



The following established style guidelines reflect the long-standing practices of developers and editors of content the Child & Youth Programs area. They are consistent with the rules and guidance outlined in The Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

Content Tips

- Pay attention to the overall organization and flow of an article. Information and ideas should be logically organized, and there should be some sense of continuity or flow from one idea to the next.
- Avoid redundancy.
- Write a concluding paragraph of two or three sentences.
- Write in generic terms.
- Write in relationship-neutral terms, such as “partner” or “couple.” Use “parent” or “guardian.”
- Flesh out and clarify statements and ideas.
- Ensure that subheads reflect the content of the text that follows.
- Focus on the positive side of content as much as possible.
- Keep the wide audience range in mind.
- The term “kid/kids” is acceptable usage in appropriate contexts, such as social media and other informal content but should be avoided in Military OneSource articles, news releases, etc.
- Use “Office of Child and Youth Programs” when referring to the program under Military Community and Family Policy.
- Use “Child and Youth Programs” when referring to a program on a military installation.
- Make “service member” and “service members” two words, except when referencing the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. Note that per MC&FP style guide, service member is lowercase.
- Make “child care” two words, no hyphen, at all times, even when used as a modifier.
- Define people by their accomplishments. “Ray Charles was a famous musician.” NOT “Ray Charles, a blind musician...”



- Use caution using too many Department of War Education Activity, or DoWEA, links. Fewer than 20% of War Department dependents attend DoWEA schools. The majority of DOW dependents attend public schools.
- Reduce the number of extra links a parent has to click to get to the material.
- Use softening or qualifying words, such as “generally,” “may be,” “can be” or “might” to avoid making blanket statements about how people feel, react, etc., in different circumstances. See the examples below:
 - ★ Wrong: “Any time you lose someone close to you, the grief is overwhelming.”
 - ★ Better: “When you lose someone close to you, the grief can be overwhelming.”
 - ★ Wrong: “Children are more resilient and better able to bounce back emotionally after a loss.”
 - ★ Better: “Following a loss, children may be more resilient and may recover more quickly than adults.”

Things to Avoid

- Don’t make assumptions.
- Don’t tell people how they feel.
- Don’t tell people what they should/need to/must/ought to/can’t/won’t do.
- Don’t tell people what they always/never do.
- Do not refer to summer camps or youth centers as child care.
- Do not refer to child care providers as babysitters.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
CCYH	Child Care in Your Home fee assistance pilot program
CDC	child development center
DoWEA	Department of War Education Activity
ELM	Early Learning Matters
FCC	Family Child Care

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Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
FOCUS	Families OverComing Under Stress
KIT	Kids Included Together
LEA	local education agency
MCCYN	Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood
MCCYN-PLUS	Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS
MIC3	Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission
VLS	Virtual Lab School

Preferred Terms

Acceptable

military life (instead of military lifestyle)

some or many (instead of most or all)

can, may or might (instead of will or are)

often or generally (instead of always)

tend to (instead of usually)



Acceptable

partner, spouse, parent or guardian (instead of husband, wife)

child, youth, teen, children, adolescent or student (instead of kid)

military-connected children, youth and teens or military-connected students (instead of military children)

installation (instead of base or garrison)

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (instead of Boys and Girls Clubs of America)

Boys & Girls Clubs of America National Military Youth of the Year or BGCA National Military Youth of the Year (instead of Military Youth of the Year; BGCA Youth of the Year; National Military Youth of the Year)

child care fee assistance (instead of fee assistance)

child development center; also acceptable: child development program, school-age center, school-age program, school-age care (instead of day care or day care center)

community or civilian child care providers (instead of community-based child care programs)



Acceptable

provided at no cost to service members and their families (instead of free)

families with special needs, children with special needs, youth with special needs, children with special education or medical needs (instead of special needs families, exceptional families, or special needs children, kids or youth)

families enrolled in EFMP (instead of EFMP families)

Military Family Support Center (instead of family center, Airman and Family Readiness Center, Fleet and Family)

Preferred Reference to Age Ranges

Term	Definition
infant	birth to 12 months
infant/toddler/preschooler	birth to 5 years
pretoddler	13 to 24 months
toddler	25 to 36 months
preschooler	37 months to 5 years
children	birth to 12 years
school age	6 to 12 years of age or through 6th grade
preteens	9 to 12 years
youth	13 to 18 years



