

*With You All the Way! Deployment Kit*  
The Comfort Crew for Military Kids

Assessment Report

18 August 2016

*report prepared by*

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***Executive Summary***

Participants were 276 parents or caregivers of children who received a *With You All the Way! Deployment Kit* from The Comfort Crew for Military Kids. Participants completed the assessment survey between October 2012 and July 2016.

Individuals reported on children who ranged in age from less than 1 year old to 17 years old ( $M = 6.94$  years,  $SD = 3.11$  years). Most children were sons (45%) or daughters (40%) of a service member. All military branches and both military components were represented in the sample, but the majority of participants were affiliated with the Army (38%), Navy (24%), or Air Force (20%).

Findings indicated that Cuzzie the Bear was the most helpful resource (63%), followed by the dog tags (12%) and the journal (10%). Approximately 87% of participants reported that the child played with Cuzzie the bear frequently or always.

The overwhelming majority of participants indicated that the deployment kit was helpful (98%) and that they would recommend The Comfort Crew to a friend or family member (99%).

## **Research Design and Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Participants were parents or caregivers of children who received a *With You All the Way! Deployment Kit* from The Comfort Crew for Military Kids. Parents or caregivers requested a kit for their child(ren) by completing an online form on the organization's website and entering their name, their shipping address, their email address, their phone number, the child's name, and the child's date of birth. Approximately 45 days after the kit was shipped, the organization emailed a newsletter with evidence-based tips for coping with military life and an invitation to complete a one-time feedback survey.

### **Sample**

A total of 276 individuals completed the deployment kit assessment survey between October 2012 and July 2016.

### **Children's Gender**

Of the 276 participants who completed a survey, 249 individuals reported the child's gender. Slightly more than half of respondents (53%) reported on boys (132 boys) versus girls (117 girls).

### **Children's Age**

Participants reported on children who ranged in age from less than 1 year old to 17 years old. The average age of children was 6.94 years old ( $SD = 3.11$  years old).

### **Children's Relationship to the Service Member**

Most participants reported that the child was a son (45.3%) or daughter (40.2%) of the service member, but a variety of relationship types were represented in the sample.

	Frequency	Percent
son	125	45.3
daughter	111	40.2
child (gender unreported)	24	8.7
brother	3	1.1
sister	1	0.4
stepson	2	0.7
stepdaughter	2	0.7
grandson	2	0.7
niece	3	1.1
not reported	3	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Military Branch**

The majority of participants were affiliated with the Army (38.0%), the Navy (23.9%), or the Air Force (19.6%), but the sample contained individuals affiliated with all military branches and both military components.

	Frequency	Percent
Army	105	38.0
Navy	66	23.9
Air Force	54	19.6
Marine Corp	15	5.4
Coast Guard	1	0.4
Army National Guard	20	7.3
Air National Guard	5	1.8
Army Reserve	3	1.1
Navy Reserve	2	0.7
Air Force Reserve	1	0.4
not reported	4	1.4
Total	276	100.0

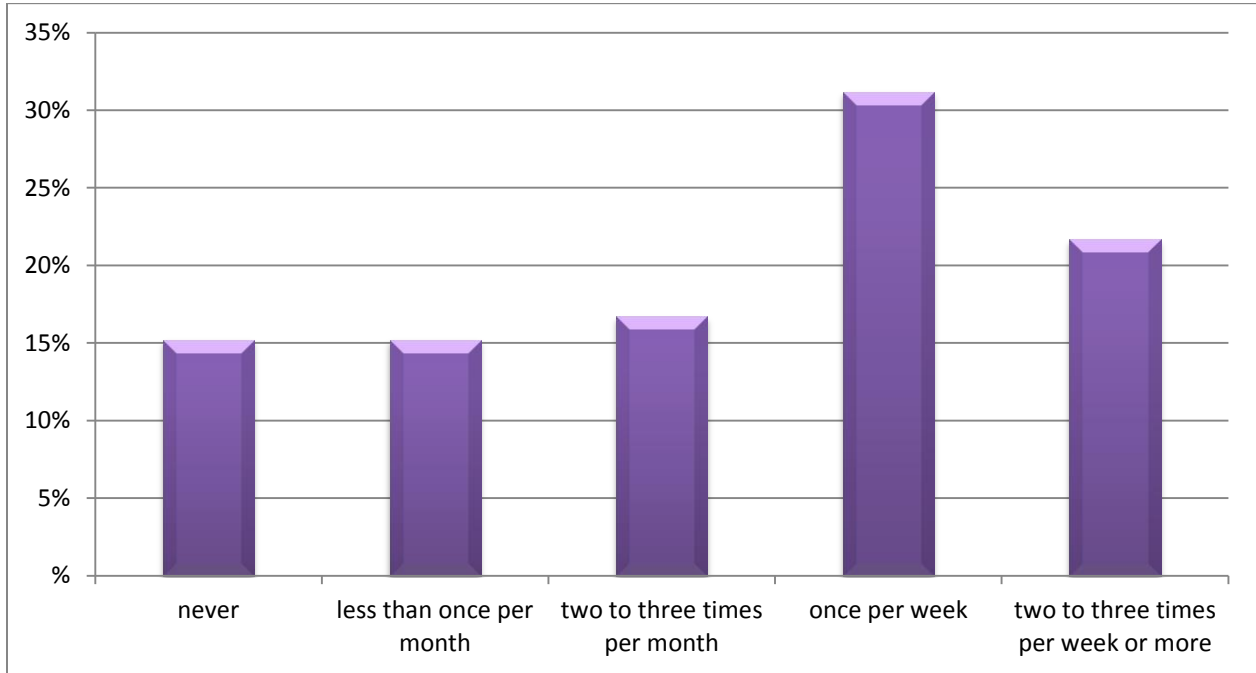
**Number of Deployments**

On average, individuals reported that children had experienced slightly more than two deployments in their lifetime ( $M = 2.16, SD = 1.64$ ). The number of deployments children had experienced ranged from 0 to 12.

**Length of Current Deployment**

Participants reported that the current deployed averaged 8.58 months in length ( $SD = 3.22$  months).

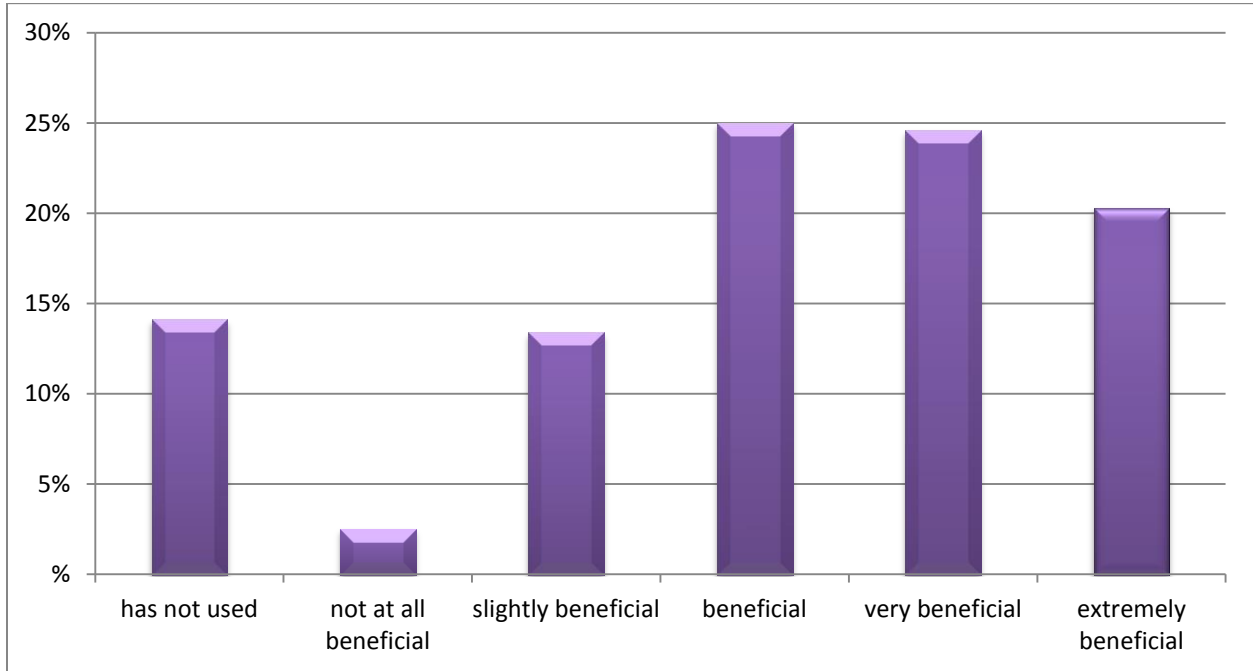
**How often does your child use the journal with prompts provided in the Deployment Kit?**



	Frequency	Percent
never	42	15.2
less than once per month	42	15.2
two to three times per month	46	16.7
once per week	86	31.2
two to three times per week or more	60	21.7
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 53% of participants reported that their child used the journal at least once per week.

