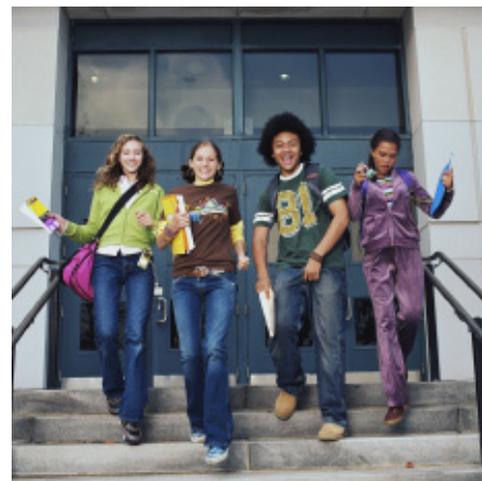




FLORIDA SUPPORTS MILITARY STUDENTS ON THE GO!

## SUPPORTING MILITARY STUDENTS: EDUCATOR STRATEGIES

The demands on military members and their families are not only increasing but are becoming more complex. When service members are called to duty, their families often experience tremendous upheaval. Children are especially vulnerable when separated from parents due to deployments. Their unique developmental perspective and limited life experience puts them at a heightened risk for emotional distress during the separation period.



Most students and their families will be able to adjust to a “new normal” after the departure of a spouse or parent; however, some students who are fragile or who have had previous social or emotional problems may continue to have serious symptoms of stress, and their ability to function in the school remains compromised.

As an educator, you play a critical role in the life of each student. You are a significant and valuable resource and support as the children affected by deployment learn to cope and also to grow during this time of change. We have provided some suggestions and strategies you can use in your classroom and school. Remember to rely on your own wisdom and knowledge of childhood development to adapt these ideas for your particular community.

### Elementary Students:

- Engage in play activities
- Draw and paint pictures
- Read and discuss stories of children problem solvers
- Write cards or letters to deployed family members
- Create a memory book of positive thoughts and actions
- Participate in individual and group counseling for persistent distress

### Secondary Students:

- Keep a journal
- Engage in art
- Write poetry and stories
- Write cards or letters to deployed family members
- Engage in relaxation exercises
- Engage in small-group discussions
- Exercise or listen to music
- Participate in individual and group counseling for persistent distress



In Collaboration with...



# MILITARY-CONNECTED YOUTH IN YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY



(By Dominique James, Ed.D.)

As the 2017-18 school year began across the United States, school administrators, counselors and teachers welcomed returning and new smiling faces into their school buildings. Some of these faces are of our nation's pint-sized heroes: military kids. There are nearly 2 million military-connected children in the United States; 1.2 million are school aged. Of these, only about 80,000 attend Department of Defense schools on a military installation, meaning that the vast majority of these students attend schools in the communities in which they live. Administrators, school counselors and teachers have the responsibility of welcoming military-connected students in their schools, understanding the unique social, emotional and academic challenges they face, mitigating those challenges, and celebrating their experiences as a military-connected youth. Here are some best practices for districts and schools:

- Create a military-connected identifier. To support them, you must first know who they are.
- Establish military student clubs or peer support groups. Military kids can move anywhere from every year to every four years, and this can result in a loss of social safety nets and peer relationships. Connecting these students with other military youth can help ease their school transition and assist them with establishing new relationships.
- Provide academic support. On average, military-connected students attend six to nine schools during their educational career. Imagine the numerous school and classroom routines a military child has had to learn! To make the challenge greater, curriculum standards vary across state and international borders. Remedial or enrichment activities may help support these students' academic needs. Consider the geography and varied cultural and global awareness your military student may have and allow them to assist or share during history lessons.
- Promote school connectedness. Veteran's Day in November and Month of the Military Child in April are perfect opportunities to celebrate military students and their families. Short schoolwide assemblies can be planned for Veteran's Day. Invite military-connected parents to participate in the ceremony. Consider alternative activities such as creating a display of patriotic-themed books in your school library or have students write thank you letters to local veterans. During April, designate a "Purple Up!" day in which everyone wears purple to celebrate military youth. For career awareness events, include careers in the military and encourage military parents to participate.

## MILITARY-CONNECTED YOUTH IN YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

- Conduct deployment and reintegration small-group counseling. Having a parent away on a business trip is common for students, but having that parent gone for months at a time is not. Learn age-specific concerns throughout the deployment cycle. These may include possible increased roles and responsibilities for an older child (and loss of independence during reintegration), changes in discipline, changes in school performance (e.g., the deployed parent helped with homework), increased somatic symptoms (i.e., appetite changes and sleep disturbances), anxiety, unrealistic expectations during reintegration, and reintegration with a wounded service member, to name a few.
- Be flexible in school policies, if possible. One of your military-connected students may have been a cheerleading captain, football quarterback or held a position in the student council, but due to a move during the school year, that student missed the tryout or campaign period at your school. If your school or district policy can allow this, consider leaving slots open or creating them as needed for military students. The same holds true for specialty programs.
- Connect with local resources. As schools support military students and their families, having points of contact on the nearby military installations is helpful. School liaison officers can help parents navigate school concerns. Other resources include the Exceptional Family Member Program, Family Advocacy Program, Family Readiness Group and Child & Youth Services.



