



My Next Steps: Transitioning from the Military with a School-Age Child



Question

What resources are available for my school-age child as my service member transitions from the military?



Answer

Children react to change in a variety of ways. Moving and attending new schools are changes many military children have experienced. Transitioning from the military may bring about new feelings - positive and negative. Some children may welcome the idea of staying in the same school throughout their education or having their family members, including their military parent, together under one roof without periods of separation. Other children may feel a loss of identity as they let go of the title and associated privileges and benefits of being a military child. As your service member transitions from the military, understand how you can support your school-age child through the changes that may come from leaving military life. There are resources that can help your family during this time.

Most importantly, keep in mind that your child is transitioning from the military, too. Begin by discussing your service member's upcoming transition with your child. Listen to his or her thoughts and feelings about how transitioning from the military will impact him or her. Many children identify as military children and have grown accustomed to common aspects of military life, such as the sense of belonging to a community and the comforts of consistent income and benefits. If upcoming changes seem to be causing difficulty for your children, your conversation may be best facilitated with help from a professional. Before transition, counseling services are available to your child and family through the Military and Family Life Counseling program. Call or visit

your installation's Military and Family Support Center to ask for a referral to an MFLC. Counselors available through the MFLC program are licensed and trained professionals who offer services at no cost to your family. If you do not live near an installation, Military OneSource can provide non-medical counseling virtually or connect you with counseling services near you. Call or visit the Military OneSource website to connect with a counselor or get a referral for counseling in your area.

“As your service member transitions from the military, understand how you can support your school-age child through the changes that may come from leaving military life. There are resources that can help your family during this time.”

If your service member's transition from the military means a move for your family, it is important to notify your child's school. Depending on your child's grade level, the school may have important dates for testing, grading periods and grade completion or graduation. Communicate with your child's teacher, guidance counselor or other school officials

Visit MySECO on Social Media



Resources at a Glance

- [Military OneSource](#)
- [Military Child Education Coalition](#)
- [Military Kids Connect](#)
- [Military Interstate Child's Compact Commission](#)
- Find a resource on your [installation](#)



Answer (cont.)

to determine procedures and timelines for requesting school records and withdrawing your children from school. For support navigating the school transition process, contact your local installation's school liaison officer. A SLO can help bridge communication between you and your child's school and may also be able to provide information, resources and referrals for other services that can support your family as your children prepare to change schools.

Once you know where your child will be attending school after your service member's transition, contact the new school. Ask about enrollment and the records and documents the school expects to receive from your family. Review the school's website with your child, and, if possible, schedule a visit to the school before the move to help familiarize your child with the building, teachers and overall atmosphere. Many new students benefit from being assigned a buddy or peer-guide to help them learn their way around the school and to understand school rules and procedures. Talk with your child's new school about resources that are available to help him or her adjust. If your child receives special education services, there may be additional steps needed to ensure a smooth transition from the current school to the new school. Review the MySTeP video and fact sheet, *Transitioning from the Military with a Child with Special Needs*, to learn more.

If your service member will be transitioning to the National Guard or reserves, your school-age child may continue to be eligible for the assistance and protections provided through the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission. MiC3 helps military families with educational considerations

surrounding enrollment, course placement and graduation requirements. Visit the MiC3 website, and contact your SLO to see if your children are covered under the compact.

Another resource for military children experiencing a school change or transition is the Military Kids Connect website offered from the Department of Defense. This website provides a safe internet community for military children to discover tips and resources to help navigate the common challenges of military life, such as moving. There are also resources for parents. Visit the MKC website to learn more.

Organizations, such as the Military Child Education Coalition, can help you support your school-age child with an upcoming transition. MCEC provides information to parents, students and professionals who work with students about a variety of issues that a military family may encounter on their journey, including transition out of the military. Visit the MCEC website to find information, tips, resources and trainings on transition topics, such as talking about change and facing challenges. Some military-connected schools offer support through MCEC's Student 2 Student program. S2S is a student-led program that aims to ease transitions by welcoming incoming students to their school and helps departing students prepare to leave the school. Ask if your school offers support to transitioning students through S2S.

Change can be hard, but parents can help ease the process. No one knows your child better than you do. Use the resources available to get the support your family needs to ensure a smooth transition for your school-age child.



Steps to Consider

These "Steps to Consider" are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- Begin talking with your child about transition from the military. Factors that may affect your child's reaction to the news of transition include whether your family will have to move from your current home and if the move will require that your child attend a new school.
- Evaluate your child's feelings about the upcoming transition. If you or other members of your family are struggling with the upcoming changes or want to talk it through with a professional, seek support. [Contact](#) an MFCLC on your installation through the Military and Family Support Center, or call [Military OneSource](#) to assess your needs and get virtual support or a referral to counseling support near you.
- Will your family move upon transition? Include your child in the moving plans. If possible, visit your new location to get a feel for the area, local amenities, and schools. If an in-person visit is not possible, review websites together. Find a few places to check out once you arrive at your new location so you have something positive to look forward to after the move.



Steps to Consider (cont.)

These “Steps to Consider” are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- Inform your child’s current school of your upcoming move. Ensure you understand the policies regarding withdrawal from school and transferring records. For additional support, [contact](#) the school liaison officer on your installation.
- Begin communicating with the new school as soon as you know where you will be enrolling your children. Ensure you have the required records, immunizations, and other documents required to enroll your child in school and in appropriate classes and course levels. Ask that your child be paired with another student to show your child around and to help him or her with his or her first few days at the new school. View the school website together to gain an understanding of the curriculum and activities offered at the school.
- Visit the [Military Child Education Coalition](#) website to find information, tips and training opportunities to help you support your school-age child with the upcoming transition. Check to see if your child’s current school offers a [Student 2 Student](#) program, which can offer your child support for the transition from a school peer.
- Connect with athletic teams and other extra-curricular activity groups or clubs and share that your child will be relocating to the area. Ask about eligibility, tryouts, and sign-up deadlines to ensure your child can participate, if he or she desires.
- Reach out to your network. Ask your friends, family, or colleagues if they have contacts in your new area to help your family better adjust to the move. Make plans to meet with a local contact once you arrive.
- Help your child discover the [Military Kids Connect](#) website. Select a topic of interest to begin.
- If you have a school-age child with special needs, review the MySTeP video and related fact sheet, Transitioning from the Military with a Child with Special Needs, to find additional resources.
- If your service member will be transitioning to the National Guard or reserves, your school-age child may remain eligible for support through the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission. Visit the [MiC3](#) website, and [contact](#) your installation’s SLO to learn more.
- After your family has transitioned from the military, know that your family may be eligible for some Military OneSource services for a limited time. Call to speak to a [Military OneSource](#) representative to learn more.



Resources

Virtual Resources

- Military OneSource: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil>; 800-342-9647
- Military OneSource Non-Medical Counseling: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling>
- Military Child Education Coalition: <https://www.militarychild.org/>
- Student 2 Student: <https://www.militarychild.org/audience/students>
- Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission: <http://www.mic3.net/>
- MiC3 Guide for Parents and Schools: <http://www.mic3.net/assets/one-pager-parents-and-schools.pdf>
- Military Kids Connect: <https://health.mil/MKCHome>

