



## My Next Steps:

# Preparing your Child for your Family's Transition from the Military



### Question

**What support is available to help my child understand and cope with our family's transition from the military?**



### Answer

As a military family, you've likely experienced many changes—a move to a new installation, a new job, or the addition of a new family member. Separating or retiring from the military and transitioning to civilian life will likely bring about lifestyle, career and financial changes for your family; changes your family may have never experienced before. Because of all of the changes transition from the military brings, you may be feeling excited or uncomfortable about the future. Know that your child may also be experiencing a range of emotions related to this transition. Many factors lead to the decision to leave the military. Some reasons for leaving may have a more significant impact on your family than others. By including your child in your conversations about transition and knowing the resources that can provide support, you can set your child up for success at transition time. Let's explore some of the ways in which you can prepare your child for your family's transition from the military.

**Acknowledge Feelings.** First, consider your feelings and your service member's feelings about the upcoming military transition. Children can pick up on excitement, worry, and stress and often look to parents as a model for coping with change. If your service member's transition from the military will move your family to a new location, your child may experience an additional range of emotions. Understanding each family member's feelings about the upcoming transition can help you to know the kinds of supports you and your child may need.

**Discuss the Transition with your Child.** No matter what the circumstances, one of the most important ways to prepare your child for an expected change is to talk about it. Give him or her as much information about the transition as you feel is appropriate, answer questions and be receptive to both positive and negative reactions. Your child's age and unique personality may influence your conversation. Remember that you know your child best, and you are the right person to provide advice and support. Even if you do not have all the answers, opening up the dialogue will allow you to support your child through this process.

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**Involve your Child in your Relocation.** If transition from the military will mean a move for your family, involve your child in the planning and preparation for moving day. Include your child in the house-hunting process or the search for a new activity in your new location. Encourage your child to pack some of his or her favorite items to hand-carry to your new home. Involving your child in the moving process can make the change feel less like it's being forced on them.

### Visit MySECO on Social Media



### Resources at a Glance

- [DoD Transition Assistance Program](#)
- DoD Transition Assistance Program [Virtual Curriculum](#)
- [Locate](#) a transition assistance office
- [Stand-alone online training](#) for family members



## Answer (cont.)

If you have a child in school, review the MySTeP video, *Transitioning from the Military with a School-Age Child*, to learn about additional resources available to support your school-age child and your family during this transition.

**Encourage Flexibility from all Family Members.** For some families, transitioning from the military may bring about a time of instability while a parent or both parents search for new employment or go to school to learn the skills necessary to switch career fields. Be open with your child about how your family's lifestyle, roles and responsibilities may change, even if only temporarily, and what he or she can expect. Transitioning from the military and settling into civilian life is a process that takes time; it may be a while before each family member gets comfortable with a new routine .

**Seek Resources.** For a younger child, transition from the military can be explored with age-appropriate support from programs such as Sesame Street for Military Families and ZERO TO THREE. Sesame Street for Military Families offers a tool kit for transitioning family members that shares parenting tips and includes kid-friendly activities and games to help children talk about their feelings and explore change. ZERO TO THREE offers parenting tips and suggestions to support parents of infants and toddlers as the family transitions to civilian life. Visit the Sesame Street for Military Families and ZERO TO THREE websites to learn more.

If you are a parent of a school-age child, a website such as Military Kids Connect can offer support to you, as well as a safe community in which your child can explore his or her feelings related to coping with change. Additionally, a

child who yearns to maintain a connection to the military community may be interested in participating in youth programs offered from Veteran Service Organizations such as the American Legion. Review the VA's Directory of Veterans Service Organizations for contact information for chartered and non-chartered organizations serving veterans and their families.

**Seek Professional Support.** If you, your child, or your family is in need of extra support as you begin this transition from the military, reach out to the counseling resources available to help. 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 virtual non-medical counseling or connect you with counseling services near you. Call or visit the Military OneSource website to get a referral to counseling in your area. Know that some Military OneSource services will continue to be available to your family for a limited time after your service member's separation or retirement.

Transitioning from the military is a change that is unlike any other you have experienced as a military family. Support is available to you, as a parent, and to your child. By working through the process together as a family and using the resources available, you can help your child prepare for your family's transition from military to civilian life.



## Steps to Consider

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

- Discuss the upcoming transition from the military with your child. Learn their feelings about the expected changes and answer questions they may have. For tips, strategies, and possible answers to common questions young children may have during this process, visit the [Sesame Street for Military Families](#) website. If you have an infant or toddler, review the [ZERO TO THREE: Military and Veteran Families Support](#) website to find suggestions to help your young child understand your family's transition. The [Military Kids Connect](#) website can provide support to you and your school-age child for issues related to coping with change.
- Will your service member's transition from the military mean a move for your family? If so, include your child in the moving plans. If possible, visit your new location to get a feel for the area and local amenities. If an in-person visit is not possible, review websites together.
- If you, your child or other members of your family are struggling with the upcoming changes, seek support.



## 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.

- [Contact](#) an [MFLC](#) 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.
- If you have a school age child, review the MySTeP video, Transitioning from the Military with a School-Age Child, to learn about some of the resources available to support your child and family during this transition.
- If you have a 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.
- Know that your family may be eligible for continued support of some the services offered from Military OneSource for a limited time after your service member’s transition from the military. Call [Military One Source](#) or visit the website to learn more.



## Resources

### Virtual Resources

- Sesame Street for Military Families: Military to Civilian Life: <https://sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org/topic/military-to-civilian-life>
- ZERO TO THREE: Military and Veteran Families Support: <https://www.zerotothree.org/parenting/military-and-veteran-families-support>
  - Returning to Civilian Life: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/433-transitions-returning-to-civilian-life>
- Military Kids Connect: <https://health.mil/MKCHome>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Directory of Veterans Service Organizations: <https://www.va.gov/vso/>
- Military OneSource: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>; 800-342-9647
  - Military OneSource Non-Medical Counseling: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling>
  - Military and Family Life Counselor: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling/military-and-family-life-counseling/the-military-and-family-life-counseling-program>

### Installation Resources

To locate an MFLC on your installation, visit <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- Select “Program or Service” from the drop down menu. Next, input “Family Center” in the text field. Next, enter your desired installation or zip code.
- Call or visit the Military and Family Support Center and ask for contact information for an MFLC.

## Related MySTeP Topics

### Special Considerations

- Transitioning from the Military with a School Age Child
- Transitioning from the Military with a Child with Special Needs

### Retirement Separation and Planning

- Relocation Considerations for Families Transitioning from the Military

### Transitioning to the Guard or Reserves

- Family Support Programs for National Guard and Reserve Families