

Geographic Transition Tips for Military-Connected Parents and Students

Transitioning from school to school is not an easy process. However, there are a few strategies to help you and your student(s) have an easier time. Every transition and school system is a little bit different, and some of these tips or strategies may work better in some situations over others.

Begin the conversation about a move with your school as soon as possible. As soon as you know where your next location is and when you will be transitioning, start to work with your student's current school. This way, if there are specific dates to keep in mind or documents to transfer, the school can let you know and you can begin to make arrangements. In addition, reach out your student's new school as soon as possible. The school's staff can begin preparations for your student's arrival, and be cognizant of any documents sent in advance.

Be aware of school year schedules. If possible, try to plan transitions over the summer. Students may want to move closer to the start of the school year if possible so they can spend the summer with the friends they have in their current location instead of having to make connections during the summer with no formal setting to do so in. It is also helpful to plan transitions at the end of quarters or semesters so students can more easily transfer grades.

Pay attention to cutoff dates. Many schools have cutoff dates to determine whether students are eligible to receive credit for the semester. If students arrive after the cutoff date, they may be placed in courses, but may not receive credit. Similarly, a student may have taken a course at his or her current school, but may not be granted credit for it because he or she did not remain in the course until the cutoff date. Ask about cutoff dates in your student's current and new school.

Advocate for your student with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The Interstate Compact covers the transfer of education records and enrollment, graduation, placement and attendance, and eligibility. All public and charter schools are required to follow the Compact; however, some may not be fully aware of the requirements. Understand how the Compact protects your student and advocate for them if need be. Visit <http://www.mic3.net/> or download the Interstate Compact Parent Brochure from <http://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/toolkit> for more information.

Reach out the School Liaison Officer. School Liaison Officers (SLOs) at both your current location and your new location can help you navigate school transitions and support the implementation of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. You can find SLO contact information at www.dodea.edu/Partnership/schoolLiaisonOfficers.cfm.

Bring electronic and hard copies off all academic records. This includes attendance records, report cards, transcripts, IEPs, Title II Plans, 504 Plans, Gifted and Talented IEPs, immunization and health records, behavior plans, extracurricular activity information, and contact information for the school and any relevant administrators or teachers. Download the Military-Connected Student Transition Checklist from <http://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/toolkit> for instructions on how to effectively organize all of these records.

Be aware of differing state transfer credit requirements. Although the Interstate Compact protects military children by allowing schools to accept similar courses for graduation credit, each state does this a little differently. Ask about how the new school will transfer your student's credits.

Ask the registrar office to be specific on the student's transcript. Many schools count eighth grade Algebra I as a high school course. However, unless this is explicitly marked on a student's transcript, another school may be unwilling to accept it as high school credit. Ask schools to specify honors, Advanced Placement, or any other specific type of courses on the student's transcript.

Ask about the options to obtain credit for a course. Some schools allow students to take end-of-course exams early, finish a course remotely, or complete a course online instead of finishing the course traditionally in the school. Talk with both your student's current school and his or her new school to make sure one of the two will be issuing credit for the course and the new school will accept the credit. DoDEA schools sometimes allow students to finish courses via the DoDEA Virtual High School Transition Program or take the course by exam.

Have the faculty advisor or coach write a description of your student's extracurricular activities. Often schools name programs or activities similarly, while the content or structure of the programs or activities is quite different. Having a description of the program or activity may make it easier for the school to place your student in a similar program or activity.

Identify as a military family. There are risks associated with identifying as a military family, including security concerns and preferential or discriminative treatment. However, when you identify as a military family, the school can better support you and your student(s). Consider asking the school to keep this identifying information only on the hard copy of your student's records. This also helps the school obtain Impact Aid. For more information about Impact Aid, see www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/impactaid/index.html.