Delphi technique, the researcher discusses the personal and professional characteristics of the panelists, and addresses the two research objectives.

#### Sources of Data: Delphi Panelist

The panelists who provided the findings for this research study consisted of military parents with children who have been involved with the Oklahoma OMK program.

#### Characteristics of Panelists

Military families with children who have participated in Oklahoma OMK events were asked to respond to questions that described selected personal and demographic characteristics. This data was summarized to compile a profile for the military parents who completed the study.

Of the 21 military parents who completed the first round instrument, 90.5% were female, and 9.5% were male (See Table 1).



Table 1

*Selected Personal and Professional Characteristics*

Characteristics	Frequency	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	2	9.5
Female	19	90.5
<b>Age</b>		
22 to 34	6	28.6
35 to 44	12	57.1
45 to 54	3	14.3
<b>Race</b>		
American Indian	1	4.8
Caucasian	15	71.4
Hispanic	1	4.8
Other	4	19
<b>Relation to Military Child</b>		
Mother	18	85.7
Father	2	9.5
Other/Caretaker	1	4.8
<b>Family Member Who Deployed</b>		
Father	16	76.2
Mother	2	19
<b>Survey Taker: Are you the family member who deployed?</b>		
Yes	7	33.3
No	14	66.7
<b>Current Stage of Deployment</b>		
Post	13	62
Pre	1	4.8
Active	5	23.9
<b>Branch of Service</b>		
Marine	1	4.8
Navy	2	9.5
Army National Guard	5	23.8
Army Reserve	1	4.8
Army	5	23.8
Air Force National Guard	5	23.8
Air Force	2	9.5

Six of the 21 (28.6%) round one respondents reported their age was between 22 and 34 years of age. Twelve of the 21 panelists (57.1%) reported their age was between 35 and 44 years of age. Three out of 21 panelists (14.3%) indicated that their age was between 45 and 54 years of age.

Regarding ethnicity or race of panelists, 71.4% reported they were Caucasian, 4.8% stated that they were American Indian or Alaska Native, 4.8% reported that they were Hispanic, and 19% said that they were of an “other” ethnicity or race.

Determining which family member spent time away from home and also the participant’s relation to the military child was of interest to the researcher. As a result, 9.5% of panelists reported that it was the father who filled out the research instruments. Eighteen out of 21 panelists (85.7%) were mothers who filled out the questionnaire. One person (4.8%) reported that they were the caretaker. Regarding the topic of which family members spent time away home to serve in the military, 76.2% reported that the father was the family member deployed. One respondent did not clarify which family member spent time away from home, and the remaining four panelists (19%) reported the mother was the family member who spent time away from home.

An important question that the researcher wanted to answer was if the participant who filled out the instrument had been deployed or if it was their spouse who had been deployed and spent time away from home. Regarding this topic, 14 of the respondents (66.7%) hadn’t been deployed. The remaining 7 respondent’s (33.3%) indicated that they had personally been deployed in the military and had left loved ones behind.

The current stage of deployment and the branch of service of the panelists were also of importance to the researcher. Out of the 21 respondents, 61.9% were in post deployment.

Five respondents (23.9%) were in active deployment. The remaining panelists, or 4.8%, indicated that they were in pre-deployment, and two of the panelists (9.5%) chose not to answer this specific question regarding deployment status. Regarding the branch of service that the panelists were involved with, 4.8% were in the Marines, 4.8% were in the Army Reserve, 9.5% were in the Navy and 9.5% were in the Air Force. In the Army National Guard, Air Force National Guard and the Army there were 23.8% for each branch.

When questioned about their level of involvement with the Oklahoma OMK program, 95.2% of the respondents stated that their children had attended a weeklong camp. Seven of the respondents (33%) had attended both weeklong camps and overnight events. Three families (14.3%) had attended week long camps and day camps, and 19% attended week long camps along with weekend camps. Overall, out of the 21 respondents, there were two panelists who stated that their children had attended all of these Oklahoma OMK events, and one respondent did not clarify which events they had attended in the past.

#### Delphi Panel: Round One

Round one of this study aimed to determine the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program. After completing the personal and professional characteristics section of round one, the panelists were asked an open-ended question about the OMK program. This question was “How has the Oklahoma OMK program been beneficial to your child/children?”

In the first round, the Oklahoma OMK program Delphi panelists provided 20 statements or benefits regarding the OMK program. Although 21 panelists participated in round one, one panel member decided not to provide an open-ended benefit statement. The similar statements or benefits were combined by the researcher, while compound statements

were separated by the researcher (Shinn et al., 2009; Ramsey, 2009). From these 20 original statements provided by the Delphi panel, the researcher consolidated 13 statements or benefits for the second round instrument (See Table 2).

The Oklahoma OMK parent panelists provided benefits about the program ranging from it “helped them express themselves” to “they made new friends who understand what they are going through.” The benefits the parents provided about the Oklahoma OMK program related to their children’s personal improvements during deployment, to their social life, and also how it improved various life skills (See Table 2).