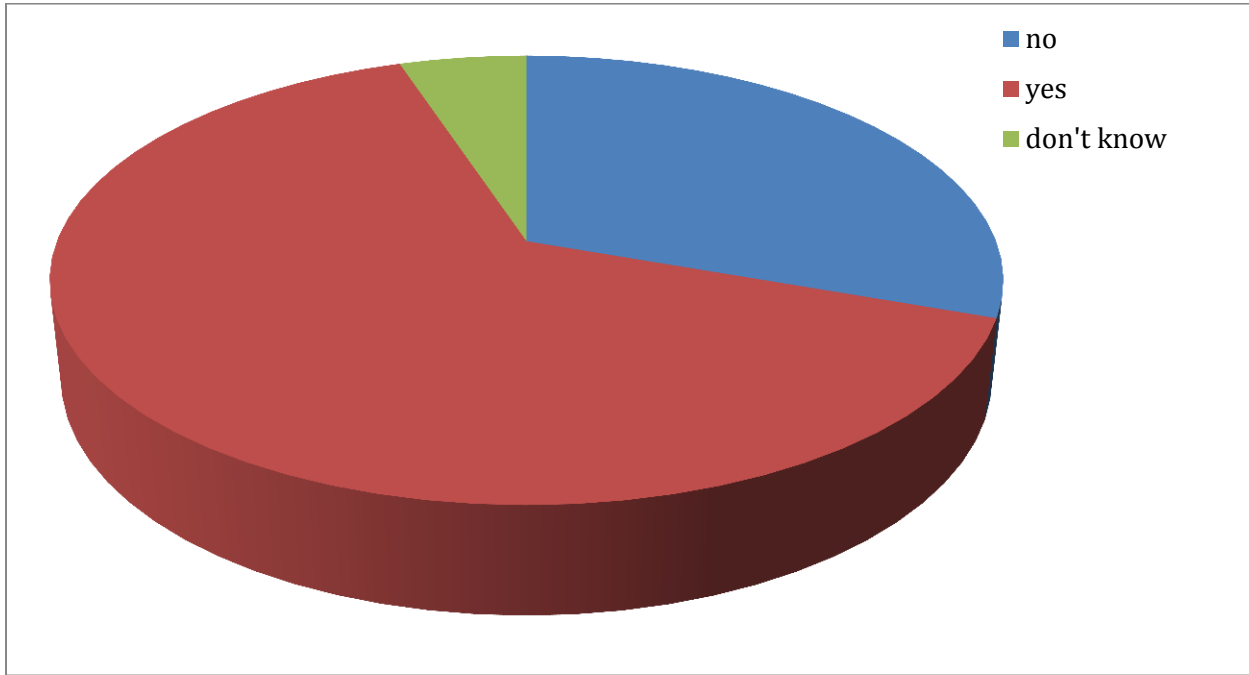
**How beneficial do you feel the journal with prompts has been for your child?**



	Frequency	Percent
child has not used the journal	39	14.1
not at all beneficial	7	2.5
slightly beneficial	37	13.4
beneficial	69	25.0
very beneficial	68	24.7
extremely beneficial	56	20.3
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 70% of participants reported that the journal was beneficial, very beneficial, or extremely beneficial.

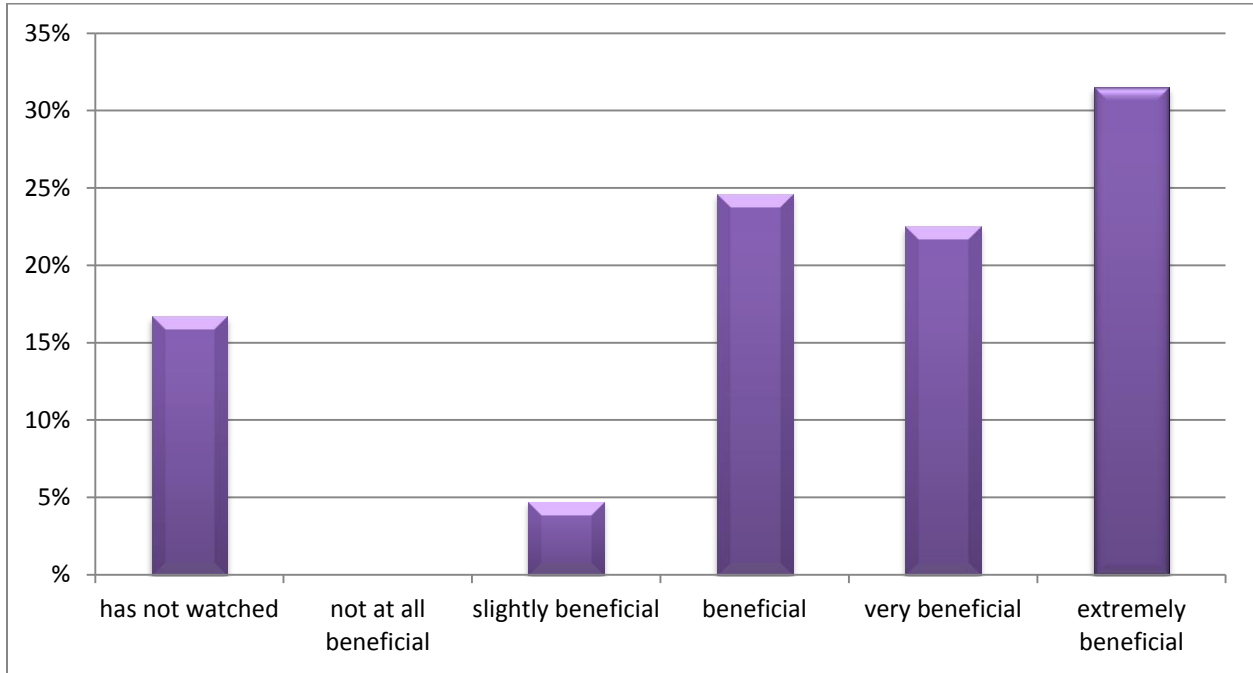
***Did your child share the dog tags in the Deployment Kit with his or her deployed parent?***



	Frequency	Percent
no	84	30.4
yes	178	64.5
don't know	14	5.1
Total	276	100.0

***Key Finding:*** Approximately 65% of participants reported that the child shared the dog tags with his or her deployed parent.

**How beneficial do you feel the With You All the Way! Dealing with Deployment DVD was for your child?**

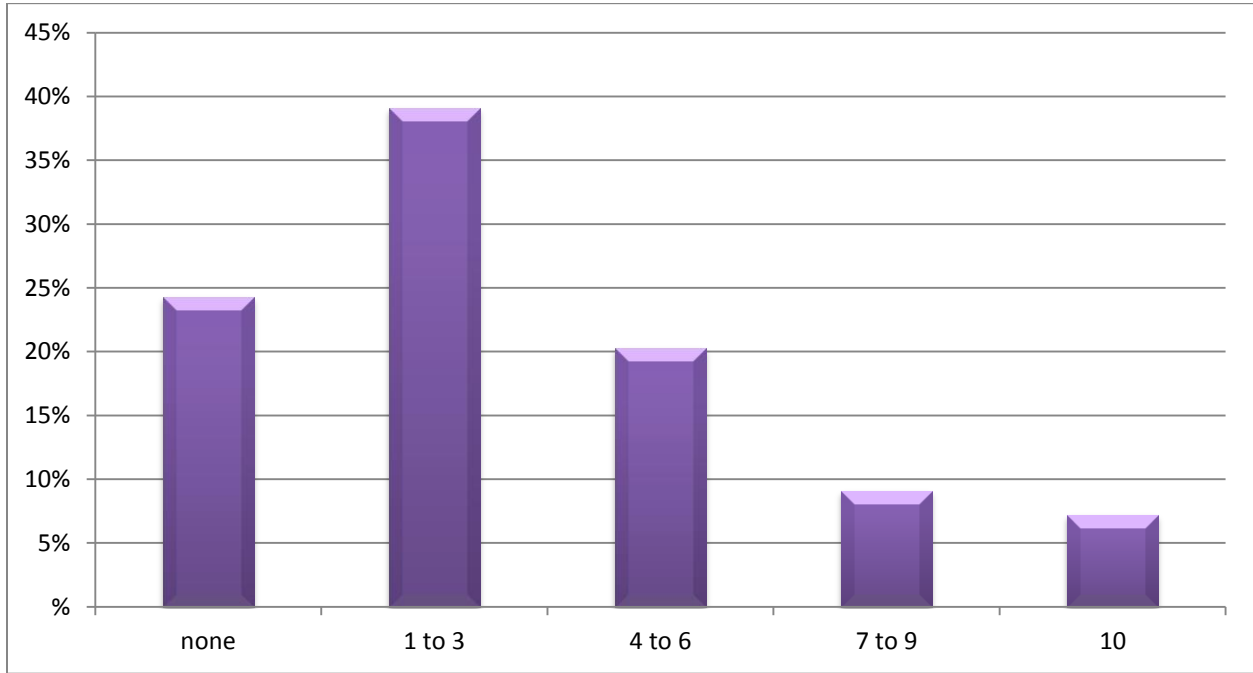


	Frequency	Percent
child has not watched the DVD	46	16.7
not at all beneficial	0	0.0
slightly beneficial	13	4.7
beneficial	68	24.6
very beneficial	62	22.5
extremely beneficial	87	31.5
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 79% of participants reported that the DVD was beneficial, very beneficial, or extremely beneficial.



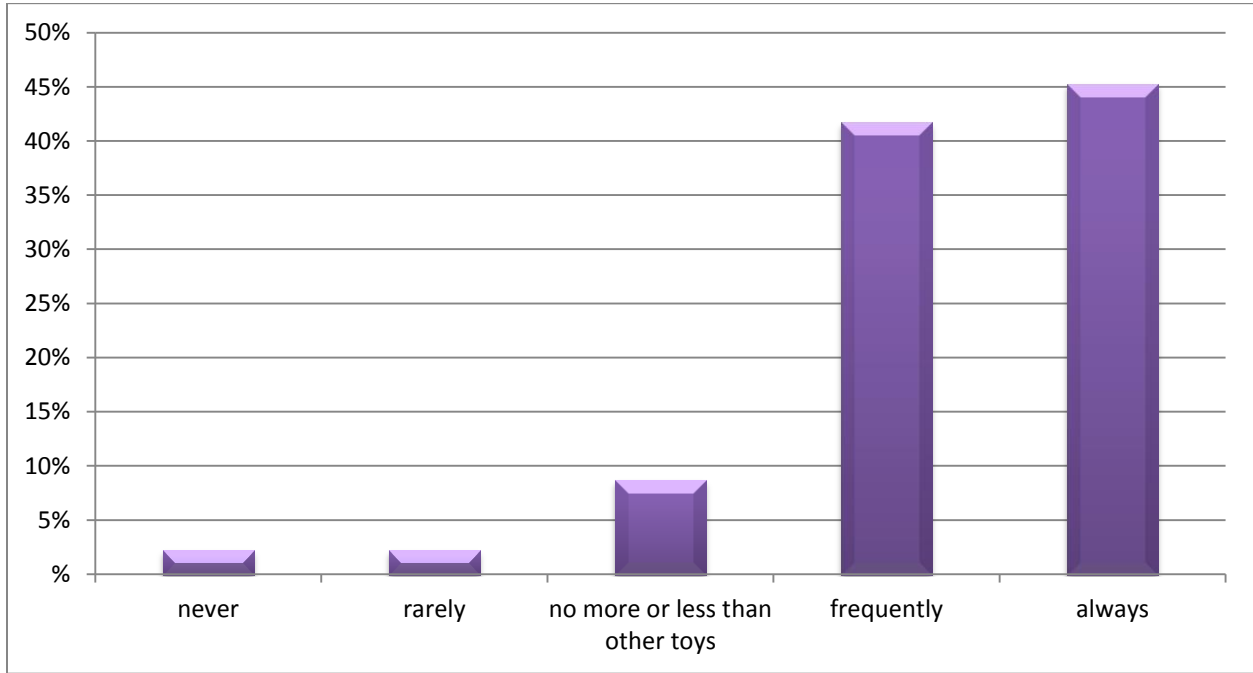
**Out of the 10 postcards provided, approximately how many has your child used?**



	Frequency	Percent
none	67	24.3
1 to 3 postcards	108	39.1
4 to 6 postcards	56	20.3
7 to 9 postcards	25	9.1
all 10 postcards	20	7.2
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 24% of participants reported that the child had not sent any postcards to the deployed service member, and approximately 39% of participants reported that the child had sent 1 to 3 postcards to the deployed service member.