Definitions

Term	Definition
child care availability 24/7	Some installations operate centers that are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; these centers are designed to meet the needs of shift workers and families seeking flexible child care arrangements.
Child Care Aware® of America	Child Care Aware® of America is a nonprofit organization that works directly with child care resource and referral agencies and families searching for quality, affordable care.
Child Care Fee Assistance	When capped, this refers to overall collection of military Child Care Fee Assistance programs to assist military families with the cost of child care in the community when on-installation care is unavailable. When referring to the fee assistance received by families or providers, and specific programs containing the phrase “fee assistance,” use lowercase: child care fee assistance. Fee assistance programs include: • Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood, or MCCYN • Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS, or MCCYN- PLUS • Child Care in Your Home fee assistance pilot program, or CCYH
Child Care in Your Home fee assistance pilot program	To help with expanding child care needs, the War Department launched a pilot program to explore providing fee assistance for full-time, in-home child care services. This fee assistance pilot program covers full-time care for a minimum of 30 hours to a maximum of 60 hours of child care weekly. Care is not limited to Monday through Friday or time of day. A third party administrator operates the

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Term	Definition
	pilot program. Parents may request the Child Care in Your Home pilot program through MilitaryChildCare.com. Space is limited in the selected regions. Parents are responsible for finding, hiring and employing their providers. Also known as CCYH.
child development center	This program is a component of the child development program system of care and provides care to children aged 6 weeks to 5 years. More than 57% of the program's care capacity is provided to children younger than age 3. Each military child development center is certified by the War Department and accredited by a national accrediting body. Also known as CDC.
child development programs	Child development programs refer to child care services offered to children of DOW personnel from birth to 12 years of age. Child development programs include child development centers, Family Child Care and school-age care programs.
Come Grow With Us	The War Department's career opportunities initiative, Come Grow With Us, offers employment with high-quality child development and youth programs on or near military installations worldwide, making it a fantastic and portable career.
community child care	Community child care expands the availability of child care options through comparable programs off installation. Care is provided in both War Department-approved community child care centers and Family Child Care homes. Child care providers are state licensed or regulated; some providers are both state licensed and



Term	Definition
	nationally accredited. A third party administrator manages community child care.
Department of War Education Activity	The Department of War Education Activity, or DoWEA, is one of two federally operated school systems. It is responsible for planning, directing, coordinating and managing prekindergarten through 12th grade educational programs on behalf of the War Department. DoWEA is globally positioned and operates 160 accredited schools in eight districts located in 11 foreign countries, seven states, Guam and Puerto Rico. Also known as DoWEA. • Department of War Education Activity – Europe operates 64 schools within three districts throughout Bahrain, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The system serves over 24,000 school-age children of active-duty military and civilian employees. • Department of War Education Activity – Pacific operates 45 schools located in Japan, South Korea and Guam that serve more than 21,000 children of service members and eligible DOW civilian personnel families stationed throughout the Pacific theater. • Department of War Education Activity – Americas operates 50 schools located in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions of the United States, Puerto Rico and Cuba, serving more than 20,000 school-age children of active-duty military and civilian employees.

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Term	Definition
Early Learning Matters	The Early Learning Matters curriculum was developed for use in War Department child development centers. It gives military children a strong foundation by promoting skills linked to school readiness, well-being and life success. Also known as ELM.
expanded hourly child care	U.S.-based military families have access to a nationally recognized child care provider database to search for hourly, flexible and on-demand child care.
Family Child Care	This care is a component of the child development program system of care and is provided in certified private homes. Families rely on Family Child Care to provide flexible child care for night, weekend and nontraditional work schedules, as well as hourly care, such as shift work and emergency situations. Also known as FCC.
Families OverComing Under Stress	This program was developed to help families and couples overcome common challenges related to military life. It builds on strengths families already possess and teaches skills to help enhance communication, problem solving, goal setting and more. Also known as FOCUS.
Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children	The War Department, in collaboration with the National Center for Interstate Compacts and the Council of State Governments, developed the compact to address the educational transitions for military families. Through the compact, all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and the Department of War Education Activity are working together to provide a consistent set of policies that will make getting started in a new school, joining extracurricular activities and meeting graduation requirements as easy as possible for military-connected children. The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, or MIC3, is

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Term	Definition
	the governing body of the Interstate Compact and enforces the compact rules. Its goal is to ease educational transitions of school-aged, military-connected students attending public schools and Department of War Education Activity schools worldwide.
Kids Included Together	This organization provides support to Child & Youth Programs to create inclusive environments. Kids Included Together has developed best-in-class inclusion services to help programs ensure all children are accommodated, regardless of ability. Resources include disability inclusion training. Also known as KIT.
local education agency	Local education agency refers to a public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district or other political subdivision (including a combination of school districts or counties) recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public schools. Both school districts and county offices of education are local education agencies. Some states treat charter schools as local education agencies. Also known as LEA.
Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood	This program is a War Department child care fee assistance program available to qualifying families. The program pays a portion of child care costs on behalf of families who are unable to access on-installation child care. Providers must be nationally accredited. A third party administers this program on behalf of the DOW. Also known as MCCYN.