Table 2

*Benefits identified by the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program Delphi Panel*

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Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program Benefits	
i.	Helped them realize that they are not alone in the deployment process
ii.	Made new friends who understand what they are going through
iii.	Gained self confidence
iv.	Met other military kids going through similar experiences
v.	Improved leadership skills
vi.	Gained more exposure to the real life world
vii.	Helped them cope during deployment
viii.	Improved communication skills
ix.	Helped them express themselves
x.	Assisted them in connecting with loved ones who were deployed
xi.	Gave them something fun to do while their loved one was far away

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- 
- xii. Received support they needed from other peers
  - xiii. Became more independent
- 

One military parent said, “My daughters would have never been exposed to Camp Waluhili or Camp Classen without OMK...They have made great strides in self-confidence and gained more independence. I can’t thank OMK enough.” Another parent stated OMK “has broadened my children’s exposure to the outside. We live in a very rural environment and they go to a small school. I want to show my kids that there is more in life if they just go look for it.” Additionally, another parent commented how OMK gave her child a “chance to meet other kids who have been in the same situation.”

#### Delphi Panel: Round Two

In the second round, the panelists were asked to rate their level of agreement with 13 benefits regarding the Oklahoma OMK program. These were the benefits the panelists identified from the first round of the study. Twenty out of the 25 panelists filled out the round two instrument.

The Oklahoma OMK program panelists were asked to indicate their level of agreement for each statement that they perceived as a benefit of the OMK program. The panelists were asked to use a six point response scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree and 6 = Strongly Agree (Shinn et al., 2009; Ramsey, 2009). Out of the thirteen benefits that were indicated from round one, five statements received a score of “5” (Agree) or “6” (Strongly Agree) by 75% or more of the

panelists (Jenkins, 2008; Shinn, et al., 2009; Ramsey, 2009). As a result, the researcher determined that agreement was reached on these five items (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Benefits that reached agreement of 75% or higher in Round 2 by the panelists regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program Benefits	% Agreement
i. Helped them realize that they are not alone in the deployment process	75%
ii. Made new friends who understand what they are going through	75%
iii. Gained self-confidence	75%
iv. Met other military kids going through similar experiences	100%
v. Gave them something fun to do while their loved one was far away	85%

In the second round, at least 51% but no more than 75% of the panelists selected a “5” (Agree) or a “6” (Strongly Agree) for seven of the benefits regarding the Oklahoma OMK program (Shinn et al., 2009; Ramsey, 2009). These seven benefits that reached higher than 51% but lower than 75% were sent to the final round (See Table 4).

Table 4

*Benefits that reached higher than 51% but lower than 75% agreement in Round 2 regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program	% Agreement
i. Improved leadership skills	60%
ii. Gained more exposure to the real life world	65%
iii. Helped them cope during deployment	70%

iv.	Improved communication skills	65%
v.	Helped them express themselves	65%
vi.	Received support they needed from other peers	65%
vii.	Became more independent	65%

One benefit the panelists indicated as a benefit from round one, which was the OMK program assisted their children in connecting with loved ones who were deployed, was not included in round three of this study (See Table 5). This one statement for which less than 51% of the panelists scored the statement a “5” (Agree) or “6” (Strongly Agree) was removed from further investigation (Jenkins, 2008; Shinn et al., 2009; Ramsey, 2009).

Table 5

*The one benefit that reached less than 51% agreement in Round 2 by the panelists regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program Benefit	% Agreement
i. Assisted them in connecting with deployed loves ones	35%

After the second round was completed, the researcher identified the frequencies and percentages of each statement presented by the panelists regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program (See Table 6).

Table 6

*Round 2 frequencies and percentages presented by the panelists (n=20) regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program Benefits	F	% Agreement
i. Helped them realize that they are not alone in the deployment process	15	75%
ii. Made new friends who understand what they are going through	15	75%
iii. Gained self-confidence	15	75%
iv. Met other military kids going through similar experiences	20	100%
v. Gave them something fun to do while their loved one was far away	17	85%
vi. Improved leadership skills	12	60%
vii. Gained more exposure to the real life world	13	65%
viii. Helped them cope during deployment	14	70%
ix. Improved communication skills	13	65%
x. Helped them express themselves	13	65%
xi. Received support they needed from peers	13	65%
xii. Became more independent	13	65%
xiii. Assisted them in connecting with loved one who deployed	7	35%



### Delphi Panel: Round Three

In the third round, the OMK panelists were asked to rate their level of agreement with seven benefits regarding the Oklahoma OMK program. Twenty out of the 25 panelists completed the round three instrument.

The panel was asked to specify their level of agreement on the statements they indicated were benefits from the first round of the study. Panelists were asked to use the six point response scale once more: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree and 6 = Strongly Agree. One benefit received a score of a “5” (Agree) or a “6” (Strongly Agree) by 75% or more of the panelists (Jenkins, 2008; Shinn, et al., 2009; Ramsey, 2009). As a result, the researcher determined that agreement was met by the panelists with one additional statement regarding the OMK program. This additional statement that was added on to the other five benefits from round two was that the Oklahoma OMK program made their child/children more independent (See Table 7).

