



SUGGESTIONS FROM THE MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT COMMITTEE

THE MOBILE MILITARY CHILD

BEFORE THE MOVE

Request Records

- Get a copy of your child's records and transcripts from the old school and take them with you when first meeting the principal or school counselor at the new school.
- Call the new school before your child begins to ensure they have a copy of those records on file.

Immunizations/ Medical and Dental records

- Request and pick up records before the move. Hand-carry records as permitted by your service.
- Make sure the new school has needed records, such as allergy, vaccination, and medications.
- If your child needs special medical attention such as daily insulin shots or other medications, make sure there is someone qualified at the new school to help your child.

Special Education

- If your child receives special education services at her current school, make sure the new school is able to give her those same services (gifted programs too).
- Bring copies of records: IEPs, 504s, Gifted Certification, etc. for new school.

Prepare Your Child

- Talk to your child about anything she's concerned or worried about when it comes to switching schools, and take her concerns seriously. Don't simply say, "You'll be fine."

Curriculum and Readiness

- Find out as much as possible about the new school's curriculum and try to gauge if your child is behind, at the same level, or ahead of her classmates at the new school. Knowing this beforehand can save a lot of stress now **and** later.

CHOOSING A NEW SCHOOL

- Are courses portable—will the new school accept? Is GPA weighted? Are high school credits earned in middle school transferrable?
- What are the standardized test scores at the new school?
- What is the standard class size?
- Is the school/family population diverse?
- What courses are offered/available?
- What extracurricular activities are available? Are they open to transfer students? What fees are attached? Do these fees change from year-to-year?
- Are parents engaged effectively?
- Is a PTA serving the school/community?

ARRIVING AT THE NEW SCHOOL

Document requirements

- Bring documentation to the school. Proof of residency, birth certificates, transcripts, custody documents/power of attorney (if needed), immunizations, physicals, physician phone number, and emergency contacts are standard items you will need.
- School websites often list mandated documents and other required information.

Loneliness

- Don't underestimate loneliness. Some children fit in more quickly than others.
- Ask if your child can get a "buddy" for the first few weeks of school - an older student who can answer his questions, show him around, and simply be a friendly face – student to student.
- Encourage your child to keep in touch with friends at the old school; they're only a phone call or e-mail away, and they can be a big comfort to your child. And don't worry. Your child will make friends at the new school when he or she is ready, and probably faster than you might expect.
- Keep on top of things. After a few months of school, it's easy to think everything's OK and your child has adjusted. This may not be the case. Talk to your child, find out what is going on in class, who he or she is sitting with to eat lunch, etc. Use your imagination, but stay engaged and continue to show you care.

Get to know the environment and teachers

- Visit the school at least once several days before school starts.
- Take a tour of the grounds and classrooms, and meet the principal and some of the teachers. If possible, and if he's comfortable with it, take your child along for the visit. It will help any fears he may have about getting lost in a school and it will feel familiar to him on the first day.
- If your child is comfortable with it, go with your child on the first day of school and walk him in.
- Talk to the teacher, principal or guidance counselor frequently over the first few weeks of school to find out about any issues or concerns impacting your child's performance or progress at "fitting in." If you think that's "spying," tell your child about your intention to call the school for progress updates and offer to share what you hear with your child.

Get Involved

- Research ways for you and your child to be involved and get involved as soon as possible.
- For your child: Look for clubs and activities, such as band, drama, after school clubs or sports.
- For the parent: PTA, clubs, or volunteer opportunities.

DEPLOYMENT

- Deployment is disruptive enough, but sometimes circumstances require that the children are under the care of a guardian. Each installation has a pre-deployment checklist that encompasses more than this. These are some great reminders for all parents though whenever they have to be away from their families:
 - Create a Power of Attorney for spouse or guardians (may be specialized or general depending on the circumstances).
 - Ensure finances are set for care of children, fees, and tuition costs.
 - Ensure wills are up-to-date.
 - Create a list due dates for immunizations, physicals, etc., and ensure medical care is up-to-date.
 - Identify additional support, such as homework assistance at <http://www.tutor.com/military>, a website specifically set up for military families.
- Ensure your child's teacher(s) and counselors are notified of the upcoming deployment. This will help them look for any behavioral changes at school. Keep those lines of communication open!