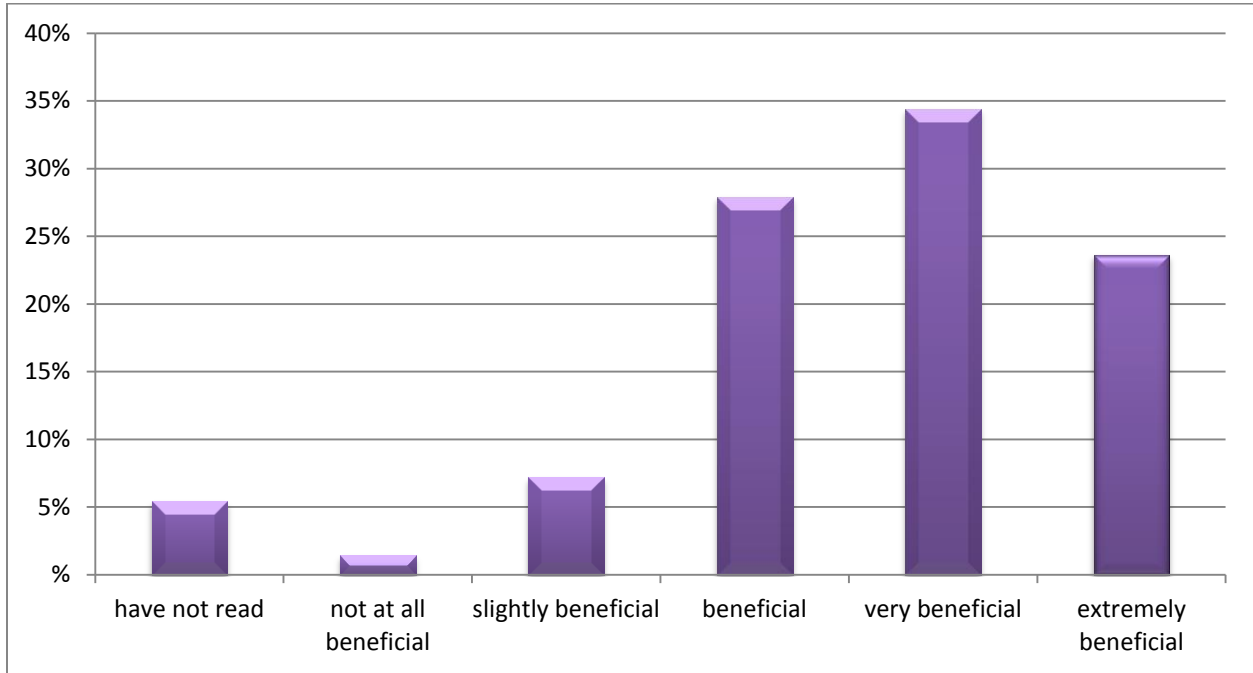
**How much time does your child play with or use Cuzzie the bear?**



	Frequency	Percent
never	6	2.2
rarely	6	2.2
no more or less than other toys	24	8.7
frequently	115	41.6
always	125	45.3
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 87% of participants reported that the child played with Cuzzie the bear frequently or always.

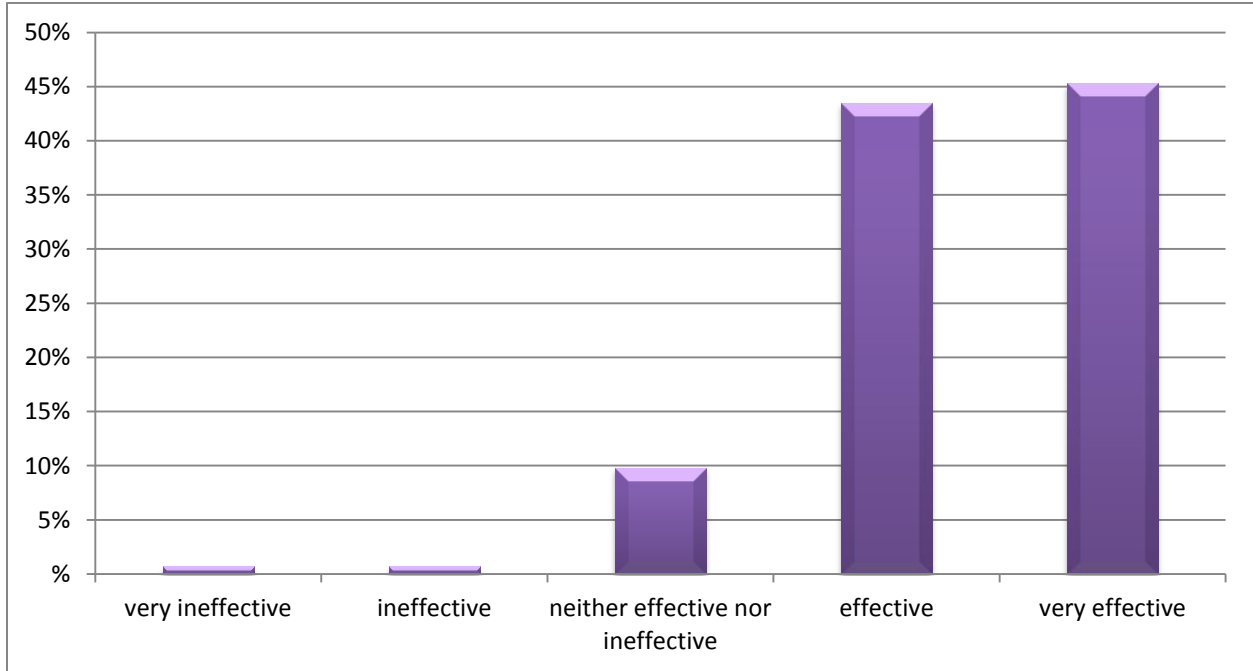
**How helpful have you found the Family Guidebook included in your child’s Deployment Kit to be?**



	Frequency	Percent
I have not read the booklet	15	5.4
not at all beneficial	4	1.4
slightly beneficial	20	7.3
beneficial	77	27.9
very beneficial	95	34.4
extremely beneficial	65	23.6
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 86% of participants reported that the family guidebook was beneficial, very beneficial, or extremely beneficial.

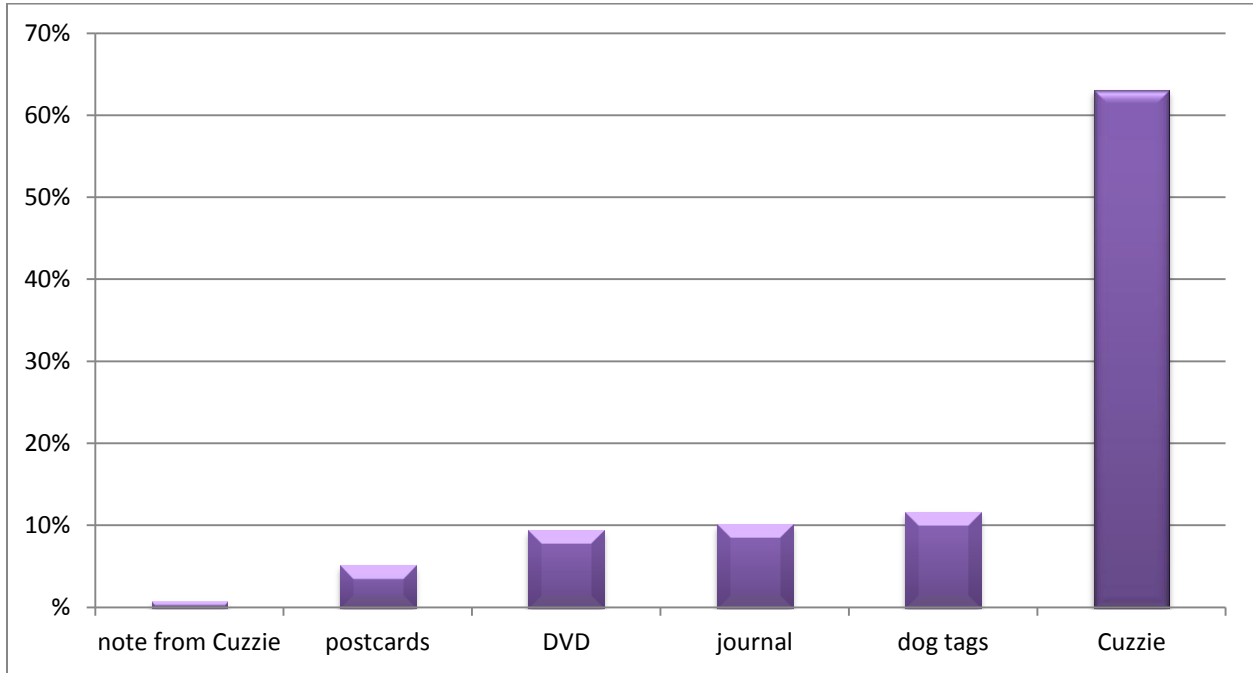
**Compared to other resources, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of the Deployment Kit in helping your child open up and discuss his or her feelings regarding the deployment of his or her loved one?**



	Frequency	Percent
very ineffective	2	0.7
ineffective	2	0.7
neither effective nor ineffective	27	9.8
effective	120	43.5
very effective	125	45.3
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 89% of participants reported that the deployment kit was effective or very effective for helping the child discuss his or her feelings.

