

The American Legion National Children & Youth Conference

Central Regional Group Assignments and Breakout

Section One

What are the benefits of a Security Dads-type program for children?

The benefits of a Security Dads-type program for children are:

Mentorship benefits children by providing mentoring relationships to children that may have an absent parent in the home, or lack of a positive role model, within the home environment. The program provides a **caring adult** in a child's life. Children have the benefit of feeling **safe and secure**, which allows for a child to **connect with the adult mentor**. Then the child may feel **comfortable sharing sensitive information** with the adult mentor, concerning a challenging home life. Children can relate better with a sense of knowing **they have someone in their life**, which are genuinely there for them. **Unconditional support** from a mentor, so children can approach the mentor with their problems. The child has someone who is dedicated to the success of their day-to-day life.

1. What are the community benefits?

The community benefits include: **fathers taking an active part in students' lives** and making an impact, **decreased vandalism, decreased crime in all aspects**, which leads to a **more productive member of society** that can **contribute and give back to society**. Another benefit is allowing **teachers more time to teach** and **less time dealing with extra discipline matters**. Teachers would be able to **direct more attention to learning in the classrooms**. **Safer community** and a **positive outcome for everyone involved** with the program. The community benefits are a **Win-win situation for everyone**. Overall benefits are **more productive citizens**.

2. How could the local post benefit by being involved in a program like Security Dads?

The local post can benefit by being involved with a program like Security Dads through community involvement, which in turn would benefit the Legion family, Sons of the American Legion and Legion Auxiliary with **increased exposure in the community**. The program could

benefit the Legion family as a whole and be beneficial to the post with **positive media attention**. The program would benefit the post by allowing the Legion post to **use the program as a tool to enter into the local schools and establish an on-going relationship with staff**. Another benefit would be **increased exposure of other various Legion programs** as well. The local post can benefit with **more involvement from their members**.

Section Two

1. How can military kids benefit from Speak Out for Military Kids?

Kids listen to kids. Young people relate more to their peers and if young people are trained to speak to their peers, this would be beneficial to **build understanding** with what it is all about and not just during a presentation, but **everyday interaction with others** and share where others are at in their lives. Provides a sense of feeling that they are **not alone, there may be other children** in the same situation. Children may collaborate and come up with a **solution on how to deal with an adverse environment**. Military kids can benefit by **learning speaking and communication skills**, which in turn helps to build future leaders.

2. How can non-military kids benefit (directly or indirectly) from Speak Out for Military Kids?

Non-military kids can benefit (directly or indirectly) from Speak Out for Military Kids by non-military kids **interacting with military kids, whose parents are deployed**. A military kid can project a **positive reaction and strength to the non-military child**. Speak Out For Military Kids can benefit non-military kids with a **greater understanding of the military** and military way of life. **Getting first hand information from a military family, instead of what certain media portrays**, concerning the military.

3. How can your Department participate with the efforts of Speak Out for Military Kids?

Each individual's department can participate with the efforts of Speak Out for Military Kids by **using knowledge gained from Darrin's speech and PowerPoint**, interjecting thoughts at future seminars, conferences and conventions. **Disburse literature to all posts and schools**

within each department's state. Get the word out about this conference and the discussions that took place. The Department can participate by linking with Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to get Iraq and Afghanistan veterans interested in joining the American Legion and by getting the veterans' children involved with Speak Out for Military Kids, which in turn opens the door for new memberships and provides the families with valuable resources. Each department's participation projects **an interest in the veteran and allow for personal contact with the veteran and/or the veteran's child. Department can also support Speak Out For Military Kids by purchasing the dog tags and the little photo doll.**

Section Three

1. What can your Department do with the Tough Topic Resources to achieve your Children & Youth objectives?

Each department can make sure **hard copies of the handouts are distributed to all schools and posts** in the department's state. Each department can **schedule a presentation for schools**, or have **department representatives attend an all day teacher conference to ensure information is readily available. Inform teachers about the Educator's Guide. Provide information to all District Officers, links to downloadable information on department website.** Make available materials of hard copies to take to Leadership Conferences and Unit and County meetings. Work as Legion family and be seen as Legion Family. **Important that hard copies be in the hands of educators and military parents** and let them know they can obtain more copies by downloading information from website. Just like in the Real Estate market the most important thing is location, location, location. Bottom line to achieve objectives is **Communication, Communication, and Communication.** Communicate from State level to District level and then to post level. The line of communication needs to be kept open. **Department needs to complete a Follow-up.** Contact the District Commanders and ask them, "Have you had a chance to think about this?" "What steps have you taken to provide the information in your community?" **Additional awareness may spark a member's interest. Each department can publish information in all publications on the state level. Inform members that they are welcome to become involved with the program.**

2. Who needs to be aware of these resources at the local and state levels?

Educators need to be aware, information to school so educators can prepare for topics. **Guidance Counselors need to be aware. Target towns where mass deployment has occurred. School Board Administration** needs to be aware. **Parents need to inform teacher if one of the child's parents have been deployed.** The parent can express, "I think my child will do better if you know what is going on in their lives."