Table 7

*The benefit that reached agreement in Round 3 regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program	% Agreement
i. They became more independent	75%

There were six benefits regarding the Oklahoma OMK program that did not reach agreement by the Delphi panel in round three. The statements which did not make the list of benefits for the Oklahoma OMK program related to the children’s leadership and communication skills, as well as coping during deployment (See Table 8).

Table 8

*Benefits that did not reach agreement in Round 3 of the research study regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program	% Agreement
ii. Improved leadership skills	45%
iii. Gained more exposure to the real life world	65%
iv. Helped them cope during deployment	70%
v. Improved communication skills	55%
vi. Helped them express themselves	60%
vii. Received support they needed from peers	70%

The panelists agreed on six statements regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program (See Table 9).

Table 9

*The final six benefits that reached agreement in all rounds by the Delphi Panel regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids program*

Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program Benefits	% Agreement
i. Helped them realize that they are not alone in the deployment process	Round 2, 75%
ii. Made new friends who understand what they are going through	Round 2, 75%
iii. Gained self-confidence	Round 2, 75%
iv. Met other military kids going through similar experiences	Round 2, 100%
v. Gave them something fun to do while their loved one was far away	Round 2, 85%
vi. They became more independent	Round 3, 75%

## Summary

The personal characteristics of the Delphi panel showed most of the panelists who filled out the instruments were female (90.5%) and Caucasian (71.4%). Eighteen of the 21 parents reported their age was 44 years of age or under. Regarding the participant's relation to the military children, 18 (85.7%) reported it was the mother who was filling out the instruments, and more than 75% of the families reported the father was the family member who spent time away from home while deployed. The Delphi panelists were also asked to provide information about the family's current stage in deployment. The majority of the panelists (62%) reported they were currently in post deployment (See Table 1).

The panelists were asked to identify what they thought were benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program in the first round. Therefore, in the first round, the Delphi panel provided 20 statements relating to the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program. From the 20 original statements provided by the panelists, the researcher compiled the answers into 13 statements.

In the second round, the panelists were asked to rate their level of agreement with the 13 statements they had indicated were benefits of the program from round one. The panelists reached agreement on five of these statements (See Table 3). One statement was removed from further investigation because less than 51% of the panelists agreed it was beneficial. The remaining seven statements that reached higher than 51% but less than 75% were returned to the panelists in round three of the study.

As a result of round three, the panelists reached level of agreement on one more statement regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program. The remaining statements that again did not reach agreement from the Delphi panel were eliminated by the researcher,

and further investigation was no longer needed. After the completion of three rounds of this Delphi study, the military parents reached level of agreement on six benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

Conclusions drawn from this study are presented in this section. A summary of the participant's personal and professional characteristics are provided, followed by the summary of results for each research objective. Implications and recommendations associated with the findings and conclusions are also discussed.

#### Conclusions

Three rounds of questionnaires were administered to a Delphi panel to gather data related to the research objectives. Panelists were parents with one or more child(ren) involved in the Oklahoma OMK program. These individuals were selected because they were in a position to make judgments regarding how the program impacted their youth who participated in Oklahoma OMK events.

#### Objective #1

Describe selected personal and professional characteristics of parents whose children participated in the Oklahoma OMK program.

The typical panelist is a Caucasian female under the age of 44 years old who is the mother of a child whose father is serving in the military. The deployed parent was in the

post-deployment stage and serves in the National Guard (Army or Air Force) or the Army. The child of the typical panelist had attended a weeklong Oklahoma OMK event.

### Objective #2

Describe the perceptions of selected parents regarding the benefits of the Oklahoma OMK program on military youth attending Oklahoma OMK events.

Findings of this study lead to the conclusion that the Oklahoma OMK program benefits participating children in six ways. These six benefits were: 1) military youth realizing they are not alone in the deployment process, 2) making new friends who understand what they are going through, 3) gaining self-confidence, 4) meeting other military kids going through similar experiences, 5) giving the youth something fun to do while their loved one was far away, and 6) allowing the youth to become more independent.

### Recommendations

#### Recommendations for Future Practice

Given there are benefits associated with the program for Oklahoma military youth, Oklahoma OMK staff and volunteers should promote the program throughout communities and schools where these youth reside. Although many military families are aware of support programs for their military children, many may not be aware of OMK programs specifically. Through networking and integration of the Oklahoma OMK program within communities, people will become more involved with the opportunities that programs such as OMK provide.

Oklahoma OMK staff should continue to focus on the benefits that reached agreement in this study and expand on them. By focusing on the six benefits identified by the panelists, the Oklahoma OMK program can continue to provide the support necessary for military youth and their families.

Oklahoma OMK staff should consider ways to improve on the OMK objectives that were not associated with the benefits identified in this research. If those objectives are valuable to the staff and program supporters, adjustments should be made to activities and events to make them more impactful to the participants. On the other hand, if they are not particularly valuable, perhaps they should be eliminated from the intended outcomes.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The military parents who participated in this study identified six statements that were beneficial to their children. These six statements ranged from helping participants gain more independence to meeting other military children going through similar experiences during their parents' deployment. Consequently, further research should be conducted to determine what areas of the program need the most improvement. Conducting another study involving the parents and identifying different ways to improve the Oklahoma OMK program would be beneficial. Future research focusing on characteristics of the participants, such as race, socioeconomic class, and age would also be beneficial in obtaining different views and opinions regarding the benefits of the program.