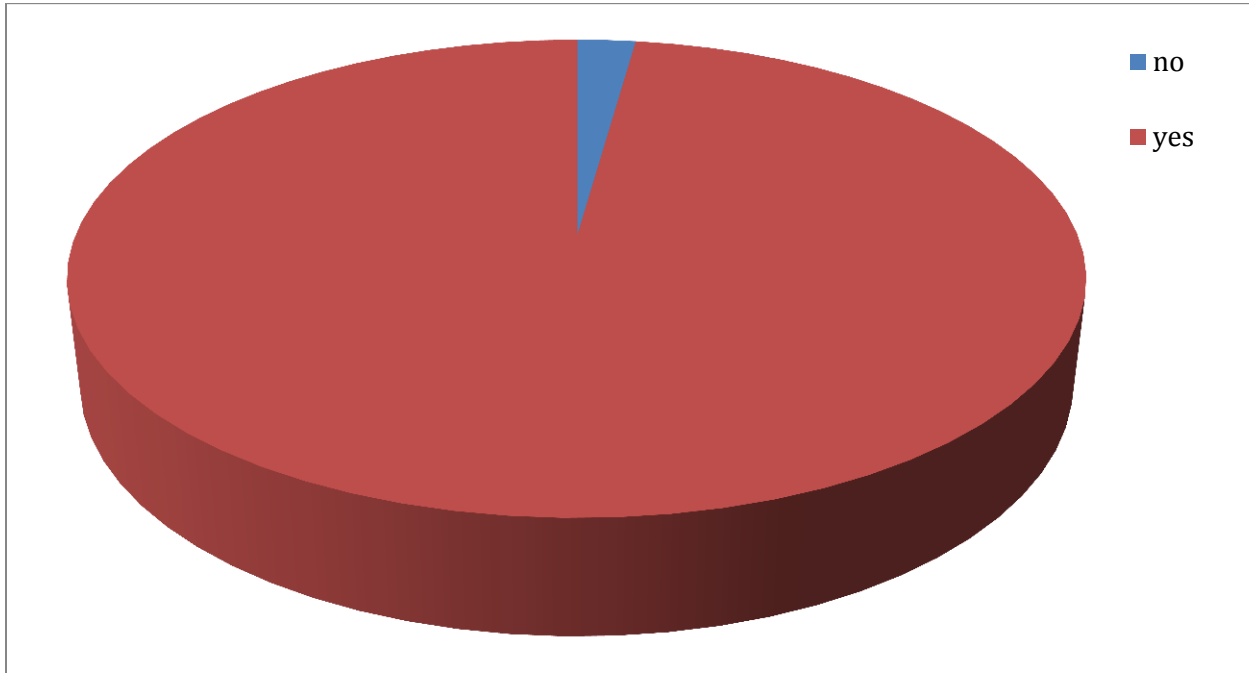
**Which of these strategies from the deployment kit most helped your child cope with deployment?**



	Frequency	Percent
note from Cuzzie	2	0.7
postcards	14	5.1
DVD	26	9.4
journal	28	10.1
dog tags	32	11.6
Cuzzie	174	63.1
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 63% of participants reported that Cuzzie the bear most helped the child cope with deployment.

**Overall, did this resource help your child/family?**



	Frequency	Percent
no	6	2.2
yes	270	97.8
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 98% of participants reported that the deployment kit helped his or her child/family.

***If yes, how did it help your child/family?***

The whole package makes her feel as if she is part of the Army. The box it came in, the dog tags, the bear and his little get up. That fact that even though the ARMY didn't assign a family to the soldier, it has made it an important for us to feel part of Army life.

She is 7 and she loves the bear and dog tags

We are going thru this deployment with my husband and son leaving for nine months. Leaving myself and my 15 year old home to man the house. This is our first deployment and the bear and all the information that was given helps us to know who we need to turn to if we have any questions or concerns.

I believe the kit has helped him understand why his daddy is gone and how to work through his feelings a little bit better and talk to me if he is missing his dad.

Even though our child is very young, she realized that there are other children out there whose parents go away for a long time for work. It made her feel not so alone. Also, she can't write, yet, but she used the journal to draw pictures of how she felt. She used happy and sad faces to tell me how she felt at the moment and then we would discuss why she felt that way. It has been very effective even with her Pre K teacher.

This kit helped our family in every way. This is the first deployment I've had to go through with our kids and this is the first deployment for our kids. They are taking it really hard but the kit has helped more than I can say. Thank you!

when she thinks of him she goes to her bear and sleeps with it

The bear has become a friend he can talk to and cuddle. He also uses his imagination with it.

Gave a lot of information on how to deal with this.

It gives them something to hold and also a way to express their feelings.

It helps mom to help me deal with daddy leaving and being gone

Made them have a positive out of the deployment. Something to look forward to

Gave them a positive thing to take away from saying good bye. Also likes to mail him stuff.

Deployment is very hard on children and parents as well. This kit brightened this up a little and put a smile on our faces. Cuzzie is now known as battle buddy for all the little secrets he receives and all the comfort he gives. You have no idea little things like these makes a huge difference. It gives us hope!

just to have the additional resource was helpful because as she is getting older, the deployments are getting harder on her

It made him feel special to receive a gift like that. It's hard to deal with having his dad gone. So getting the gift made him feel like he got a bravery award. He really liked the bear and accessories.

My kids love to send the dog tags to their dad. He has quite a collection now and cherishes the set. Cuzzie bear usually only lasts one deployment, I'm glad we get one each time he leaves....my daughter is attached to it while he is gone.

Helping them communicate feelings

My daughter loved the bear and sleeps with it at nights at times. It reminds her that someone was nice to help her during this difficult time in our lives.

It explained and helped the child to understand deployment.

comfort

it's something just between the child and the person deploying -- makes them feel a more positive connection.

Anything to help with coping with the separation and feelings that accompany it are gladly welcomed. With my oldest child (now 19) having been through seven deployments we've learned that what works for one deployment may not work for the next and what works for one child may not work for the other. Having new resources to draw from help both myself, the caregiver, and my children. We greatly appreciate the resources you've made available to our family.

It gives some good information how to deal with the deployment situation and advises what to do especially when it's the first deployment.

Since I will be going out for deployment, my mother in-law is there for my girls, and the bear give my eldest comfort.

It gives her something to hang onto that her Uncle gave her and to remember he loves and misses her.

Made the separation easier

Provides information about how to understand deployment better. She LOVED the bear.

She has been talking to me a bit more about this deployment. She didn't the past ones. She likes the mouse she has received in her kit.

This kit was shared with his elementary aged siblings (aged 6, 7, and 10) which the kit seemed geared more appropriately towards. They have enjoyed the video numerous times in the past few weeks, and have been able to sit down and express their feelings more clearly after watching and practicing. It was great for them to hear the things we as a family have been promoting from another trusted source. For the 12 year old who received the kit, much of the information was reiteration of things we have been talking about and practicing for most all his life.

more talkative with her parents, she opened up more the lines of communication.

My son absolutely loves getting this box! He loves the bear and cannot wait to use the journal. Thank you for everything you do!!

It showed my family that we are not alone in this deployment. My kids now have a better understanding of what it will be like for the months to come and that they are not alone in their feelings. I have a wide range of kids and they all have enjoyed the deployment kits! The older ones really like being able to send a postcard whenever they feel like it whereas the younger ones enjoy drawing a picture on the cards to mail. The caregiver booklet is a great resource for me and I have enjoyed connecting with other parents in my similar situation.

It gave my child the bear to dress up and love on when she is missing me.

She is very worried about her uncle and she states the bear is her uncle



Our FRO gave us the kit, my son was sleeping so when he woke up we told him daddy gave it to him. He LOVES Mrs. Teddy Bear (that's what he calls him) and he is very proud of his dog tag. Thank you so much for this incredible idea.

it gave him a way to be able to express himself in the journals and someone to snuggle with.

They both talk more about the deployment and their dad and how they feel after using the journal

It helped my son see that others care about his family and the sacrifices he makes when his dad is gone.

It helped my son know that our family wasn't alone in having a deployed parent. We do not live near a military base so my kids don't know any other children with a deployed parent.

It's helped us talk about how the deployment affects us as a family.

The kit was so nice! What a fantastic program! My daughter is doing well with the deployment so far but she has her days of really missing her Daddy. It's nice to have the journal, bear, and DVD to get her through the rough spots.

It gave my kids something positive to share with their dad during this deployment. Postcards were great!! My son is only 6 months but he loves his bear. And I love the kit. I think it will come in handy in the future.

Cuzzie (she named him Flyer) sleeps with her every single night, he eats meals with her goes to the doctor with her ... pretty much goes everywhere with her besides the bath tub (he sits and waits for her to be done).

I told my daughters that the bear was sent on behalf of their dad. My 7 year old has been using the postcards to write to her dad and my 4 year has started practicing how to write her name so she can also send dad postcards.

She slept with the bear beside her every night till her Dad came home.

My three yr old has a short attention span but appreciated the bear and dvd. I appreciated reading the materials in the kit that told me what to possibly expect during deployment.

It helped my son with being honest about how he is feeling.

Having a place to write his feelings down, and postcards to send to Dad, made him feel more connected.

Our service member has been away for one year of his two year deployment. My child received his package at the perfect time and it encouraged him to look ahead and stay strong for the next year. Plus, it was exciting for him to share Cuzzie with his dad on Skype

My oldest expresses herself best with pictures and writing so she really liked the journal. My youngest isn't able to read or write yet so she used the postcards to draw pictures to her dad.

