

**THE GOALS OF THE OPERATION ENDURING  
FAMILIES PROGRAM ARE TO:**

1. Provide information to returning service members/veterans and their family members about the common experiences of returning from combat and to help normalize their experiences.
2. Provide resources and coping tools for returning service members/veterans and their families who are adjusting to life after a deployment and to assist with the common challenges that arise in reintegrating into the civilian community.
3. Provide an atmosphere where service members/veterans and their families can support and encourage each other.
4. Link returning service members/veterans and their families with other opportunities for support both at the **Oklahoma City VA Medical Center** and with community resources.

## **FORMAT OF THE OPERATION ENDURING FAMILIES PROGRAM**

### **Number of Sessions**

This manual contains 5 modules, each of which lasts 1.5 hours, plus an optional module on traumatic brain injury. Each session can stand alone, and the order of the presentation of sessions can be varied according to participants' needs. Furthermore, all the sessions do not need to be presented, as facilitators can select the topics most relevant to their clients' needs.

### **Frequency of Sessions**

The frequency of sessions can be variable and should be based on the needs of the particular facility and the participants involved. However, we have found that attendance tends to be best when meetings are held on a weekly basis.

### **Participants**

The group is open to all returning service members/veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as their adult family members or close friends. Returning service members/veterans and their families are encouraged to attend the classes together, but this is not a requirement and either family members or returning service members/veterans can attend separately.

### **Facilitators**

If possible, it is recommended that 2 providers co-facilitate this group, as this provides someone who can respond to crises and attend to logistical issues. If this is not possible, the curriculum is written such that one provider could facilitate the group. Facilitators should be mental health professionals who hold at least a master's degree in a mental health field and have experience leading psychoeducational groups and some familiarity with the needs of returning service members/veterans and their families.

### **Logistics**

The curriculum is written such that the group can be held on a continuous or occasional basis. For those facilities that run the group intermittently, a set date for the start and end of the group should be made. For those facilities that choose to run the groups continuously, group members may begin at any session. Participants are not obligated to attend every session. To maximize group cohesion and the effectiveness of the group, it is encouraged that group members attend whenever possible. The sessions are broad enough that every session should be applicable to all returning service members/veterans and their families, with the exception of the optional TBI module.

A list of the necessary materials for each session is on the following page of this manual.

### **Flexibility**

Although each session has a structured format and didactic material to cover, the facilitator should remain flexible in meeting the needs of the participants. For example, if those in attendance express concerns or questions during the check-in process about a certain issue related to readjustment, the facilitator may wish to abbreviate the prepared material and devote some time to discussing the more immediate concerns.

## **OPERATION ENDURING FAMILIES** **MATERIALS NEEDED FOR EACH SESSION**

1. Participant Notebook (3-ring binder or folder)
2. Handouts
  - Handouts for the particular module
  - Welcome to Operation Enduring Families (Handout A)
  - Resource List for OEF/OIF Returning Service Members/Veterans and Their Families (Handout B)
  - Operation Enduring Families Evaluation Form (Handout C)
  - Operation Enduring Families Background Information Form (Handout D)
3. Reminder cards or appointment letters for the next group
4. List of treatment options available at your facility should other services be recommended
5. Pens
6. Nametags
7. Box of tissues
8. Refreshments