3. How do you plan to educate those you have identified about Tough Topic Resources?

Plan to educate with **hard copies of the materials** distributed and **ensure literature is in the hands of those who have access to children.** Place **links on website**, so others may retrieve **downloadable copies**, if needed.

Section Four

1. What existing programs does the Legion currently support to bring assistance and comfort to sick children and families?

Children Miracle Network, Spinoza Bear, Songs of Love, which includes child's name in the song, Josh Dogs, Children Organ Transplant Association, COTA, Fisher House, Ronald McDonald House-donate food and blankets, Mercy Medical Airlift, Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA), Tabs for Tots.

2. How can the Department encourage participation and awareness of these programs?

Department can make **challenges to members that members must meet for recognition, communication through various vehicles such as: state newsletter, bulletin, newspaper and Internet. Make incentives for members, then acknowledge members with a reward**, no one participates for himself or herself; serving others makes a difference. If it makes a difference in someone else's life, then it feels great to be acknowledged for what one does to benefits others. **Each department can appoint a chairman over each Legion program and programs presented during the conference.** The chairman should be very knowledgeable

and be able to answer questions for the particular program assigned. The individual should be enthusiastic about the particular program they chair.

3. What resources are available to help you increase participation and awareness?

Resources available to increase participation and awareness include: **brochures, Internet and Jason R. Kees. Publish your event s and reports in newsletters.** Make aware of what parts are doing on a local level. **Positive local media can be a valuable for awareness.** Contact **Guest Speakers** from the conference and invite speakers for your state events with those who can share **personal testimonies. Real life stories that are moving may provoke an emotional experience for the audience.** Submit Press Release involving a relationship, between the American Legion and whatever program is being promoted.

Section Five

1. How do you plan to share and disseminate the information covered at this conference within the Legion family? (Other than a dedicated Department Children & Youth Conference)

Hold a workshop, links on department web page and department mailings, bulletins and newspapers. Provide information to all in department **e-mail database.** District chairman report what information was mailed in district. **Follow-up is crucial. Share information, during District, County, and State Conferences and Conventions.**

2. What resources are available to help you achieve this?

National and State Headquarters, guest speaker contacts the Internet and brochures.

The American Legion National Children & Youth Conference

Midwest Regional Group Assignments and Breakout

Section One

What are the benefits of a Security Dads-type program for children?

- Mentor youth
- Supplemental figure
- Roles Model
- Show children care
- Providing safe environment
- Helps form character decency
- Learning and giving respect
- Trust

What are the community benefits?

- Giving back
- Good citizenship
- Games/gangs
- Crime activity curtailed
- Connect with kids
- Better future as adults

How could the local post benefit by being involved in a program like Security Dads?

- Exposure to younger veterans
- Younger volunteers in community
- Pride
- Real honor and respect

Section Two

How can military kids benefit from Speak Out for Military Kids?

- Releases emotions
- Public speaking
- Real life situations are related/ reinforces that kids are not alone
- Helps children deal with real issues and explain to those who do not understand

How can non-military kids benefit (directly or indirectly) from SOMK?

- Learn feelings and help recognize, console, a learn about different problems
- Special days
- Mothers deployed
- Kids more aware of news

How can your Department participate with the efforts of SOMK?

- Make contact with Family Readiness Groups
- Encourage oratorical contest participation
- Opens lots of doors – American Legion and Children & Youth
- Invite speakers to the Legion
- Link to other local civic organizations
- Increase enthusiasm for Legion programs

Section Three

What can your Department do with the Tough Topic Resources to achieve your Children & Youth objectives?

- Get into to schools; talk to teachers
- Articles in Department newsletters
- Influence groups that plant the seed
- Through churches

- Scouts, vets and other avenues in system
- Day camps, by districts, Jr. Auxiliary and SAL project assignments

Who needs to be aware of these resources at the local and state levels?

- Varies by community
- Law enforcement
- Headquarters
- Military

How do you plan to educate those you have identified about Tough Topic Resources?