According to the OMK Training and Resource Manual (2010), the main goal of the program is to support military youth who have been affected by deployment. Further studies should be conducted to establish what components or areas of the Oklahoma OMK program need adjustment or alteration to enhance the effectiveness and value of the

program. John Bowlby's Attachment Theory Model (Cherry, 2012) should be concentrated on because it directly relates to what military children experience while their parents are deployed. Models such as the Attachment Theory Model could be relevant when researching ways to help military youth.

Discovering what activities, events, and camps have the greatest impact is a necessity for the future of the Oklahoma OMK program. By researching what events have the most impact, Oklahoma OMK staff can continue to conduct these specific activities and provide military youth and their families in the most effective way. Additionally, further research regarding military youths' perceptions of the overall benefits of the OMK program would be extremely helpful.

### Implications and Discussion

Findings from this research will be instrumental in assisting staff members with programs such as OMK in determining and improving program activities and events for military youth and their families. The goal of this research was to determine the most beneficial aspects of the program. Park (2011) stated support programs exist and are intended to help but their effectiveness is largely unknown.

OMK is a program that continues to provide support to military children and to the general public (Edwin, 2007). Panelists indicated OMK had a positive impact on their children and there were a variety of benefits from the program (Edwin, 2007). The different program areas have satisfied not only the children who become involved, but also their parents (Edwin, 2007). Children who feel supported by family or a support group are likely to cope better when under stress (Edwin, 2007).



“According to Bowlby’s theory, children, over time, internalize experiences with caretakers in such a way that early attachment relations come to form a prototype for later relationships outside the family” (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 226). The Attachment Theory Model is a way to represent what military youth experience when a loved one is deployed, and this model reveals the challenges families face during deployment. By referring to models like the Attachment Theory, support programs can identify what focus areas are most important.

Six of the 13 benefits initially identified by the panelists were ultimately considered a benefit of the Oklahoma OMK program. There were two statements that reached 70% agreement in round three, just short of the 75% mark to qualify as a benefit of the Oklahoma OMK program. The Oklahoma OMK program staff should focus on the six benefits that reached 75% agreement in this study. However, the remaining seven benefits that did not make agreement by the Delphi panel should be looked at more closely to see if there are ways to shift programming to have more of an impact in these areas, which were initially identified as important by the panelist.

The methodology used in this study proved to be useful in soliciting the perceptions of the Delphi panel. Panelists were willing and comfortable providing information about their experiences with the Oklahoma OMK program. The open-ended section in the first round allowed panelists to clarify exactly how the Oklahoma OMK program benefits their child/children.

#### Contributions of this Study

This research study supports John Bowlby’s Attachment Theory Model and the idea that “attachment behavior is conceived as any form of behavior that results in a person

attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual” (Bowlby, 1976, p. 203). This study further supports Ajzen’s Expectation theory, and the concept of information having an effect on intentions and behavior through attitudes and subjective norms (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). The research also revealed the Oklahoma OMK program helps alleviate stress for youth experiencing separation distress, which is the central concern under the attachment theory and relates to the key characteristics of safe haven, secure base, and proximity maintenance.

Although there is some research revealing military youth and families need additional support during deployment, there is little research revealing the benefits of support programs and the actual impact it has on military children. This study contributes to the literature regarding the challenges faced by military youth and the programs that seek to provide support. Park (2011) stated that the well-being of military children should not only be approached at individual levels, but also in terms of larger social systems.

The Oklahoma OMK program is meeting the national OMK goals and objectives. It is evident from this study regarding parent’s perceptions that Oklahoma OMK has done just that. The objectives outlined by the national OMK program involve raising community awareness, creating local support networks, implementing outreach support services, and providing a core set of tools for local communities (Allen et.al, 2010). The panelists in this study proved the Oklahoma OMK program has been meeting these standards, and the program has been impactful to their military youth in multiple ways. A few statements provided by the panelists demonstrated how the Oklahoma OMK program has been meeting the national objectives. One statement from a panelist was “My oldest son got to be with kids going through what he is going through, and he felt at ease being with others who

were missing a parent as well.” Another panelist said OMK “helped him learn he is not the only child going through deployment. Making friends with other youth who have parents in the military has been the most beneficial.”