She felt very important and connected to him with the dog tags and loves her "flying bear"

The DVD is engaging and relevant.

He had something to cuddle "that Dad had sent to him." He drew in the journal, he loved the box it came in, he collects all of his postcards and letters from Dad in it. He carries it around like a suitcase filled with treasures.

First of all, it made my child along with the other 109 feel special, and at a time like this, they need that! Cuzzie the bear was a hit!

Helped my daughter to understand she isn't alone and other parents deploy. She loved the dog tags and it helps her feel closer to her dad even though he is so far away. She sleeps with Cuzzie the bear every night since she has gotten him. We love the journal and it helps us talk about what is going on and not just ignore the fact that he is gone. It helps us share what is happening from day to day with each other and her daddy.

It made him understand more about daddy's job and he is away so much.

It helps that my son has something he can hold while his father is deployed.

It provided them with something they were able to interact with, and they enjoyed the video after they dressed the bear

I actually got a bear for my 8 month and 2 year old They seemed to enjoy it.

My children were thrilled to get the items in the kit. My daughter loves the journal and post cards and my son thought the bear was awesome.

the resources have made him better understand the process and made him know that daddy is away but misses him very much. it has given us the tools to deal with the everyday life and stress it can have on the family.

knowing where his papa is located by using the map and seeing his picture in his journal . loves the dvd also. makes him/ us better understand the daily issues of loved one not being here.

My son wears his dog tags almost everyday (and so does his father). He sleeps with Cuzzie and has watched the video several times. I can see he is watching it each time to answer questions he has. We have worked in the journal almost every week and we truly appreciate the help especially with my son's first deployment.

My children are still young and they love the bears. They both like to take them along, and make sure they have them at night. We couldn't afford daddy dolls, so on their dog tags we taped a picture of their dad and they put their tags on their bears.

He has been sending the postcards in the care packages we send to his dad. It helps him to add his own message. We also were able to talk about how much he misses his dad after he watched the video. He loves the bear, he sleeps with it almost every night.

My son loves the bear. He is only 2 so he did not receive the other items. The bear goes everywhere. Every night before bed we have to go find the bear. He could not care less about the daddy doll we bought, but he is constantly holding and hugging the bear.

Daughter loves to sleep with soft bear.

It gave him a better overview of what a deployment is and that his family is not alone in it. It helped him understand that communication, while not always available w/his dad, is still there in form of writing, and when the verbal communication is available, it helped him see how beneficial an open convo is for both him and his dad.

She loved getting the bear and was so excited to share it with her dad. It made her feel closer to him and less sad

It helped my daughter feel special and know other kids go through the same thing. She enjoys playing with Cuzzie and has given her daddy one of the dog tags and many post cards

My 4.5 year old loves Cuzzie and sleeps with him every night. Both girls love to wear the dog tags. The youngest has watched the DVD almost every day since my spouse has deployed. She watches with Cuzzie and wears her dog tags. She walks around singing the "with you all the way" song.

My children snuggle their bears all the time. They are their "marine" bears. We loved the DVD. It explained things very well. It definitely helped them to understand what was happening a bit more. Thank you so much for sending it!

I think the DVD was comforting because he is learning that he doesn't go through it alone.

It gave him a special way to communicate with his dad

both my boys wear the dog tags. it helps them feel closer to their dad.

It made it so much easier to talk to my kids about leaving work all the stuff and the video!

Both of my children loved Cuzzie bear, but my older son LOVED the journal.

My kids watched the video on a daily basis. It opened a dialogue for us to comfortably talk about deployment. The bears are their favorite stuffed animal. Best resource I've ever received.

It gave us something solid to talk about. Sometimes you don't really know what to say to your child about everything that is going on. The journal topics were great talking points for me to use when talking to my daughter about it.

Watching the DVD showed that my sons are not alone, they can talk about problems and help each other to go through this together.

Before receiving this resource my son never really talked about missing my husband. Now he is opening up a little more and asking more questions. He does use the journal, to write letters to my husband. He's 4 so the prompts aren't really appropriate. We received a second bear for my daughter (2yrs), both love the Bears and play with them often. The guide also have given me some insight on what to expect when dealing with the uncertainty and emotions that my children are having. Thank you for supplying these to the families in our unit!

Let her realize that what she was feeling was normal.

Cuzzie bear is her new partner. I think it is helping to somehow fill or make her remember her dad while the bear is with her. She is proud to show her dog tags to everyone, she took them to school and when daddy calls she shows him the dog tags.

We received Cuzzie the bear or Patches as he has been named in our house when my husband deployed when our daughters were 1 and 3. My youngest does not let Patches out of her sight. He goes everywhere she goes. My older daughter also sleeps with her patches. Patches was getting a little rough around the edges (I even had to hot glue his nose back on in September), so I thought it would be nice to order a new deployment kit for this current deployment. My older daughter 5, loves her new Patches (and now snuggles up with two of them at bed time), but the young one only wants her old tattered Patches. He has been sewn and hot glued and his nose is even chipped. But just like her Daddy she knows a good thing when she has found it. There is no replacing Daddy and there is no replacing Patches. So thanks for sending us Cuzzie or Patches as we have lovingly come to know him. He has made a huge impact and become a great source of comfort for our girls!

My child likes to wear the dog tags to remind him of/feel close to his dad.

It was comforting.

Helps her express her feelings

My child is only 1, and she has been carrying around the bear looking for her "dada". She recognizes the dog tags that her daddy wears and she has been wearing them around her neck. I think it is comforting my daughter.

Every time my son misses his brother, he cuddles with Cuzzie the bear.

Thank you SO much for all that you have done for our family.

The bear brought comfort. I think it made him feel like he was given a little piece of his dad back

With communication

Help my child ask more questions

It is a great kit that assists children in understanding what is going on and to relate to the deployed parent.

The Comfort Crew box was such a wonderful help for our family. It helped me to understand how best to discuss the deployment with our daughter and she has been clinging to the bear since it arrived in the mail. Honestly, everything in the box was useful, and I can't thank you enough. The journal would be a little more useful for someone older than 6, but we have still found a way to use it for us (helping with discussion topics).

I have only had it a few days, but we have been discussing how I will be gone for a while.

When she is missing daddy she likes to cuddle Cuzzie.

She loved Cuzzie and when she gets older I will show her the journal and DVD

The Cuzzie bear, dog tags, and journal were the most beneficial to our family! The journal section where the kids could fill out information about their dad's deployment was helpful! The dog tags were special because they signed their name to the back of them and wear them and keep them close to their hearts! The bear is just so cute - the kids loved them and the fact that you could dress him up!

It has helped our family by making our kids more comfortable with the situation and it has made it much easier to discuss the deployment and their feelings about it.

The bear, accessories, and dog tags gave something visual and tactile that my son could hold on to when remembering my husband.

Cuzzie is looking after my son while my husband is away.

Child care and alot of other information.

I think because this is her first deployment she doesn't understand the length of time daddy will be gone, so by having the bear it's a reminder of him and she can hold on to it and cuddle. Once she feels the loss as time goes on I will implement the other items to help her understand what's going on and why so long. For now it's baby steps. It tears me up inside that she doesn't realize what is really going on but it's better for her this way.

My 5 year old daughter received a kit. She bonded with Cuzzie Bear and takes him everywhere. My son found the dog tags to be very special and was proud to wear them. My husband was already gone when we learned of the kit so the kids couldn't exchange dog tags. We also can't mail the post cards to him at his location.

My child loves Patches the bear. At least once a day she will crawl to him and play briefly with it. While she is too young for the journal or much of the other information in the kit I have felt that I have benefited from it.

She loves the journal and brings it with her everywhere.

He felt that the bear was from his dad and slept with it every night. It really meant something to him

My children have really been missing their dad through this deployment. They can look at the stuff from the Comfort Crew and know that their dad is thinking about them and misses them too. The Family Guidebook was helpful to me. And my older son found the journal especially helpful when he didn't want to talk to me.

It let her know she was not the only one going through this. We don't live on a base, and she often feels alone because no one at school understands what she is going through.

To know that there are others who support the whole family.

They carry the bear everywhere.

It helps my daughter understand she was not the only one going through this, she loves her Cuzzie bear it goes with us everywhere. From therapy to therapy, it definitely helps with the transitions throughout the day, also when she thinks of her dad or gets blue, she has Cuzzie to cheer her up.

My son loves the bear very much. All the other resources were very helpful too, but he's a bit young to appreciate the value of them right now. We will hold onto them for him to use at a later time.

My son's bear is experiencing the same emotional difficulties as my son. He is able to express himself through the bear.

It helps open the conversation about the deployment

It allowed my daughter and I to connect and grow closer while we set up the journal and took and added the pictures.

It made him feel special and thought about.

Provides our daughter comfort and opens up communication between all of us when before our daughter didn't want to talk about her daddy being away.

she understood and learning how to count how many more days till he returns.

My son finds comfort in the Cuzzy when he misses his father.

Our daughter brings her bear with her everywhere. He eats with her at school and sleeps with her at night. It is very comforting.

It's helped our girls and boys cope with deployment and understanding that this is part of dad's job

It made my child feel a part of something special and loved being able to share it with us.

It helped her realize other kids have gone through this and to not bottle up her feelings.

Just giving my child an overall sense of comfort and knowledge that he's not alone in this deployment and that he's not the first kid to feel what he feels.

Great program. My wife said our boys carry their bears with them at all times

The Journal has been a huge help in helping my 8yr communicate without having to talk. It is a safe place to put feelings and reminds him to stay positive.

It helped explain how to cope with deployment very well and give them something to bond with.

Gave her something special that made the time go faster

Such a wonderful tool to help explain deployment at their level. Has helped them understand and express their feelings.