- Personal contact with schools. Colleges, 4-H
- Appropriate sources that are identified

Section Four

What existing programs does the Legion currently support to bring assistance and comfort to sick children and families?

- Children's Organ Transplant Association
- Josh and Spinoza
- Mercy Medical Airlift
- Ronald McDonald House
- Special Olympics
- Children's Miracle Network
- Child Welfare Foundation
- Temporary Financial Assistance
- Blue Star Banner
- Operation: Military Kids

How can the Department encourage participation and awareness of these programs?

- Communicator
- Publications/websites
- Monthly newsletters
- Training
- Programs fair
- Service officer
- Mid-Winter Conferences
- Leadership school
- State/county fair

What resources are available to help you increase participation and awareness?

- Holiday traffic
- Local hospitals
- Department of Human Services
- Mental health – special needs

The American Legion National Children & Youth Conference

Northeast Regional Group Assignments and Breakout

Section One

What are the benefits of a Security Dads-type program for children?

- Keeping kids on track and off drugs
- Building self-confidence
- Helps kids to open up to someone other than a teacher or administrator
- Helps by promoting a “father figure”

What are the community benefits?

- Produces more productive young adults/ citizens
- Schools can nurture relationships with other organizations to work together cohesively

How could the local post benefit by being involved in a program like Security Dads?

- Post can use as an outreach tool to demonstrate what The American Legion does
- Will allow the Legion to get into schools

Section Two

How can military kids benefit from Speak Out for Military Kids?

- Allows them to share their experiences with non-military children
- Allows them to become better public speakers
- Builds self-confidence/ lets them express their feelings

How can non-military kids benefit (directly or indirectly) from SOMK?

- They learn about a military child’s life and become respectful of them and the military
- They can be impacted by hearing of their (military kids) experiences

How can your Department participate with the efforts of SOMK?

- Do awareness programs
- Distribute Hero Packs
- Partner with other Veteran Service Organizations

Section Three

What can your Department do with the Tough Topic Resources to achieve your Children & Youth objectives?

- Share materials with the schools
- Encourage active listening y teachers
- Recognize “educators of excellence”

Who needs to be aware of these resources at the local and state levels?

- Parent Teachers Organization (PTA)
- Public library systems
- Other various community based organizations

How do you plan to educate those you have identified about Tough Topic Resources?

- Contact Boards of Education to share information in the schools
- Use an established contact to work within the school
- Boys and Girls State teachers

Section Four

What existing programs does the Legion currently support to bring assistance and comfort to sick children and families?

- Spinoza Bear
- Josh and Friends
- Children’s Organ Transplant Association

- Children's Miracle Network
- Warriors Family Assistance

How can the Department encourage participation and awareness of these programs?

- Publications
- Media
- Helping a sick child and them publicizing

What resources are available to help you increase participation and awareness?

- Websites
- Conference

Section Five

How do you plan to share and disseminate the information covered at this conference within the Legion family? (Other than a dedicated Department Children & Youth Conference)

- Webpage
- Newspapers
- Newsletters

What resources are available to help you achieve this?

- Internet
- Brochures
- Website links to other websites

The American Legion National Children & Youth Conference

Southeast Regional Group Assignments and Breakout

Children & Youth is one of the four pillars of this great organization of ours. The Southeastern Region had a spirited and productive conversation about the topics discussed during the day.

Communication , education and unification were the dominant key words that came from our group.

In our dialogue about Security Dads we decided that interaction, mentorships, stability, structure and motivation to do better are the positive aspects of this program.

Creating good citizens and possible crime deterrent are positive impacts for the local community.

The local post can benefit with working with this program by taking the lead and being more active in our local school through our programs.

On the Military Kids (Speak Out) program we concluded that the positive impact of this program is that the children would hear from their peers.

Within their communication they will communicate about their fears of their parent deployment, or possible deployment, and that communication gives confidence to the kids to become mentors to one another and a sounding board to others.

We concluded on the Department level we could do fundraising events to help send kids to OMK camps. We could participate in local family support groups. Being proactive with faith based organizations to educate about the ups and downs of being caretakers of children whose

parent are deployed and about the resources of the American Legion that are available to them.

The dissemination of information through newsletters and the protocol in the leadership are key to the education process.

It is important to take all the information disseminated here upon return to our departments and communicate it at your fall and mid-winter conferences by the way of the presentations presented here this weekend.

If your department has a newsletter, it's incumbent upon the Chairman to get space in that newsletter to begin the education process.

Finally, we agreed that the unification of the Legion Family is the only way we can be productive and successful.