This study holds potential to inform volunteers, schools, communities, and staff of support programs. In addition, this study makes a case for the value of various support programs such as OMK and the benefits it can have on military youth. Specifically, this study holds potential for Oklahoma OMK coordinators and directors around the U.S. with reflection on the promise to provide additional support to those families and children who need assistance during deployment.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Initial Approved Documents

**Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board**

Date: Monday, June 25, 2012  
IRB Application No AG1223  
Proposal Title: Identifying How the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is Beneficial to Military Youth: A Delphi Study

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 6/24/2013**

Principal Investigator(s):

Hillary Siegfried	Dwayne Cartmell
209 4-H Youth Development	448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078

---

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

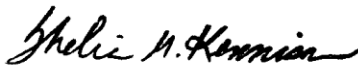
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

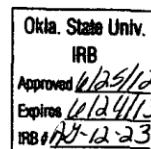
First E-mail to panel of experts:

Hi, my name is Hillary Siegfried. I am a graduate student working at Oklahoma State University with the Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK). I am conducting a research study that is focused on identifying how the Operation: Military Kids Program has been beneficial to military youth. You were selected for this study because your child has been active with this program and has also attended multiple OMK events.

Participation in this study requires the completion of three questionnaire's over the next 30-60 days. Your responses will be used to describe how the Oklahoma: Operation Military Kids Program has benefited your child's life.

Participation in this study will help identify how OMK has impacted lives, and it will also be a way to improve future events. To thank you for your participation, your family will receive one free ticket to the overnight stay at Jenks Aquarium in Tulsa, Oklahoma to be held in the fall of 2012. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Please indicate your willingness to participate by selecting the appropriate response.

If **YES**, please click on the **ACCEPT** button. Selecting yes will generate an email that will provide a link to the study. Begin the study by completing the informed consent. If you choose not to participate in this study, please click on the **DECLINE** button and thank you for considering my request.



Second E-mail to panel of experts:

Dear Study Participant:

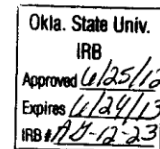
Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete the first round questionnaire. In round one, you were asked basic demographic questions and information about the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program. In this next round you will be asked more questions related to the Oklahoma: Operation Military Kids program and the way it has been beneficial to your child/children. You will rate your level of agreement with each of these questions.

Please click on the link below to access the second round questionnaire.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please e-mail me at [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hillary Siegfried



Third E-mail to panel of experts:

Dear Study Participant:

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete the second round questionnaire for the Oklahoma: Operation Military Kids Program. In round two, you indicated your level of agreement with questions related to the benefits of the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program. In this last round, you will be asked one more question about the benefits of the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids program.

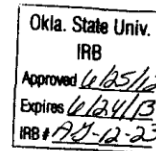
Please click on the link below to access the third and final questionnaire for this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please e-mail me at [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu).

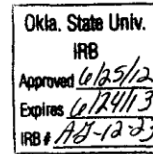
Thank you for participating in this study for Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids! Your input is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Hillary Siegfried



Oklahoma State University  
209 4-H Youth Development  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
[hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu)



### **Identifying how the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is beneficial for Military Youth: A Delphi Study**

*Directions: Please read to the bottom of these instructions. This web page is intended to provide you with a summary of this research study. It will also provide what is expected of you as a participant and your rights as a participant. After you have read to the bottom of this page, you may either accept or decline to participate in the study. If you have any questions concerning this study, please e-mail your questions to [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu). Thank you for your time!*

#### **PURPOSE:**

The Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK) is a beneficial program that has impacted the lives of military children around Oklahoma. However, there is little research representing how this program has affected and impacted the lives of military children. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the parents' perceptions of the multiple benefits Operation: Military Kids has on youth who have been active in events throughout the last few years.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

This research study will involve three questionnaires. The first questionnaire will ask for demographic information. This includes information such as your gender, age, and ethnicity. In addition, you will be asked about your family's current stage of deployment, which branch of service your family is involved with, who was or is still deployed, how this program has been beneficial to your child/children, and your relation to the military child who is involved with Operation: Military Kids.

The questionnaire for round two and three of the study will be based on your answers that are provided from round one of the study. There will be summated scale response questions asked in the last two rounds, on the goal is to develop consensus by rating your level of agreement on certain items.

This study is designed to last over the course of approximately six to eight weeks. If at any time you do not want to continue on with this study, you may end your participation without explanation.

#### **RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:**

This research study does not involve risks that are associated with stress, psychological, social or physical risk. However, if you begin to experience any type of stress during this study, you may end your participation at any time.



**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:**

Although there are no expected personal benefits from you participating in this study, this research will contribute to the knowledge known about military youth support programs. By conducting this research study, there will be identification as to which events and activities are the most beneficial to your child/children involved with Operation Military Kids. Therefore, future events conducted by the Oklahoma Operation Military Kids team will provide events that are the most beneficial to military youth.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The information provided by you will at all times be kept confidential, and no information will be released. Research records will be securely stored in 209 4-H Youth Development, and only the researchers or individuals responsible for this study will have access to records. Results from this study may be used in publications, but you will NOT be identified individually. This data will only be saved as long as it is scientifically useful.

**COMPENSATION:**

If you decide to partake in this research study for Operation: Military Kids (OMK), you will receive compensation in return. In the fall of 2012, your family will receive one free ticket for the overnight stay at the Jenks Aquarium in Tulsa, Oklahoma!

