



Key Message

Military families homeschool their children at nearly twice the rate of civilian families and face unique challenges associated with military life. State policies that streamline homeschool requirements, expand access to educational resources such as extracurricular activities and sports, and clarify participation requirements for Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, or JROTC, can contribute to greater stability for military families, which supports retention efforts.

Analysis

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 highlighted gaps in educational support for military children. According to the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy summary report (<https://education.jhu.edu/edpolicy/policy-research-initiatives/homeschool-hub/military-homeschoolers/>) of the 2024 U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey.html>), active-duty military families living in the U.S. homeschool their children at nearly double the civilian rate.

Additionally, according to the 2024 Survey of Active Duty Spouses, following the decision to homeschool, military families must navigate dramatically different state requirements with each permanent change of station, or PCS, move. High-regulation homeschool states require families to meet stricter standards – such as curriculum approvals, testing, teacher qualifications and progress reports. This creates significant compliance challenges for families moving from low-regulation states, where oversight is minimal.

Frequent relocations create educational compliance burdens for military families, forcing service members to choose between effective homeschooling and military service. More than 30 states have enacted some form of homeschool access policies, and military-specific provisions in homeschool statutes may improve service member retention by eliminating these educational barriers.

DoDEA Model Policies

The Department of Defense Education Activity, or DoDEA, is the federal school system that serves children of U.S. military service members and Defense Department civilian employees. It's essentially the DOD's own K-12 education network, designed to ensure that military-connected students receive a consistent, high-quality education no matter where they're stationed.

DoDEA schools and programs are dedicated to fostering excellence in education for every student, every day, everywhere. The following DoDEA policies highlight the various educational opportunities available to homeschool students, ensuring they have access to the courses, services and programs provided by DoDEA schools and programs.

Designed to support families who choose homeschooling, this framework empowers families to embrace flexible, high-quality education and may serve as a model for state-funded schools to follow.



- Eligibility and enrollment in DoDEA schools
 - Enrollment in up to three courses per academic year
 - Access to special education services and Section 504 plans, as deemed appropriate
 - School transportation services based on existing routes and schedules, when feasible
- Auxiliary services
 - Access to school libraries
 - Participation in extracurricular activities to include music, athletics and interscholastic events
 - Eligibility to participate in PSAT and SAT assessments offered by the DoDEA schools
 - Right to request and sit for Advanced Placement, or AP, exams
 - Use of school facilities after hours, if available

Best Practices

In addition to policies that the Department of Defense Education Activity, or DoDEA, has in place to support military homeschool families, the Defense Department has identified several state approaches that facilitate homeschool transitions for military families.

1. Full inclusion in interscholastic activities

Nineteen states allow homeschooled students full access to public school interscholastic activities without requiring enrollment or special approval: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont and Wyoming.

These states recognize that homeschooled students should have access to competitive sports and activities that provide social connections and opportunities for excellence. For military families, this access helps children integrate into new communities with each PCS move and maintains continuity in extracurricular pursuits.

EXAMPLES:

Maine

Maine Revised Statute, Title 20-A, Part 3, Chapter 211, Subchapter 1-A, Section 5021

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec5021.html>

"5. Participation in extracurricular activities. Students receiving home-school instruction are eligible to try out for extracurricular activities sponsored by the local school unit, provided the student applies in writing, if the following requirements are satisfied.



- A. The student agrees to abide by equivalent rules of participation as are applicable to regularly enrolled students participating in the activity and provides evidence that the rules of participation are being met.
- B. The student complies with the same physical examination, immunization, insurance, age and semester eligibility requirements as regularly enrolled students participating in the activity. All required documentation must be made available upon request by the school unit.
- C. The student meets equivalent academic standards as those established for regularly enrolled students participating in the activity and provides evidence that the academic standards are being met.
- D. The student abides by the same transportation policy as regularly enrolled students participating in the activity."

Oregon**Oregon House Bill 2187 (2025)**

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2187/Introduced>

"(2) A school district may not deny a high school equivalency student, a homeschooled student or a student who attends a public charter school that does not provide interscholastic activities the opportunity to participate in all interscholastic activities available in the school district within the attendance boundaries in which the high school equivalency student, homeschooled student or public charter school student resides [...]"

2. Compliance grace periods for relocating families

For states that stipulate a timeline within which requirements must be met, or mandate immediate compliance, establishing a minimum 30-day compliance window recognizes the unique needs of highly-mobile families, such as military families. This grace period allows them reasonable time to understand and meet new state homeschool requirements without immediately falling into noncompliance. It also helps prevent educational disruption during cross-state transitions and eliminates administrative burdens for military families during relocation.

