



A MILITARY FAMILY'S GUIDE TO SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

Moving to a new post can spark anxiety in military families over the quality of the schools in and around a military installation. But families with children in preschool through high school can take certain actions to mitigate these concerns and help their children transition effectively to a new school. This guide has been compiled by military spouses with decades of experience in an effort to help simplify that process.



ORGANIZE SCHOOL RECORDS

Have at least an unofficial copy of your child's school records as well as report cards. While the receiving school district will make the request for the transfer of your child's official records, unofficial copies will give you some material to work with when discussing your child's placements in the new school. Don't forget a copy of your child's birth certificate and immunization records.



COMPILE SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

For older students, especially high school students, compile contact information for teachers and coaches at the previous school who might be future references for your child.



FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Each curriculum has its own focus, style, and methodology, so becoming familiar with the curriculum that your child has been involved with can prove helpful in making school choices. You can often make efficient comparisons with the new school's program knowing what reading, math, science, and social studies curricula were used. Write down the names of the books that your child used in his or her last school as a starting point.



KNOW YOUR CHILD'S INTERESTS

Have a list of your child's extracurricular activities and interests — including sports and level of participation, volunteer commitments, and hobbies. Be aware of new activities that your child might want to participate in, as well as athletics tryout eligibility requirements — especially if transferring mid-season. This information helps to round out the picture of your child that you present as a new member of this school community.



CONNECT WITH SCHOOL LIAISONS

School liaisons at the military installation serve as a clearinghouse for information about the schools on and near bases, and the services and programs offered in them. Meeting with them should be the first step for all transitioning parents, as they are the subject matter experts on education. It is their job to assist you in best understanding your new installation and the educational offerings it provides and supports — both inside and outside of the gates.

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GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD

Follow local school board members in the region where you are moving. Use local newspapers and district websites to become aware of their objectives, student outcomes, and performance goals prior to your arrival. Know when they hold public meetings. Many school boards now include a military representative, who can be another great resource.



MEET WITH A SCHOOL'S SPECIAL NEEDS DIRECTOR

If you have a child with an active Individualized Education Program (IEP), consider communicating with the district's Special Education Director to identify where services that your child may use are provided. Even schools in close proximity to one another can vary significantly in the availability of special education services. District staff can provide the most complete picture of their offerings and locations. A copy of your child's current IEP provides the receiving district with facts about your child's current services and your expectations. This can expedite continued support for your child upon arrival, especially for mid-year transitions. Bases also offer supports through the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Be sure to reach out to the EFMP Coordinator at your new base before moving to get connected.



GET FAMILIAR WITH THE INTERSTATE COMPACT

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children addresses key educational transition issues encountered by military families including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility, and graduation. While the compact "levels the playing field" for students, it's not intended to impact curriculum or local standards of education. To resolve compact-related concerns, families should first work with the school and military school liaison officer — or contact their state commissioner if additional assistance is needed. Visit www.mic3.net for more information.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PLETHORA OF MILITARY PARENT RESOURCES

Several key organizations provide information and insight about transitioning from one post to another and how to mitigate the impact on your child's school experience, including Military Families for High Standards, Military Child Education Coalition, the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, National Military Family Association, and ZERO TO THREE. Visit their websites and read their publications for more information, and get in touch if you have questions.

Each child is as unique as each family's experience. But remember, you are not alone. Military spouses at the new installation or spouses who have recently lived at that particular base have learned the ins and outs of that location and are often happy to share their experiences.

Learn more at militaryfamiliesforhighstandards.org