**CONTACTS:**

Throughout the duration of this study, you may contact any of the following researchers to discuss your participation and request information about the results of the study: Ms. Hillary Siegfried, Student Graduate Assistant, 209 4-H Youth Development, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-8873, [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu); Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, Dept. of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, Oklahoma State University, 436 Agricultural Hall, 405-744-0461, [dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu](mailto:dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu).

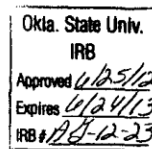
If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

**PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS:**

There will be no penalty for refusal to participate in this study, and you are free to withdraw from your participation in this project at any time. **Your participation in this research is voluntary.**

By clicking on the **ACCEPT** button, you have been informed about all of the procedures listed. You are also informed of what you will be asked to do and the benefits of your participation.

If you decide not to participate in this study, please click on the **DECLINE** button.



Appendix B

Institutional Review Board First Modification Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, July 02, 2012 Protocol Expires: 6/24/2013  
IRB Application No: AG1223  
Proposal Title: Identifying How the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is Beneficial to Military Youth: A Delphi Study  
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt  
**Modification**  
Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**  
Principal Investigator(s):  
Hillary Siegfried Dwayne Cartmell  
209 4-H Youth Development 448 Ag Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078 Stillwater, OK 74078

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The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

The modification request to alter the recruitment and consent process to all PI to obtain email addresses for follow-up contact is approved.

Signature :

  
Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Monday, July 02, 2012  
Date

First E-mail to potential participants:

Hi, my name is Hillary Siegfried. I am a graduate student working at Oklahoma State University with the Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK). I am conducting a research study that is focused on identifying how the Operation: Military Kids Program has been beneficial to military youth. You were selected for this study because your child has been active with this program and has also attended multiple OMK events.

Participation in this study requires the completion of three short questionnaire's over the next 30-60 days. Your responses will be used to describe how the Oklahoma: Operation Military Kids Program has benefited your child's life.

Participation in this study will help identify how OMK has impacted lives, and it will also be a way to improve future events. To thank you for your participation, your family will receive one free ticket to the overnight stay at Jenks Aquarium in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which will take place on September 7-8. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Please indicate your willingness to participate by replying back to this e-mail stating your decision to contribute to this study. By replying to this e-mail, you will receive further instructions and a link to the first survey.

Okla. State Univ. IRB Approved <u>7/2/12</u> Expires <u>6/24/13</u> IRB # <u>AG1223</u>
---

Second E-mail to potential participants:

Thank you for agreeing to complete my series of surveys regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program. Your perceptions are important as we look to improve upon the opportunities available to military youth through this program.

This survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete and is only available for a short time. If you are not able to access the survey for some reason, please e-mail me as soon as possible.

By clicking on the link below, you will be taken to the electronic survey. You will need to read the consent document and input your e-mail address to begin the survey. To access the survey, go to:

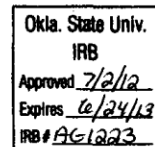
[SurveyLink]

You may choose at any time to withdraw from participating in this study without penalty. The risks associated with this project are no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Sincerely,

Hillary Siegfried

hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu



This phone script will be used if the potential participants do not respond to the first invitation e-mail:

Hi, my name is Hillary Siegfried and I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. I recently sent you an e-mail about participating in my research study about the benefits of the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program. I am calling you to confirm your decision for my research project. Would you be willing to participate in three short rounds of questionnaires that will benefit the future of this program?

Thank you for your time!

Okla. State Univ.  
IRB  
Approved 7/2/12  
Expires 6/24/13  
IRB # 12-1223

Oklahoma State University

209 4-H Youth Development

Stillwater, OK 74078

[hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu)

### Identifying how the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is beneficial for Military Youth: A Delphi Study

*Directions: Please read to the bottom of these instructions. This web page is intended to provide you with a summary of this research study. It will also provide what is expected of you as a participant and your rights as a participant. After you have read to the bottom of this page, you must enter your e-mail address to continue to the survey. If you have any questions concerning this study, please e-mail your questions to [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu). Thank you for your time!*

#### PURPOSE:

The Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK) is a beneficial program that has impacted the lives of military children around Oklahoma. However, there is little research representing how this program has affected and impacted the lives of military children. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the parents' perceptions of the multiple benefits Operation: Military Kids has on youth who have been active in events throughout the last few years.

#### PROCEDURES:

This research study will involve three questionnaires. The first questionnaire will ask for demographic information. This includes information such as your gender, age, and ethnicity. In addition, you will be asked about your family's current stage of deployment, which branch of service your family is involved with, who was or is still deployed, how this program has been beneficial to your child/children, and your relation to the military child who is involved with Operation: Military Kids.

The questionnaire for round two and three of the study will be based on your answers that are provided from round one of the study. There will be summated scale response questions asked in the last two rounds, on the goal is to develop consensus by rating your level of agreement on certain items.

This study is designed to last over the course of approximately six to eight weeks. If at any time you do not want to continue on with this study, you may end your participation without explanation.

#### RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:

This research study does not involve risks that are associated with stress, psychological, social or physical risk. However, if you begin to experience any type of stress during this study, you may end your participation at any time.