When our daughter received the box in the mail, before she opened it I told her it was something special just for her because her daddy is deployed. I am a bit behind but we will send pics to share her pure joy of receiving the box. She has taken Cuzzie with her to her dentist appointment, a birthday party, church, bedtime, storytime ... it has been a huge comfort to her. We are spreading out the postcards but she has also enjoyed sending daddy a postcard each month. And my husband can see how much her handwriting is improving throughout the year as well. The video was probably a tie with Cuzzie because it clicked for her that she wasn't alone and that other kids' soldiers are gone as well. She's asked to watch it several times. She didn't send her daddy the dog tag but she wears one and Cuzzie wears one...it's their thing. The notebook we have her drawing pictures of how she feels and I told her we'd save it when she's finished so daddy can see it when he comes home...so it's kind of like a journal she keeps for daddy to read later when he returns. For a fresh four year old that PCS'd and a few weeks later her daddy deployed, it has helped her to understand why he had to leave.

My daughter has really enjoyed Cuzzie. She snuggles with him every night and talks to her deployed dad about Cuzzie.



The kids enjoyed the DVD and the association to Cuzzie. My son also uses the journal and has used several of the postcards to send to his dad.

The use of the dog tags allows a little of me with a little of her.

The journal has helped our daughter express her feelings. We have not gotten to use the postcards yet because her dad has not been where he could receive and send mail. We hope to utilize these on the next rotation in 2016.

My responses are based on the positive feedback I've received at the USO center from families who have received the kits.

My three kids all sleep with Cuzzie. They watch the dvd at least once a week. They also love writing in their journals. Now they are more open to talk to me about how they are feeling. We sent their dog tags to their daddy and they were very happy to have those to send to daddy.

Our USO location offers the Comfort Kits for deployments, it is always very well received

Discussing their feelings in the movie helped them associate that their behavior was because they were sad and missing their dad.

I am not a parent of a deployed child, but I work for the USO. We promote this program at every community outreach event and deployment briefing. These kits are extremely popular and I receive several requests monthly.

Makes them feel they are not alone.

Helps her when she brings up deployment or missing daddy.

The video helped my children to see that their dad is not the only hero in the family and that they sacrifice as much as he does. They were showed that it is okay to have the feelings that they are experiencing and to feel free to share them. The bear is a huge source of comfort for them, they sleep with it and even took it along with them on our vacation for the holidays.

My kid felt more at ease about the deployment and she became less stressed. She was happy to view and use all the materials. Being able to wear the tags and send them to her dad made her light up so much. Not only was a he happy to share them with her dad, but he was happy to get them from her. She started using the catch phrase "with you all the way" a lot.

She loved the bear, calls it her daddy bear

Made them feel like someone cared that they were having to go through not having their dad home with them

They loved the bear, but as it got mixed into the toys, they played with it equally with other toys.

They enjoy all the gifts that came in the comfort box. When they hug the bear I think they feel like dad is close. They liked looking at the map to see where we are located compared to where daddy is.

It helped me have a child friendly way to have conversations.

Carter gave the other dog tag to his best friend. They used it as a promise to be there for each other while his daddy is gone.

I [uncle] am trying to answer the questions best I can. She is too young to write at the moment but adores Cuzzie. I can't thank you enough.

This was the first deployment we have gone through. I think it was very helpful for both myself and my daughter. It helped us start a conversation to help both of us deal with the emotions we were feeling. The postcards were great. She was so excited to send them to her father.

Gaining knowledge about what a deployment is. How she can help while he is away.

My son loved everything in the box ... already filled out all the postcards and sleeps with his bear every night ... the DVD is in his DVD player and he watches it whenever he feels ... he's autistic and any little thing that helps him understand anything better is an awesome tool to have ... thank you so so so much!!!!!!

With the DVD, they saw other kids had the same feelings they had. It showed they weren't alone and weren't the only kids who felt anger, sadness, and confusion. The ending with the military kids at schools was the most beneficial because it was real kids as opposed to a cartoon.

She's on the younger side, so the journal was a little above her. However, she uses Cuzzie daily! And she loved that Cuzzie was in the DVD and she could hold him at the same time. Seeing real kids at the end of the DVD share their feeling helped greatly to show that she's not alone and other kids have the same feelings of anger, sadness, and confusion.

Just knowing there is available support

My child had something that was unique and special for her as a means to connect with her dad

It helped encourage conversations about feelings and dealing with daddy being away.

My son likes to cuddle with his "special bear" and shows it off to his daddy when we are able to Skype.

It let my son talk to other people about dad being on deployment, without getting upset, he had a friend to hold onto when we was sad, and lots of good positive prompts to focus on. He shared his dog tags with a retired Service member that he met at the holiday party.

Every little thing that helps my daughters cope with the deployment is a blessing.

The journal has helped the children explore and articulate their feelings about deployment and missing their father better than I could have hoped.

Opened up ways to start conversations about deployment and feelings.

My son can write to his daddy now and wants to talk to him more.

She opens up more about wanting to communicate with her daddy

It helped us explain the leaving to our son. And the different items in the kit helped him feel like he was connected to his Dad.

It's like a piece of their dad is with them with the dog tags and the bear. My little girl likes to dress up and it reminds her of her daddy. She likes the map of the world in her journal as well but I help her with the journal. My son no longer feels alone, it made him feel more included.

Comforted her

It opened up dialogue between all of us. It also gave her an avenue to express her feelings.

It keeps everyone talking about the deployment and the thoughts/feelings associated with it.

It gave him something to hug while his Dad is away.

It showed other kids that are going through similar situations and feelings. It also gave them something tangible to hold on to/do.

Comfort

My daughter has shown an interest in the deployment. Asking questions about her dad and what she feels while he us away. She takes her Cuzzie bear everywhere she goes.

My child was really sad about his father having to leave for 6 months. he didn't fully understand why and that was hard for him. with the dvd it explained in words that he could understand why his daddy had to be where he is for a little while and with the comfort bear he finds it sentimental he loves to always sleep with it and have it with or near him it's a comforting toy to him. We greatly appreciate everything the comfort crew has done for our family. It has had a tremendous impact in our son's life in better understanding deployments and we are grateful for everything your company has done for us thank you all so much and God bless!!



They love Cuzzie ... it is a cozy reminder that they are not alone. The extra dog tags are on Cuzzie

It sparked conversations about the job, travel, and how she was going to cope with my absence.

He loves to sleep with his bear, because it is related to his father. He does enjoy drawing in his journal.

My daughter uses the journal map to show family and friends where her dad is located. She likes to send postcards to her dad. She likes to dress up the bear too. I am very appreciative of the whole kit. Thank you!!!

Helped them talk more openly without being overwhelmed with sadness

She is having trouble talking about the deployment. This is our 3rd one. I think the bear gives her comfort. She loves it!!

Being able to present the entire footlocker to our son before deployment was special. It was from Daddy. They were able to talk about the different things inside together and how they could stay connected.

***What other resources do you feel would be appropriate to include in the Deployment Kit?***

It would have been nice if they had provided a journal for the parent who is at home taking care of the home front.

Maybe providing something for the parent who is at home.

I can't think of anything else at this time

For kids: I think a key chain where they can put a picture of the service member and then attach it to their back pack. For caregivers: Provide a blog where caregivers can go to openly discuss how they use their kit as well as other things they do to cope with deployments. I know I love to hear other's ideas!

I think everything in there is great. Maybe having the journal also have a section in it for little ones to color pics or something.

nothing you have it all

It's awesome already!!!

Na

I like all the ones included, I'm not sure what could be added.

A small picture frame

Maybe a countdown calendar instead of a journal

count down deployment calendar. they are really nice. me and my kids made one and it's nice to see how far we've come so far

Maybe a photo album to include things they are doing during the day or week, something that shows how they pass they time.

letter writing material ... the postcards are just not enough ... my kids let their dad know everything

A countdown

I think the resources that are currently offered in the kit were most helpful.

it is fine the way it is

It's new to me so I don't really know other resources yet

The overall Kit is very helpful for children during this time of separation.

Camera to share what has been going on since the service member deployed

Photo frame

If I could add anything to the deployment kit it would be a pen/pencil, stamps for the postcards, and a world map.

I feel it needs more things to help teens as well. My child is now 15 and every deployment goes into a shell. I know she can hold the bear and watch a video, but that is more of a help to younger kids and people need to realize teens struggle too with deployments.

maybe a secure soldier blanket (blanket)

I like the journal but it is too much for my son of 4yrs. I would have liked it better if it wasn't too "complicated" for him BUT I am keeping it for future use...

a map that way we can show them where there loved one is.

Something to put a photo of Dad in that my son could carry around with him.

I'm not sure for his age.

Maybe make a separate box for pre-teen/teen aged children that have age related coping methods.

Backpack to carry the "essentials" with them if they are missing a parent

A t-shirt or wristband, kids like those.

Resources such as support groups in surrounding areas

A blanket.

Something to put pictures in.

A photo frame

Maybe a cardboard keepsake box for the child to keep items in to show the deployed parent when he/she comes home.

More Trevor Romaine resources.

For smaller kids instead of the journal a picture book with places to insert pics of the service member.

If the bear could be modified for different branches of service.

I think you did an amazing job with this kit and loved every aspect of it. I feel very grateful this is available to us. Thank you so much!

Bedtime story book.

none

Bracelets . Photo albums.

A small world map.

Perhaps a world map to locate where we are and where daddy is?

I think it would be neat to have some kind of game, or countdown to parent coming home, an activity to do daily or something!

Maybe some resources for smaller kids like a board book or a recordable story book.

Books, coloring books on deployment

A coloring book would be nice with photos of plans, ships, and service members doing their jobs.

Branch specific postcards would be great.

An iPad. 😊 Honestly feel that the deployment kit is full of awesome resources that are very beneficial!

Military picture frame or counting calendar

A book!

A picture frame? Really it was perfect.

I can't think of anything at this time, because everything has been wonderful and helped both my daughter and I adjust to this new situation. It's only been 6 weeks since my husband left but it's been much better since the arrival of the package.

Maybe different uniforms... it would just be a nice touch.

Maybe a book about deployment following the dvd.

None that I can think of

I think the personal stories from other kids that have gone through deployments are very helpful! I think adding more of those and more ideas of how to cope (for kids and family left behind) to the kit would be super beneficial!

Maybe a craft kit to make a picture frame to send to the deployed parent so kids can send a picture to them, whether it be a drawing or an actual picture.

none

-discount tickets for places to go on weekends to stay busy

-crafts to make for our soldiers and send to them. Some people are just not crafty and if there are some simple items put in there to do with children then it would be so helpful.

