

FACT SHEET FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



OUR ORGANIZATION

United Through Reading (UTR) offers military service members who are away from home the opportunity to be video-recorded reading storybooks to the children in their lives, creating positive emotional connections and a love of reading.

UTR is available to all military branches and units including the Coast Guard and all Reserve components. UTR is also hosted at select USO sites and has served more than two million beneficiaries since 1989.

Service members or family may visit the UTR website and click on **How to Participate** to view a current list of program locations.

HOW SERVICE MEMBERS PARTICIPATE

1. The service member reads a book aloud while being recorded and sends the video home to the child.
2. The child at home watches the video and follows along with the book, if available.
3. While the child watches the video, the caregiver captures the child's reaction and shares it with the service member.
4. The service member receives the feedback and is encouraged to record again.

BENEFITS TO MILITARY CHILDREN

Each UTR video can bring essential emotional support for children:

- Offers reassurance when they see their service members' faces, hear their voices, and know they are safe.
- Provides time together to continue or establish a storytime routine.
- An opportunity for babies to hear the voice of someone who loves them and begin the bonding process.
- A happy homecoming because mom, dad, an aunt, an uncle, or an older sibling is a familiar hero, not a stranger.



“Reading to children improves family relationships, reduces stress, and promotes resiliency. In fact, parents reading daily to their children may be one of the greatest protective factors for families during deployment.”

*DR. (LT. COL.) ERIC FLAKE, U.S. AIR FORCE,
FORMER CHIEF OF DEVELOPMENTAL BEHAVIOR*

Our innovative program helps service members to create that “everyday” moment throughout separations due to deployment, training missions, being a non-custodial parent, geographical separations, other military assignments, or even with our wounded, ill, or injured warriors. Participation in UTR maintains a presence in the child's life from wherever the service member may be by:

- Helping children build literacy skills.
- Being role models to kindle the love of reading.
- Using stories to share understanding and wisdom for children's challenges and feelings.
- Preparing for reunions, reconnecting, and reestablishing family routines.