The American Legion National Children & Youth Conference

Western Regional Group Assignments and Breakout

Section One

What are the benefits of a Security Dads-type program for children?

Benefits of a Security Dads-type program for children include providing a child with a sense or knowledge that someone cares. It also provides stability and leadership to children. An added benefit could be the ability to stop problems/ incidents from escalating. We also discussed how to start this or a similar program. Our exchange on this topic was focused on the local level.

What are the community benefits?

The community would benefit from having better citizens. Their children will feel supported with a program like this to act as a buffer between the structure of school and the authority of teachers and absent or ambivalent parents. We felt there was a good possibility that the community would maintain or increase funding to their schools based on better student attendance and test scores. Also, we noticed in the clip that the school halls were clean and free of graffiti which led us to determine that less money spend on repairs and clean-up would leave more money able to be spent on educating. Discussion also included the need for screening, protocols for volunteers, and the benefit to working with younger kids to maximize the benefit. One participant mentioned a nationwide program no us were aware of called a "Walking School Bus" where a designated adult walks a group of children to school, picking up kids along the way.

How could the local post benefit by being involved in a program like Security Dads?

At the local Post level the benefits are many:

- Positive public image of The American Legion
- Active community participation

- Entry into schools for other programs including Oratorical, Boys State, Flag education, Veterans in the classroom, Gateway Drugs, etc.

All these benefits have potential to increase membership in the Legion family from parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members.

Section Two

How can military kids benefit from Speak Out for Military Kids?

Speak Out for Military Kids can benefit military children by providing peer support, making them realize they are not alone – others are experiencing the same feelings. It fosters leadership and public speaking skills when they educate civilian children about military life.

How can non-military kids benefit (directly or indirectly) from SOMK?

Non-military children can benefit from learning about the military family life. By understanding the challenges of training, deployment, and reunion it is quite possible that the civilian kids can learn some or new coping mechanisms for the stressors in their own lives. We felt significant benefit could come from the civilian children sharing what they learned with their families.

Quite possibly, parents and grandparents that opposed or protested the Vietnam War could have a different level of compassion, understanding, and/or appreciation of soldiers and their families.

How can your Department participate with the efforts of SOMK?

Our departments can participate with Speak Out for Military Kids by contacting Operation: Military Kids and providing Department Chairman contact information. We also discussed working with out National Guard and military bases to build resource list that can benefit the spouse's and children's during deployment (i.e. car mechanics, plumbers, gardeners, day care providers, etc.)

Section Three

What can your Department do with the Tough Topic Resources to achieve your Children & Youth objectives?

As a group we felt the best way to utilize the Tough Topics Resources to achieve our Children & Youth objectives would be to distribute them to all Posts, Units, and Squadrons. Ideally we would have an opportunity to present the information, along with education and communication at a quarterly conference. We touched briefly on the quantity of information that flows in department mails and how much of the information does not get into the hands of the appropriate person. For the same reasons stated about Security Dads, this is a good tool for membership as well. Working with the school and community to build awareness of the issues facing military kids and planning and/or participating in events for them will bring positive public awareness and grandparents, siblings, parents, and spouses to our ranks.

Who needs to be aware of these resources at the local and state levels?

At the local and state levels we felt, as noted above, the members need to know about the resources – because the best tool is word of mouth. The large number of people that know about it, the more conversation and discussion will occur and more people will be aware.

How do you plan to educate those you have identified about Tough Topic Resources?

Our plans to educate members would be at time of sign-up for new members; speakers and education at local level (meetings and newsletters) district and department meetings.

Section Four

What existing programs does the Legion currently support to bring assistance and comfort to sick children and families?

Existing programs the Legion currently supports to bring assistance and comfort to sick children and families includes:

- Children Organ Transplant Association
- Josh and Company
- Spinoza Bear
- Temporary Financial Assistance
- Children's Miracle Network
- Family Support Network, Operation: Military Kids
- Fisher House, Ronald McDonald House

How can the Department encourage participation and awareness of these programs?

Departments can encourage participation and awareness of these programs through communication, education, and speaker presentations. Department conferences would be ideal – coupled with District events and personal contact. Every Post, Unit, and Squadron could be exposed to multiple aspects of the Children & Youth programs and select one or more areas to concentrate on.

What resources are available to help you increase participation and awareness?

National provides every resource needed to increase awareness at many levels. There are brief overview brochures, detailed pamphlets, and positioning pieces. All with resources listed, websites, phone numbers, etc for additional information.

An increase in participation could come from a Department contest; challenges between districts, mentoring between Posts, Units, and Squadrons with successful programs and those needing support.