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Term	Definition
Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS	The War Department child care fee assistance program Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood has expanded to Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS to offer community child care providers that are participating in their state's quality rating and improvement system an opportunity to participate in the military fee assistance program. Child care providers enrolled and participating in their state's quality rating and improvement system will be additional options for families. Also known as MCCYN-PLUS.
military child care programs	This term refers to child care programs offered on installations. The War Department provides military families with a variety of quality, affordable child care options. While services may vary by location, the standards and quality of services are consistent and meet established regulations.
MilitaryChildCare.com	MilitaryChildCare.com is the War Department's online request-for-care system that helps families in any service branch find and request military-operated child care worldwide. The website provides a single gateway for parents to find comprehensive information on military-operated or military-approved child care programs worldwide. Parents may request the Child Care in Your Home fee assistance pilot program through MilitaryChildCare.com. By streamlining the child care search and request process, MilitaryChildCare.com makes it easier for military parents to understand and assess child care options and make more informed decisions about their children's care. Families may search for full- and part-time care at child development, school-age care or Family Child Care programs, including before-

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Term	Definition
	and after-school care, as well as summer and holiday camps. Child care definitions for preference request, metro zone, waitlist, immediate need, unmet need, met need and placement time can be found on MilitaryChildCare.com. It should never be referenced as MCC or MCC.com.
Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission	The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission is the governing body of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and enforces the compact rules. Its goal is to ease educational transitions of school-aged, military-connected students attending public schools and Department of War Education Activity schools worldwide. Also known as MIC3.
Month of the Military Child	The Month of the Military Child, celebrated each April, is a time to recognize the contributions of military-connected youth and demonstrate support for the unique needs of children, youth and teens in military families. Month of the Military Child presents an opportunity to deepen awareness of valuable Child and Youth programs and services offered through Military Community and Family Policy and highlight resources that support military-connected children, youth and teens, and their parents. MC&FP does not use the MOMC acronym in its content.
New Parent Support Program	The New Parent Support Program helps military parents, including expectant parents, transition successfully into parenthood and provides a nurturing environment for their children. The New Parent Support Program's staff consists of nurses, social workers and home visitation specialists and is supervised and monitored at the installation level by the Family Advocacy Program manager. The program

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Term	Definition
	focuses on providing one-on-one support for new and expectant parents through home visits, but some installations may offer parenting classes and groups.
school-age care program	This program provides facility-based care for children ages 6-12 years, or those attending kindergarten, who require supervision before or after school or during duty hours, school holidays or school closures. School-age care is a component of the child development program system of care. Each military school-age care program is certified by the War Department and accredited by a national accrediting body.
school liaison	School liaisons are located at each installation and are the central point of contact for commanders, military families and local school systems on military-connected school-related matters for grades pre-K-12. School liaisons advocate, advise and build alliances to help address education concerns, challenges or issues of the Total Force and offer a network to educate and provide information or referral for both military families and school districts. School liaisons help with transition support before and after a permanent change of station and can connect parents to the Exceptional Family Member Program and their school's special education department, as well as help parents navigate their new school district's special education program. School liaisons can provide information on school districts and boundaries, assist with transfer of credits and class registration, help locate after-school and extracurricular programs, inform parents about tutoring availability, set up youth sponsorship referrals, and help with college, career and military readiness.

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Term	Definition
Sesame Street for Military Families	Sesame Street for Military Families is a free multimedia website — with videos, games, tips, articles and more — offered in both English and Spanish for children and parents. Families can find information and multimedia resources on the topics of military deployments, multiple deployments, homecomings, injuries, grief and self-expression.
Thrive	Supplemental modules are added regularly. Parents have access to content for families with special medical or educational needs, grandparents as caregivers, mental health and wellness, and more. This free, online parenting-education program promotes positive parenting, stress management and healthy lifestyle practices. The program is organized by children's age groups, from 0-18 years, to help military parents raise healthy, resilient children. The four age groups are Take Root (for children ages 0-3), Sprout (for children ages 3-5), Grow (for children ages 5-10) and Branch Out (for children ages 10-18).
Virtual Lab School	The Virtual Lab School is an online professional development and resource system supported by an extensive repository of professional development videos, research-based content and relevant, interactive learning materials. This system is the professional development platform for training child development personnel to build their knowledge and skill around research-based practices in child care and development. Also known as VLS.
Youth Programs	These programs contribute to the readiness, retention and lethality of the total force by helping families balance the competing demands of work and family life, assist the installation commander in supporting healthy youth development, increase youth well-being, promote