Okla. State Univ. IRB Approved <u>7/2/12</u> Expires <u>10/24/13</u> IRB # <u>12C1223</u>
---

**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:**

Although there are no expected personal benefits from you participating in this study, this research will contribute to the knowledge known about military youth support programs. By conducting this research study, there will be identification as to which events and activities are the most beneficial to your child/children involved with Operation Military Kids. Therefore, future events conducted by the Oklahoma Operation Military Kids team will provide events that are the most beneficial to military youth.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The information provided by you will at all times be kept confidential, and no information will be released. Research records will be securely stored in 209 4-H Youth Development, and only the researchers or individuals responsible for this study will have access to records. Results from this study may be used in publications, but you will NOT be identified individually. This data will only be saved as long as it is scientifically useful.

**COMPENSATION:**

If you decide to partake in this research study for Operation: Military Kids (OMK), you will receive compensation in return. In the fall of 2012, your family will receive one free ticket for the overnight stay at the Jenks Aquarium in Tulsa, Oklahoma!

**CONTACTS:**

Throughout the duration of this study, you may contact any of the following researchers to discuss your participation and request information about the results of the study: Ms. Hillary Siegfried, Student Graduate Assistant, 209 4-H Youth Development, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-8873, [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu); Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, Dept. of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, Oklahoma State University, 436 Agricultural Hall, 405-744-0461, [dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu](mailto:dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

**PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS:**

There will be no penalty for refusal to participate in this study, and you are free to withdraw from your participation in this project at any time. **Your participation in this research is voluntary.**

By putting your e-mail address in the box below, you have been informed about all of the procedures listed. You are also informed of what you will be asked to do and the benefits of your participation.

If you decide not to participate in this study, please close your Web browser at this time.

E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Okla. State Univ.  
IRB  
Approved 7/2/12  
Expires 10/24/13  
IRB # AG1223



Appendix C

Institutional Review Board Second Modification Approval

**Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board**

Date: Thursday, July 26, 2012 Protocol Expires: 6/24/2013  
IRB Application No: AG1223  
Proposal Title: Identifying How the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is Beneficial to Military Youth: A Delphi Study

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt  
**Modification**

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s):

Hillary Siegfried	Dwayne Cartmell
209 4-H Youth Development	448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078

---

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office **MUST** be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

The modification request to add the round 2 questionnaire is approved.

Signature :

  
Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Thursday, July 26, 2012  
Date

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Third Modification Approval

**Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board**

Date: Monday, August 13, 2012 Protocol Expires: 6/24/2013  
IRB Application No: AG1223  
Proposal Title: Identifying How the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is Beneficial to Military Youth: A Delphi Study  
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt  
**Modification**  
Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**  
Principal Investigator(s):  
Hillary Siegfried Dwayne Cartmell  
209 4-H Youth Development 448 Ag Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078 Stillwater, OK 74078

---

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

- The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

The modification request to add the round 3 questionnaire is approved.

Signature :



Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Monday, August 13, 2012  
Date

## Appendix E

### Reminder Phone Script

Hi, this is Hillary Siegfried and I am the graduate student working on the research study over the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program. You recently received an e-mail with the link to the OMK survey. I am checking in to make sure you received the e-mail and to remind you about filling out the survey. Are you still willing to participate in this research study?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix F

Round One Instrument



## Demographics

### Identifying how the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is beneficial for Military Youth: A Delphi Study

Directions: Please read to the bottom of these instructions. This web page is intended to provide you with a summary of this research study. It will also provide what is expected of you as a participant and your rights as a participant. After you have read to the bottom of this page, you must enter your e-mail address to continue to the survey. If you have any questions concerning this study, please e-mail your questions to [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu). Thank you for your time!

#### PURPOSE:

The Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK) is a beneficial program that has impacted the lives of military children around Oklahoma. However, there is little research representing how this program has affected and impacted the lives of military children. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the parents' perceptions of the multiple benefits Operation: Military Kids has on youth who have been active in events throughout the last few years.

#### PROCEDURES:

This research study will involve three questionnaires. The first questionnaire will ask for demographic information. This includes information such as your gender, age, and ethnicity. In addition, you will be asked about your family's current stage of deployment, which branch of service your family is involved with, who was or is still deployed, how this program has been beneficial to your child/children, and your relation to the military child who is involved with Operation: Military Kids.

The questionnaire for round two and three of the study will be based on your answers that are provided from round one of the study. There will be summated scale response questions asked in the last two rounds, on the goal is to develop consensus by rating your level of agreement on certain items.

This study is designed to last over the course of approximately six to eight weeks. If at any time you do not want to continue on with this study, you may end your participation without explanation.

#### RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:

This research study does not involve risks that are associated with stress, psychological, social or physical risk. However, if you begin to experience any type of stress during this study, you may end your participation at any time.

#### BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

Although there are no expected personal benefits from you participating in this study, this research will contribute to the knowledge known about military youth support programs. By conducting this research study, there will be identification as to which events and activities are the most beneficial to your child/children involved with Operation Military Kids. Therefore, future events conducted by the Oklahoma Operation Military Kids team will provide events that are the most beneficial to military youth.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY:

The information provided by you will at all times be kept confidential, and no information will be released. Research records will be securely stored in 209 4-H Youth Development, and only the researchers or individuals responsible for this study will have access to records. Results from this study may be used in publications, but you will NOT be identified individually. This data will only be saved as long as it is scientifically useful.