While military-connected youth can face unique challenges, keep in mind that not all military-connected students have been exposed to a school transition or deployment. Be careful not to think that military children have “problems.” They experience many of the same issues that civilian families do; however, their challenges are magnified. Support, assist and celebrate military children in an inclusive rather than exclusive manner. As you support and assist all students this school year, consider how lucky you are to have military-connected students as part of your school community. They can be

very emotionally mature, patriotic and service-oriented individuals who typically have more political and global awareness than their peers. We can support our men and women in uniform by supporting their little heroes at home—after all, military kids serve too.

Dominique James, Ed.D., is a military spouse, educator and advocate for military students. She is project director for the 2015 DoDEA Military Grant at the Prince William County Public Schools, Office of Student Services, in Prince William County, Virginia. Contact her at [JamesD@pwcs.edu](mailto:JamesD@pwcs.edu). Reprinted with Permission.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Florida has the fifth highest number of school-age military children in the country. According to the Department of Defense Manpower Data Center, as of August 2017 there are 39,686 school-aged children of military families in Florida.



# ABOUT US

As one of the original 11 states to become members of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, Florida recognizes the need to provide supports to ease the trauma when children are uprooted from school as parents are transferred from base to base and state to state. The demands on military members and their families are not only increasing, but are becoming more complex.

Members of the Florida Military Compact Council include:

**Jacob Oliva** – Executive Vice Chancellor, K-12 Public Schools – Designee of the Commissioner of Education

**Henry Kelly** – Program Director, Office of Community Affairs, Okaloosa County School District – Designee of the Superintendent of the school district with the largest percentage of military children

**Kaye McKinley** – Military Family Liaison – Appointed by the Governor

**Nelly Richards** – School Liaison Officer, MacDill Air Force Base – Representative from a Military Installation

**Zackary Gibson** – Director, Office of Adoption and Child Protection, Executive Office of the Governor – Appointed by the Commissioner of Education – Representative from the Executive Branch

**Kelly Owens** – School District of Okeechobee County – Appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House

**Bob Buehn** – Florida’s Compact Commissioner – Appointed by the Governor

**Captain Sean Haley** – Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station Jacksonville – Representative from the Department of Defense

**Jordanne Stark** – Assistant Director for Compliance, Florida High School Athletic Association – Ex Officio Member

**Curtis Jenkins** – Student Services Consultant, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services – Staff Support to Council



# WHO DO I ASK FOR HELP?

1

School Liaison Officer (SLO),  
School Administrator, or  
other School Representative



School Liaison Officer

<http://bit.ly/2jxNmvr>



If you still need help  
please contact the MIC3  
Commissioner in your  
State

2

State Commissioner

<https://goo.gl/2Z9Jq1>

3

If you feel that the issue  
needs further attention  
please contact the  
MIC3 National Office



859.244.8133



[mic3info@csg.org](mailto:mic3info@csg.org)

<http://www.mic3.net/>

**MIC3**

MILITARY INTERSTATE  
CHILDREN'S COMPACT  
COMMISSION

## DID YOU KNOW?



Kathy Facon, Chief  
Education Partnership  
and Resources

[The Department of Defense Education Activity](#) (DoDEA) is a civilian agency of the United States Department of Defense (DoD).

The DoDEA is well-poised to lead the K-12 education strategy for the DoD. DoDEA, one of only two federally operated school systems, is responsible for planning, directing, coordinating and managing prekindergarten through grade 12 educational programs on behalf of the DoD. DoDEA is globally positioned, operating 168 accredited schools in eight districts located in 11 foreign countries, seven states, Guam and Puerto Rico.

DoDEA is committed to ensuring that all school-aged children of military families are provided a world-class education that prepares them for postsecondary education and career success and to be leading contributors in their communities as well as in our 21st century globalized society.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[School Liaison Officers](#) (SLOs) serve as the primary point of contact for school-related matters; represent, inform and assist commands; assist military families with school issues; and coordinate with local school systems. [Find your SLO!](#)

[Guide for Schools and Parents](#) – The compact deals with the challenges of military children and their frequent relocations. It allows for uniform treatment as military children transfer between school districts in member states.

A [Permanent Change of Station](#) (PCS) move can be a stressful experience and requires a great deal of advanced planning. The above link provides information and checklists to assist you in planning and executing each step of the PCS process.

A [Military Family's Guide to School Transitions](#) – Families with children in preschool through high school can take certain actions to mitigate 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.

Educator Toolkit to Increase Awareness & Support to Military Children in Schools – [https://dmna.ny.gov/family/docs/educators/Educator\\_Toolkit\\_for\\_Military\\_Children.pdf](https://dmna.ny.gov/family/docs/educators/Educator_Toolkit_for_Military_Children.pdf).

The [DoD Impact Aid for Children with Severe Disabilities Program](#) reimburses local educational agencies for money previously spent on military-dependent children with severe disabilities.

## RESOURCES

### [Florida Military Families](#)

The Florida Department of Education has a number of resources for military families transitioning in and out of Florida public schools.

### [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

SAMHSA offers support through technical assistance for state, territory and tribal behavioral health systems assisting service members, veterans and their families.

### [The Education Directory for Children with Special Needs](#)

This Education Directory for Children with Special Needs provides military families with children who have special needs with the information they need to make informed assignment decisions and easier transitions.

### [Military Child Education Coalition \(MCEC\)](#)

The work of the MCEC is focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation and transition.

Some photos provided by Thinkstock and Getty Images.