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Term	Definition
	resilience, ease transition from childhood and adolescence into adulthood, provide opportunities for personal, physical, emotional, cognitive and social development, and provide access to education-related services and resources.
Youth Programs — the arts	The arts programs, including digital, fine, applied and performing arts, offer opportunities to encourage imagination and self-expression, and help youth develop knowledge and understanding of specific arts forms.
Youth Programs — education and STEM programs	These programs complement and reinforce what youth learn during the school day while creating experiences that drive interest and build a capacity for success in these disciplines. They provide youth with homework assistance as well as support in developing a plan for the future by complementing academic success, preparation for a postsecondary education and career development.
Youth Programs — health and wellness programs	These programs provide opportunities for youth to enhance relationships with themselves and others, regulate emotions and solve problems by developing social-emotional skills.
Youth Programs — instructional classes	These sessions are age and developmentally appropriate with clearly defined goals and are designed to teach and develop the skills and abilities of youth in hands-on, informal settings. These include regularly scheduled classes and one-time clinics or events that reflect the interests of the targeted market and are generally offered on a fee basis. Classes cover a wide range of topics, including photography, woodworking, gardening, gymnastics, dance, martial arts, music and more.

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Youth Programs — leadership and service programs	These programs help youth build leadership with self, leadership with others and leadership within the community.
Youth Programs — sports and recreation programs	These programs help youth develop physical fitness, reduce stress and experience healthy physical development. Recreational programming includes active and passive leisure activities and events that are usually self-directed in nature for individual or group participation that meet the needs of the youth. Activities and events may include, but are not limited to, social gatherings, dances, sports, arts, technology and media. Youth are also introduced to lifelong sports, such as fishing, tennis and running.
Youth Programs — Youth Sports and Fitness Programs	Youth Sports and Fitness Programs provide supervised options designed to productively engage youth in physical and fun activities in a positive setting that supports varying skill levels and interests of youth, while developing life skills such as good sportsmanship and teamwork. These year-round programs are organized and offered in a variety of settings including, but not limited to, leagues, camps, clinics or instructional formats to enhance the emotional, physical, social and educational well-being of participants. Sports include individual and team sports and fitness activities such as baseball, basketball, soccer, cheerleading, flag football, tennis, golf and more. Individual sports may be offered through a variety of Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs and services facilities, such as golf courses, bowling alleys and youth centers.



Term	Definition
youth sponsorship	Youth sponsorship is a program to facilitate the integration of dependent children of military families into new surroundings when moving to a military installation as a result of a parent's permanent change of station. The program is primarily directed toward preteen and teenaged youth. Youth sponsorship can be accessed by contacting local school liaisons or through installation youth centers.

Official Resources

Department policy

- [DOD Instruction 6060.02, "Child Development Programs," Aug. 5, 2014, incorporating Change 2, effective Sept. 1, 2020](#)
- [DOD Instruction 6060.04, "Youth Services Policy," Dec. 4, 2019](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1402.05, "Background Checks on Individuals in DOD Child Care Services Programs," July 14, 2016](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1015.10, "Military Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs," July 6, 2009, certified as current May 6, 2011](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1342.22, "Military Family Readiness," Aug. 5, 2021](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1342.19, "Family Care Plans," May 7, 2010, incorporating Change 1, Nov. 30, 2017](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1342.29, "Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children," Jan. 31, 2017](#)

Legislation or regulations

- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1785, "Youth Sponsorship Program," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1791, "Funding for Military Child Care," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1792, "Child Care Employees," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1793, "Parent Fees," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1794, "Child Abuse Prevention and Safety at Facilities," Jan. 6, 2025](#)

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- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1795, "Parent Partnerships With Child Development Centers," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1796, "Subsidies for Family Home Day Care," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1797, "Early Childhood Education Program," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1798, "Child Care Services and Youth Program Services for Dependents: Financial Assistance for Providers," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1799, "Child Care Services and Youth Program Services for Dependents: Participation by Children and Youth Otherwise Ineligible," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 10 U.S. Code §1800, "Definitions," Jan. 6, 2025](#)
- [Title 34 U.S. Code § 20351 "Requirements for Background Child Care Worker Employee Background Checks," Jan. 3, 2024](#)
- [Public Law 106-65, "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000," Oct. 5, 1999 \(as amended through P.L. 119-60, enacted Dec. 18, 2025\)](#)
- [Public Law 111-84, Section 539 "Interstate Compact on the Educational Opportunities for Military Children," Oct. 28, 2009](#)
- [Public Law 101-647, "Crime Control Act of 1990," Nov. 29, 1990](#)

Military OneSource websites

- [Service Providers & Leaders page on Children, Youth and Teens](#)
- [Service Providers & Leaders page on K-12 and College Education](#)
- [Service Providers & Leaders page on Parenting](#)
- [Military OneSource overview page on Parenting](#)
- [Military OneSource overview page on New Parenting](#)
- [Military OneSource overview page on Adoption & Foster Care](#)
- [Military OneSource overview page on Children, Youth & Teens](#)
- [Military OneSource overview page on Child Care Programs](#)
- [Military OneSource benefits page for DoWEA Schools for Military-Connected Children](#)
- [Military OneSource overview page on Education & Employment for Youth & Teens](#)