



Smooth School Transitions: Tips for Military Families

One of the greatest challenges for some military families is to ensure children receive a fine education despite frequent moves ([/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Helping-Children-Adjust-to-a-Move.aspx](#)).

Steps to Prepare for the Move

Preparing for the move may set the stage for success. Several months before the move, parents can begin to familiarize the family with schools in the community. The Internet is a great resource for this.



District & School Web sites

Parents and children can visit the district and school Web sites looking for academic credentials and programs, athletics, and clubs available. Many Web sites have posted additional information and news updates about the campus. Such information can help allay your child's fears.

A school's Web site may provide information about schedules and calendars, including start dates, holidays, and end dates. These are not standardized from state to state, nor even within a state. Incorrectly assuming your children's new school schedule is similar to their current schools can result in their enrollment being days and even weeks later than the official start date of the district. Classes in which they wish to enroll may be full, friendships are already solidifying, and athletic teams may have a cutoff date for students wishing to make the team.

School Records

Hand carrying school records is vital in a school move. These records may include a photocopy of a cumulative folder, withdrawal paperwork, report cards, information on textbooks used, and a copy of the student's health record. Calling the person in charge of registration, likely a counselor or registrar, several weeks prior to the move will give time to copy these documents. It will also give the counselor or registrar the opportunity to let you know what you need to do to withdraw your child from the school.

You need to hand carry documentation related to any special programs your child is enrolled in, whether enrichment, gifted, accelerated, special education ([/English/health-issues/conditions/learning-disabilities/Pages/Special-Education.aspx](#)), or 504 services ([/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Section-504-and-IDEA-Coverage.aspx](#)). The receiving school may send a formal request for records to the sending school, and the documents you provide at the time of registration may be the only information the new school has to make informed placement decisions. This is extremely important for students receiving special education and 504 services. The information you provide may be instrumental in your child receiving services seamlessly; without that information your child may experience a lapse in services.

Once You Arrive

When you arrive at your new community, a trip to your child's campus can give him an idea of what to expect. The school may give him a tour and a map so he can familiarize himself with the facility. Knowing where the cafeteria, auditorium, restrooms, and counselor's office are can go a long way to helping a student settle in to a new routine.

Getting Involved

This presents an opportunity to explore what clubs and athletics are available for your child and how to go about joining them. Remember that although your biggest concerns may be about academics, your child's biggest concern may be about finding his locker or a group to sit with at lunch.

Parents can read and discuss the school's expectations for conduct and dress with their child.

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Meeting your child's principal or assistant principal, counselor, and teachers will go far to establish a personal connection. They may go further out of their way to ensure your child adjusts well.

Volunteering on your child's campus or joining a parent organization such as the PTA can help you make contacts at the school (/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/How-to-Get-Involved-With-Your-Childs-School.aspx) while making you and your child more comfortable in new surroundings.

Fitting In

Fitting in is vitally important to children and adolescents. A visit to the school's Web site can show pictures of students in the new community. Once you have arrived, look around the community to see what clothing, shoes, hairstyles, and accessories local kids are wearing. It may be that a few purchases would be all it takes to ease your child into his new life in his new community.

Where to Turn For Additional Help with the Transition

Many organizations work to help students transition to new schools. One organization particularly worthy of notice here is the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) (<http://www.militarychild.org/>). It is devoted to helping schools and military installations deliver accurate, timely information to meet transitioning parent and student needs. It focuses on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition.

Additional Information from HealthyChildren.org:

- Deployment and Children (/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Deployment-and-Children.aspx)
- Military Families: Child Care Support During Deployments (/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/Military-Families-Child-Care-Support-During-Deployments.aspx)
- Helping Children Adjust to a Move (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Helping-Children-Adjust-to-a-Move.aspx)
- A Message to Military Families: Staying Connected (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/A-Message-to-Military-Families-Staying-Connected-Video.aspx) (Video)
- Resiliency of Military Children (/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Resiliency-of-Military-Children-Video.aspx) (Video)
- Caring for Military Children (/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/Caring-for-Military-Children-Video.aspx) (Video)
- Health and Mental Health Needs of Children in U.S. Military Families (<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2013-0940>) (AAP Clinical Report)

Additional Resources:

- CNN Reports on New AAP Clinical Guideline on the Health and Mental Health Needs of Children in US Military Families (<http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2013/05/27/docs-urged-to-address-military-kids-mental-health/>) (CNN.com)
- Coming Together Around Military Families (<http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families/>) (zerotothree.org)
- FOCUS (<http://focusproject.org/>) (Families OverComing Under Stress™)
- FOX News Talks to Pediatrician on the Effects of Deployments on Families (<http://q13fox.com/2013/07/24/military-deployment-kids/#axzz2ZzpF187>) (Fox.com)
- Government form to release medical or dental records to a new provider (<http://www.jpc.capmed.mil/docs/dd2870.pdf>) (PDF)

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