



Key Message

Military families are at a disadvantage when it comes to the enrollment options available to their children due to military-directed reassignments. States can provide military families with increased flexibility through access to district open enrollment policies.

Discussion Points

1. Military families have limited housing options when moving to a new location as part of a permanent change of station. As a result, school and district options for military children can also be limited.
 - Many military families must move from temporary to permanent housing at some point after school has started, or move from permanent to temporary housing prior to moving out of state on military orders.
 - Some military families have no choice but to live in military housing (due to command requirements), thus may not have the schooling/placement options available to other students.
2. Open enrollment is a form of K-12 public school choice that allows students to attend a different school than the one to which they are assigned based on their place of residence. Currently, 46 states have varied open enrollment policies.
 - These policies can be mandatory or voluntary for the school or district; may apply to interdistrict transfers or be limited to intradistrict transfers; and may provide priority to students who are part of designated categories.
3. Many states have developed policies that specifically address the open enrollment needs of military children.
 - Some states have mandatory clauses within their voluntary open enrollment policies for military students that allow them to automatically access the state's open enrollment system.
 - Other states have existing priority systems within their mandatory open enrollment policies that include military students as a priority category.
 - A small number of states temporarily waive residency requirements to allow military students to remain in their placement for the remainder of the school year, or through graduation for juniors and seniors, despite a change of residence.



The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children includes many provisions that ease enrollment challenges for military children. However, due to their unpredictable and high rate of mobility and limited housing options, military families face additional challenges not addressed by the compact – specifically, those related to enrollment timing, school placement options and continuity of education through intrastate relocations following a PCS move.