EXAMPLE:**Virginia****Virginia Code Annotated, Title 22, Chapter 14, Article 1, Section 22.1-254.1**

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-254.1/>

"(B) [...] Any parent who moves into a school division or begins home instruction after the school year has begun shall notify the division superintendent of his intention to provide home instruction as soon as practicable and shall thereafter comply with the requirements of this section within 30 days of such notice. [...]"



3. Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, or JROTC, access

Allowing homeschooled students to participate in JROTC programs maintains military cultural connections and leadership development opportunities for homeschooled military children. States can facilitate access by clarifying in state policy that pursuant to federal law, homeschool children are required access to JROTC programs, and ensuring local education agencies provide clear and accessible guidance to schools and information for parents. This supports military family values while providing structured programs that complement homeschool education.

EXAMPLE:

Virginia

Virginia House Bill 1231 (2024)

<https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?241+ful+HB1231>

"Ensure that any Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program offered by any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States in any public school in the local school division is open to any student who resides in such school division in the attendance zone of such school, receives home instruction or attends a private school, and meets all applicable eligibility requirements for participation in such program."

Innovative Approaches

Some states have developed creative and pioneering solutions to assist families who have chosen homeschooling as the best educational choice for their children. Although these approaches may not be feasible for all states or local education agencies, due to funding or policy frameworks, we are highlighting them to share additional opportunities for states to consider as they explore ways to further support all students regardless of schooling model.

1. School facilities and equipment access

Public school facilities offer specialized materials and resources that may not be available to homeschooling families. Such access helps homeschoolers meet state education standards, particularly in states with stringent oversight.

EXAMPLE:

Maine

Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, Part 3, Chapter 211, Subchapter 1-A, Section 5021

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec5021.html>

"6. Use of school facilities and equipment. A student receiving home-school instruction may use public school facilities and equipment on the same basis as regularly enrolled students if the following conditions are met:



- A. Use does not disrupt regular school activities;
- B. Use is approved by the school principal in accordance with established school policy;
- C. Use does not create additional expense to the school unit;
- D. Use is directly related to the student's academic program; and
- E. Use of potentially hazardous areas, such as shops, laboratories and the gymnasium, is supervised by a qualified employee of the school administrative unit."

2. Special education support

Special education-related services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, counseling and other supports, are often critical for children with special needs. States can support equal access to education by including students who are homeschooled in the provision of state- and federally mandated (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-III/part-300/subpart-B/subject-group-ECFR3556f7ac2fe0a92>) requirements for privately enrolled students. This fosters supportive learning for all students in the state regardless of schooling choices determined as most appropriate by families.

EXAMPLES:

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Home Schooling

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/homeschool/>

"Under Massachusetts law, home-schooled students have a right to special education services. In addition, school districts are required to evaluate students suspected of having a disability and re-evaluate students eligible for special education services consistent with federal and state requirements. Please see the advisory for more information about the [provision of special education and related services to home-schooled and privately educated students](#)."

Arkansas

Arkansas Department of Education Special Education and Related Services - Section 22.00: Home Schooling

https://arksped.ade.arkansas.gov/rules_regs_08/1.%20SPED%20PROCEDURAL%20REQUIREMENTS%20AND%20PROGRAM%20STANDARDS/22.00%20HOME%20SCHOOLING.pdf

"22.10 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

22.10.1 By way of these regulations, it shall be the policy of the State Board of Education that school districts provide a genuine opportunity (see 34 C.F.R. Sec. 76.651(a)) to students who are home-schooled with disabilities, as defined in state regulations, to access special education and related services from the district where they reside. This policy is not to be construed as conferring the procedural protections and rights under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to such students and their parent/guardians."



3. Parent-issued diploma recognition

Some states have created pathways to recognize parent-issued homeschool diplomas for all official state purposes, including driver's licenses and employment. This eliminates bureaucratic barriers that can complicate military teens' transitions during frequent relocations.

EXAMPLE:

Pennsylvania

1949 Act 14, Chapter 13, Section 27, Subsection 1

<https://www.palegis.us/statutes/unconsolidated/law-information/view-statute?SESSYR=1949&SES SIND=0&ACTNUM=14&SMTHLWIND=&CHPT=13&SCTN=27&SUBSCTN=1>

“(d.1) (1) [...] a high school diploma awarded by a supervisor or an approved diploma-granting organization shall be considered as having all the rights and privileges afforded by the Commonwealth.”