

## Reach Out and Read, Military Doctors Team Up to Promote Early Literacy for Children of Military Families

The next time a young child comes into the pediatrician's office on a military base for her checkup, she won't just be getting a shot – her doctor will be giving her a brand-new book! That's because Reach Out and Read (ROR), the nationwide nonprofit early literacy program that works with doctors and nurses to encourage parents to read aloud to their young children, has launched a major new initiative to expand its proven program to 20 American military bases. Reach Out and Read's Military Initiative will be funded by the Department of Defense and jointly administered with Strategic Resources Inc. ROR was selected by the Military to help lead this project because of its evidence-based, cost-effective model and its 20-year track record of preparing children nationwide to succeed in school.

Reach Out and Read will train doctors and nurses at Military Treatment Facilities on the ROR model which includes providing a carefully selected new, age-appropriate book for each child to take home from every checkup from 6 months to 5 years, starting with board books for babies followed by more complex picture books for preschoolers. Along with the free book for every child, military healthcare providers will also provide advice and tips to the parents about reading aloud with their children. Each child who participates in ROR will start kindergarten with a home library of up to 10 books, and parents who understand the importance of reading.

Military bases participating in Reach Out and Read will also create literacy-rich waiting rooms, complete with child-size furniture and bookcases, where ROR-trained volunteers will model reading with the children while their families wait for appointments. In the first year, Reach Out and Read will be introduced at the following 20 military bases:

**Air Force:**

Eglin AFB, FL; Elmendorf AFB, AK; Nellis AFB, NV; Scott AFB, IL; Travis AFB, CA; Wright-Patterson AFB, OH

**Navy/Marine:**

Naval Base, San Diego, CA; NAS, Jacksonville, FL; NS Great Lakes, IL; NS Newport, RI; Camp LeJeune MCS, NC; Camp Pendleton, CA

**Army:**

Ft. Stewart, GA; Ft. Bliss, TX (Beaumont AMC); Ft. Bragg, NC; Ft. Hood, TX; Ft. Lewis, WA (Madigan AMC); Tripler AMC, HI; Walter-Reed AMC, DC; Landstuhl RMC, Germany

Reach Out and Read in the Military will be serving more than 90,000 children, or 25% of the children of U.S. military

families aged 0-5 years worldwide. U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), who led the effort in Congress to secure funding for this initiative stated: "The Reach Out and Read model is a proven success. I am proud to have secured \$1.1 million in federal funding for this new initiative so that ROR can expand its program to military bases across the country. Reach Out and Read's Military Initiative will help doctors and nurses at Military Treatment Facilities encourage parents to read to their children and give them the tools to get started. I



*PHOTO CAPTION: Maj. (Dr.) Renee Cevey, staff pediatrician in the 59th Maternal/Child Care Squadron, reads with Jared, son of Staff Sgt. Marlon Robles, 37th Civil Engineering Squadron, during a well-child visit at Wilford Hall Medical Center's pediatric clinic. (U.S. Air Force photo/Master Sgt. Kimberly A. Yearyeen-Siers).*

am particularly pleased that kids on base at Naval Station Newport will now benefit from this important program." Reed, a member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, last year authored and introduced the Prescribe a Book Act (S.1895), which would create a federal pediatric early literacy grant initiative based on the ROR program.

"Reading aloud to a young child every day is a wonderful way to stimulate language," said Perri Klass, MD, Medical Director of Reach Out and Read. "And it also does so many other things. It helps children love books and reading, because they associate books with the parent's voice and with the pleasures of being read to. And that's the advice that military doctors and nurses will be giving to the parents of their young patients at every checkup – important advice for all parents to help their children learn language and enjoy books. Reading aloud can help children feel secure, loved and reassured, helping families cope with stressful times, and that could be especially important in military families, who face separation and deployment."

In addition to Reach Out and Read's wide selection of "doctor-recommended" children's books, children served by Reach Out and Read in the Military will also receive books designed specifically to calm anxieties about deployment and military service, such as "While You Were Away," by Eileen Spinelli.

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