#### COMPENSATION:

If you decide to partake in this research study for Operation: Military Kids (OMK), you will receive compensation in return. In the fall of 2012, your family will receive one free ticket for the overnight stay at the Jenks Aquarium in Tulsa, Oklahoma!

#### CONTACTS:

Throughout the duration of this study, you may contact any of the following researchers to discuss your participation and request information about the results of the study: Ms. Hillary Siegfried, Student Graduate Assistant, 209 4-H Youth Development, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-8873, [hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu](mailto:hillary.siegfried@okstate.edu); Dr. Dwayne Cartmell, Dept. of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership, Oklahoma State University, 436 Agricultural Hall, 405-744-0461, [dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu](mailto:dwayne.cartmell@okstate.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

#### PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS:

There will be no penalty for refusal to participate in this study, and you are free to withdraw from your participation in this project at any time. **Your participation in this research is voluntary.**

By putting your e-mail address in the box below, you have been informed about all of the procedures listed. You are also informed of what you will be asked to do and the benefits of your participation.

If you decide not to participate in this study, please close your Web browser at this time.

#### E-MAIL ADDRESS:



Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age Range:

- 21 and Under
- 22 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 and Over

Race/Ethnicity:

- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Other

**Operation: Military Kids Information**

What is your relation to the Military Child who is involved with Operation: Military Kids?

- Mother
- Father
- Grandparent
- Sibling
- Other/Caretaker

Which family member spent time away from home while they were active or deployed in the military?

- Mother
- Father
- Sibling

Are you the family member who has been active or deployed in the military?

- Yes
- No

Current stage in families deployment:

- Pre-Deployment
- Active Deployment
- Post-Deployment

Branch of Service:

- Navy
- Navy Reserve
- Army
- Army Reserve
- Army National Guard
- Air Force
- Air Force Reserve

Branch of Service:

- Navy
- Navy Reserve
- Army
- Army Reserve
- Army National Guard
- Air Force
- Air Force Reserve
- Air Force National Guard
- Marine
- Marine Reserve
- Coast Guard

Which type of Operation: Military Kids activities has your child/children participated in? Please check all that apply.

- Week Long Camps
- Weekend Camps
- Day Camps
- Overnight Events

How has the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program been beneficial to your child/children?

Appendix G

Round Two Instrument



**ROUND 2**

**Identifying how the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is beneficial for Military Youth: A Delphi Study**

Thank you for filling out the first survey over the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK).

In the first survey, the initial question asked "How has the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids program been beneficial to your child/children?" Based on the answers provided on this question, a second survey has been compiled with statements regarding the benefits of the OMK Program. Please mark your level of agreement for each statement based on how you think the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program has been beneficial to your child/children.

It should not take more than a minute or two to complete this survey as there are only twelve statements. Thanks for your assistance in helping us with this research.

Please enter your E-mail address below to begin Round 2:

**The Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program has helped my child/children in the following ways:**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Helped them realize that they are not alone in the deployment process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made new friends who understand what they are going through	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gained self confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met other military kids going through similar experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved leadership skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gained more exposure to the real life world	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped them cope during deployment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped them express themselves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assisted them in connecting with loved ones who were deployed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gave them something fun to do while their loved one was far away	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Received support they needed from other peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Became more independent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix H

Round Three Instrument



**ROUND 3**

**Identifying how the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program is beneficial for Military Youth: A Delphi Study**

Thank you for filling out the second survey over the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program (OMK).

In Round 2, there were 13 statements in which you marked your level of agreement regarding the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program. Based on the answers you provided from this last survey, a third and final survey has been compiled. Round 3 will consist of seven statements that we are attempting to reach consensus on regarding the benefits of the OMK Program. Please mark your level of agreement for each statement based on how you think the Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program has been beneficial to your child/children. You will notice a percentage next to each statement, which indicates the level of agreement reached for the statement in Round 2. The statements in Round 2 that reached a percentage above 51 percent and less than 75 percent will appear in this final round. The remaining statements from Round 2 that were not included in this final survey have already met consensus, which means that 75 percent or more of the research participants agreed with the statement. In this last and final round we are trying to reach consensus on those statements which didn't meet consensus in Round 2.

It should not take more than a minute or two to complete this survey as there are only seven statements. Thanks for your assistance in helping us with this research.

**Please enter your E-mail address below to begin Round 3:**

**The Oklahoma Operation: Military Kids Program has helped my child/children in the following ways:**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Improved leadership skills -- 60%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gained more exposure to the real life world -- 65%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped them cope during deployment -- 70%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved communication skills -- 65%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped them express themselves -- 65%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Received support they needed from other peers -- 65%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Became more independent -- 65%	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

VITA

Hillary Siegfried

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: BENEFITS OF THE OKLAHOMA OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS  
PROGRAM – A DELPHI STUDY

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