-picture frame

I think a children's book would be great!

I think you guys are doing an awesome job.

I think is perfect the way it is, you may have to change some things may be in the future for children with different abilities. I am lucky my daughter is high functioning in the Autism Spectrum, so I guess it all depends on the child's abilities.

I can't think of anything.

None

don't know

Things for younger kids who are going through it, too.

More military branch specific items.

I think what you have included is wonderful.

Perhaps a book for a toddler as well

Making sure all kids receive the same thing. My one daughter didn't have a hat for her Cuzzy or dog tags and it caused a fight about them.

N/A

Nothing that I can think of

I thought the kit was great and it fixed what we were struggling with in helping her to understand everything better for her age. We could tell her all day long why but the video and Cuzzie just made it click.

I really think the kit has been great. I believe our entire family got a big emotional boost when it arrived on our doorstep. It made us feel cared for, and that we weren't alone.

Photo frame

A keychain with service member's branch seal and the child(ren) can put their housekey on it.

The kit is wonderful as is, but I would love to see something like a siblings guide. Military children can relate to other military children especially their siblings. I think a guide to facilitate conversations and support among siblings would be greatly beneficial.

Two small photo albums that the children and their deployed loved one can add photos to and they can give to each other the next time the service man or woman deploys.

The kit was wonderful as is. The journal made her feel comfortable about expressing her feelings more.

I think the boxes need to be age appropriate. My daughter being 5 had no use for the journal or the postcards except to draw and color on them.

coloring book or maybe a picture frame.

Not sure

T shirt.

Everything you offer is great although maybe a spot on the bear for a picture of child with soldier to slide in would be awesome!!!!

a picture of the deployed service member in uniform, or a recording of their voice.

notes/books from other kids who have "survived" a deployment

Coloring book and crayons. A story book.

For an 8 year old I feel this kit is very appropriate maybe add a special pen or pencil to go along with the journal coloring books

I think a book about deployment. The DVD is tough to watch at times with a busy schedule:) but a bedtime book may help with rough nights:)

Comfort blankets

Maybe something that is kid friendly on OPSEC. All too often parents tell their kids (or they overhear) information that isn't for their ears. If there is a video/pamphlet on OPSEC as it relates to kids telling "secrets" on Daddy's whereabouts or any other personal information that would be awesome!

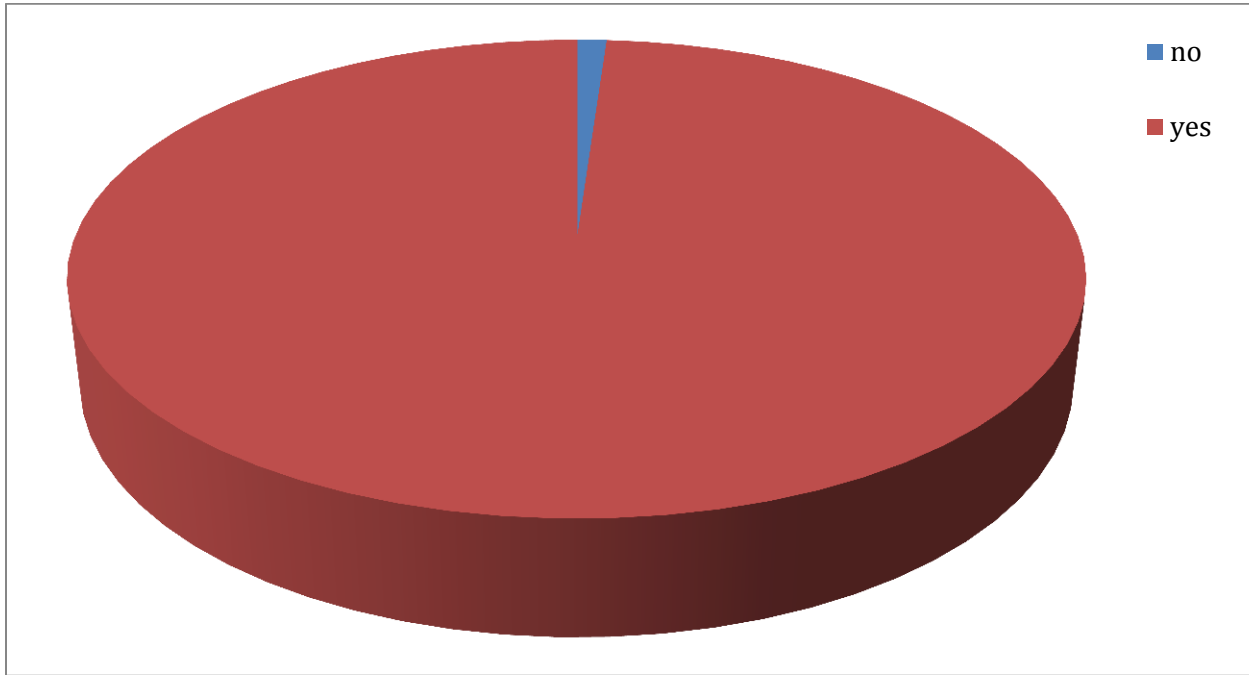
I think the kit is wonderful as is. However I do have a younger child who would benefit from a similar kit. Perhaps one that offers younger children comfort while there dad is gone. A picture frame or something g like that would also benefit the children.

Blanket, pictures.

More information on how to handle behavior difficulties as a result of a parent being gone.

Not sure

**Would you recommend The Comfort Crew to a friend or family member?**



	Frequency	Percent
no	3	1.1
yes	273	98.9
Total	276	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 99% of participants would recommend The Comfort Crew to a friend or family member.

***Do you have any other comments to leave for The Comfort Crew?***

Provide something for the parent who is at home taking care of the home front. Like a journal or a pin or a magnet stating how proud he or she is of their soldier!!

Thank you so much for making this resource available to military families, it has been a blessing in ours.

Maybe you could provide a DVD that's more appropriate for younger children that is a little more simple to understand.

Great job!!!

you are doing a good job

No thank you.

what are some ways to help make sure an infant will remember their parent?

Y'all are amazing and put a smile on our face!

Thank you for putting the packages together for our kids. It is a blessing to see my kid being loved on by teachers and people from our community.

Thank you ... my kids are older and most other items we receive are for younger kids and this one serves them the best.

I feel as though the Deployment Kit was very beneficial for children. Thank you for providing these resources!

it helped alot

Many thanks from our family to the Comfort Crew!

My daughter was very pleased with the Comfort Crew Kit, give her a piece of mind that I will be there during this deployment, but they understand that this part of my service to keep America safe.

This is an excellent resource, and as an FRG Leader for a company of deployed soldiers, I wish I could have had access to this resource last year. When I contacted our ACS they were unaware of this program ... please, please, please get this resource out to the ACS channels!! I have passed out all the cards I picked up at Camp Corral, so I know I have armed my fellow spouses and FRG Leaders, but I know there are many out there who could benefit from this excellent resource!!

My parents would like to donate to this cause. How would they go about doing so?

This is an amazing organization and I am so thankful for the help and support of people like you! Just knowing that there is someone out there who cares about how my kids feel makes my heart a little lighter. Thank you SOOO much for all you have done for my family and for all you have/will do for others!

Please make it more teen friendly and more positive and not so sad.

Thank you to the staff for the kit and the other resources that are more targeted for her age!

You guys are very great and were all so thankful=)



I am not sure if it is a good idea but what if you include a tiny Cuzzie the bear for the deployed service member so he can take him with him, take pictures and send those pictures to the kids?

Thank you for your support!

Thank you for all U do!

Thank you for your support to military families. You are making a difference.

Thank you so much! She would be lost without that bear

Thank you for all your support it means so much to know that we are supported

You are doing a great job with your program. I think more advertisement is needed to make more people aware of it. We are all members of the American Legion Auxiliary, she is a Junior member since birth and is very involved with this organization. Do you have brochures or handouts that can be passed out when we come in contact with families that are going through deployments? If so if you could send some out to us we would be glad to pass them on.

Keep up the good work.

It would be great if you could make a resource geared towards younger children.

I wish I could have gotten a bear for my four year old he loves his brothers and he also liked the video. They ask to watch it a lot.

Thanks so much for all the effort you put into making military kids feel loved and encouraged!

Thank you, your thoughtfulness really made our day. Also, the little suitcase box the kit came in was just as big a hit! She would pack it for pretend trips to go see daddy.

If you would like photos of my children with Cuzzie and the dog tags please let me know and I can send them to you.

Thank you!

thank you for providing this for our family

You are a great organization. I am going to tell my friends about you.

Thank you so much for all you do! This kit was awesome and brightened our day when we got it!

the box has been such a great help and the resources it means so much to the family that's affected during this time.

this box has been such a value to our family, helping us get through this tough time.

this box has been a blessing to our family and the kids absolutely love all the materials that's in them. it so helps them through this hard time. thank you so much comfort crew for providing these things to our family :)

I think you guys nailed it pretty well with the package you have. He even loves the box and uses it often at home.

Thank you so much for doing this. It made my kids' week to get a care package just for them.

My son loves his bear. He usually is not attached to stuffed animals, but for whatever reason this bear is different. He hugged it as soon as we took it out of the box. We have taken it everywhere. Thank you for taking care of military kids.

This is an amazing service and I'm so thankful to those who donate to it.

Just a big thank you!

I think you are doing a great job and it wonderful what you do for family like ours!

Thank you

You guys are amazing! Thank you!

Thank you!!

Thank you for providing a large number for a deployment event hosted by our frg. They were very appreciated and well received.

Thank you again for providing our families with this awesome resource! Nothing makes being away from your soldier fun, but this makes it a little less scary for children!

Thank you so much!

God bless all of you that help our kids through this new normal, there are no words to express my girl's face when she saw the package. She still carries her military scarf in her backpack to school. Just thank you from the bottom of my heart!

We love Cuzzie or Patches as we have named him in our house.

You guys are awesome! Thank you for being so giving!

Thank you so much for all the people involved in making this program! It has helped my 2 boys tremendously! God bless.

I would love to do a blog review on your program!!

Thank you for all the thought put into this great resource.

I am sure my daughter will use the journal frequently. She loves writing!

We have not deployed yet but this kit will be amazing in teaching our child where the parent has gone and how to keep in contact.

We are eternally grateful! Thank you!

Thank you very much. It has started the conversation with my son and I ....

Thank you! My daughter was so excited to get mail and her excitement about this package encouraged her to mail her daddy letters and packages hoping he would be excited about them just like she was.

Thank you so much - keep up the great work!!!

Thank you so much for everything you all do. It has made a tremendous impact on our children in many different ways and it has helped to show them that there are amazing people in this world who care for military families and truly understand what they are going through. Thank you!

THANK YOU so much!!!

Thank you! My son loves Cuzzie. Thank you for the quick delivery.

Job well done!! Thank you for doing what you do!!

Thank you!!

Perhaps raise the age of receiving additional information besides the bear to 4 or 5. She doesn't understand at 2 where her parents are besides at "work". She does ask and talk about them on a daily basis, however, and we talk about them, but that is as deep as she understands.

Thank you so much! This kit made my children feel special and closer to their Dad. It gave me an opening to explain to them how proud we are of them for being strong while he's away. We all talk about feeling sad sometimes and that being ok.

I believe that it is a great program and know that it has helped many families and their deployed family members.

Thank you for doing this for us ... it's extremely hard but knowing someone cares, it really helps!

Thank you!

THANK YOU. YOU ARE ALL AMAZING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

God bless and Thank you for what you do!

I want to take the time to thank you guys. It has been a life saver, I will be sharing Cuzzie's journey with us, through Facebook, you will definitely will get a kick out of it, he did a lot this summer.

It would be nice if something was available for the older kids. A journal and small stuffed animal/beanie baby would be good. We have two teenagers and honestly the deployment is much, much harder on them. They have had to pick up a lot of extra work around the house and it takes a bigger emotional toll on them, in our experience. Thank you for the kit for our younger kids. Your program is amazing!

The kit is a great idea! It helps explain things in a way the child understands.

My child is too young for the journal, otherwise he would probably use it.

This was a very nice treat. My kids don't understand time frames and my husband got hit with a deployment a few days after he returned home from a month long tdy. It's so easy for people to prepare the service member but it's a lot harder to prepare the kids. It's so hard as a parent to watch your child constantly ask for daddy when he still won't be home for months. Getting special things in the mail makes them feel remembered too. They love the dog tags and wear them proudly. It would just be nice if kids under school age could be included too. My 2 year old and 4 year old were crushed they couldn't get a bear.

Thank you for everything!

thank you!!

Thank you for working with me to get them to two separate addresses!

Thank you for what you do for our military families!

Really is a great program, thank you.

thank you for all your hard work and effort in helping military families like mine.

So thankful for this

Words cannot convey the gratitude I feel in my heart but I'm writing with tears of great appreciation, THANK YOU!!!

I also let my 3 year old watch the DVD with her brother, but I felt it was definitely too old for her. I think including content for some younger kids would be helpful too.

Maybe make the dog tags service specific with the seal on the tag with the "With You All The Way" message. I know this is for the children, but maybe a little something for the spouse who is "holding down the fort" and being both parents at the same time for the child(ren) involved. I don't know what I would do without my husband's support and knowing he is doing a huge chunk of my normal job that I do when I am home.

I would really appreciate seeing Cuzzie available for younger children too. While the younger kids cannot journal, they struggle through deployment too. My younger two felt left out when they did not receive bears. They miss their daddy too and this visible cuddly reminder would help them too as they adjust to the separation and deal with their feelings.

Keep up the amazing work!!

Great job, I really enjoyed meeting The Comfort Crew this past September at Camp Pendleton.

GREAT!!!

It would be great if there was something for younger children like toddlers.

I understand why the age requirement may be a factor when it comes to distributing the kits, but I think younger children may benefit from having Cuzzie the bear at least. The bear is such a comfort to the children. I'm not sure if you already provide resources for younger children.

What your organization is doing goes above and beyond. I can not put into words how much you have helped my family on this last deployment. It seems the more our children are getting older it is becoming more difficult for them and it is a comfort to know that organizations like yours exist for military families. Thank you.

Thank you so much for all that you do for our kids during hard times like these. My soldier came home early in time for the holidays and my kid was able to open your holiday card with her dad. She was excited to tell him all about you all and show him what you sent to her. It really opened the door for them to talk and bond on a deeper level. My family appreciates you all.

I think for the younger ages including a book that can be read to them would be helpful

Both of my girls loved being able to open something that was for them and that was to help them cope with the deployment. I love the fact that there are people outside of our family are thinking about them! Thank you for that!!

Thank you for your attention to military children!

I am very grateful for the The comfort crew and its helpful resources. The deployment is hard on a family but it's the little things included in the box like the bear and journals that make it feel like we are not alone in this and that others care about the kids. It's a blessing. \*\*\*The only thing was my son did not receive the little goggles that go on Cuzzie the bear. If possible to send him one? Thank you for everything!

I recommended this to my key spouse group and the rest of the deploying wing

Just thank you!!!!

There is no place to add a picture. I will email you a great picture you can use in future advertising.

I want to thank you for supplying us with resources. They were a great help. I was so happy to find something like that was available.

You're an amazing organization and you made my child smile so I'm happy!!!!

It was helpful on and off. They didn't use the journal daily, but they did go back to it periodically. I'm glad I ordered the kit!

Great resource! I'm glad I ordered it for both kids, even though they're on the younger end of it.

This is an amazing service. Thank you. The bears are super snuggly and have gotten dragged all over town.

Thank you so much!

Thank you for what you do for families.

Great product and very useful. Wish we would have had this for previous deployments.

Yes I feel that the comfort box could be useful for pre-k as well it would function for 3 years and older with just a couple accommodations. Change the journal to a coloring book and the post cards to a storybook about Cuzzie.

amazing job, thank you

Thank you so much for the package. So many resources are so expensive. Having a box come to help us talk to our children about the upcoming deployment made the talk so much smoother. Thank you for all you do for our children!

Getting his own care package in the mail really made him feel included. He calls cuzzie "patches" and calls him his battle buddy. Thank you.

Thank you all so much for what you do! You make such an amazing difference for the kids going through a very difficult time!

Was very impressed with the kit overall. Thank you for being there for families like ours.

Thank you very much!!!!

Thank you!!

Thank you for everything!!

GREAT RESOURCE AND THANK YOU!!

Thank you for our kits. Each of our kids were so very happy to receive them and each uses parts of the kits everyday. Because we received one for each child there was even an extra "with you all the way" necklace/ dogtag for me to wear. Thank you!

Thank you very much for all you do to help our children!

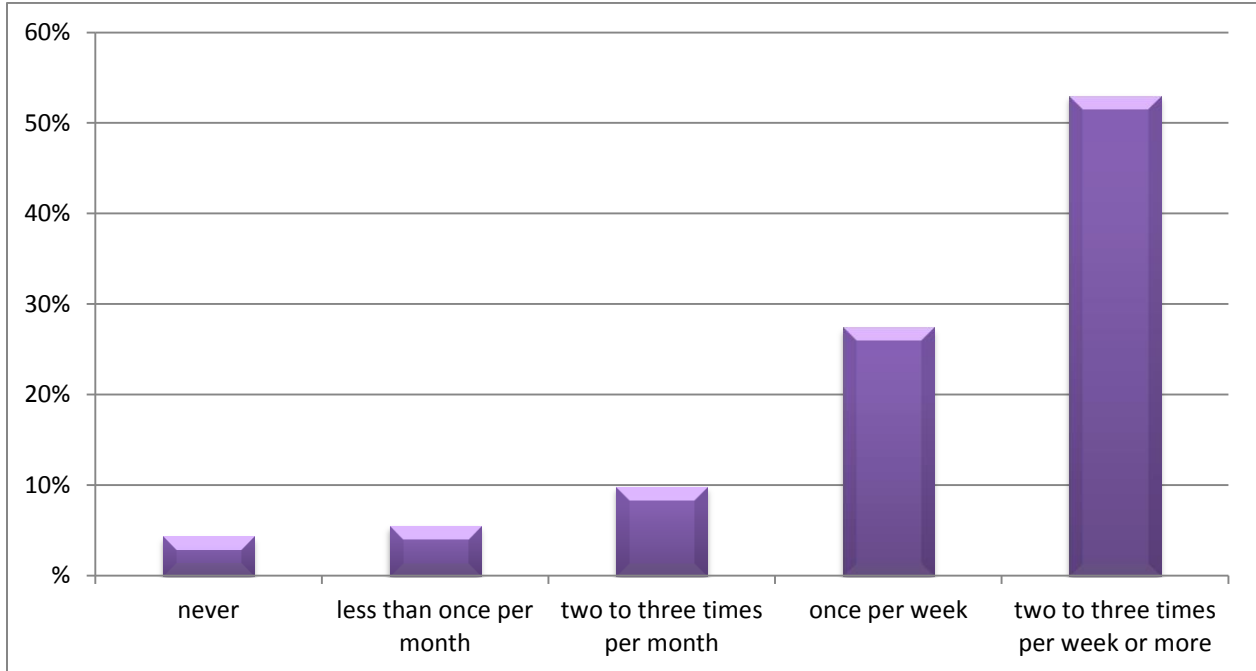
Thank you!!

I'm the FRG lead and I've suggested/recommended The Comfort Crew to our families, especially the ones with kids! We haven't used the post cards yet because we haven't been given their overseas address. The kids really LOVE the bear!

I would love to see The Comfort Crew provide a similar resource for preschoolers (3-5yr ):

**Since receiving the deployment kit, how often does your child initiate a conversation about the deployment?**

*Note: This item was included for 164 participants.*



	Frequency	Percent
never	7	4.3
less than once per month	9	5.5
two to three times per month	16	9.8
once per week	45	27.4
two to three times per week or more	87	53.0
Total	164	100.0

**Key Finding:** Approximately 80% of participants reported that their child initiated a conversation about the deployment at least once per week after receiving the deployment kit.