

Easing the Transition of Military-Connected Children in Virginia Schools



AN OVERVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

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How many military connected children are there?



Nationally

- Nearly 2.0 million military connected children (active duty, National Guard, and Reserve)
 - ✓ 37.4% are ages 0-5
 - ✓ 30.3% are ages 6-11
 - ✓ 25.1% are ages 12-18
 - ✓ 7.1% are ages 19+

Virginia

- Approximately 71,000 school age children of active duty members

Where are Military Connected Children?



There are military connected children in

EVERY

Virginia school division!!

- Guard and Reserve families
- Children living with guardians while parents are deployed

Unique Aspects of Military Connected Children



- Most military children attend schools in six to nine different schools from kindergarten to 12th grade
- On average, a military student transfers to different schools more than twice during high school

Attributes



Educators in schools with large numbers of military students have identified the following as general qualities of the military child:

- Strong family bonds
- Parents who are involved in their children's education
- Parents whose employer encourages parental support of schools
- Experiences from many different cultures and geographic areas
- Ability to relate to others with diverse backgrounds
- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Cooperative Spirit
- Maturity
- Independence

Transition



Moving from one school to another
because of military orders = PCS

Can be from Norfolk to Fairfax
or California to Virginia
or Germany to Virginia...
and anywhere in between!

Can be anytime of the year

Transition - Stressors



- **Mixed emotions**
 - Sadness/Excitement
 - Anger/Anticipation
 - Vulnerability/Confidence
 - Loneliness/New challenges
- **May be living in temporary housing**
- **Making new friends – who to sit with at lunch?!**
- **Reorienting to new classmates, teachers, schedules, school policies and offerings**
- **May have missed deadlines for sports or extracurricular activities**
- **Lack of sense of belonging**

Deployment



When active duty parent(s) is given
military orders to leave home post for
3 months or more

Not always a lot of notice

Can be anytime of the year

Deployment - Stressors



- Safety of deployed parent(s)
- Increased responsibilities at home
- Changes in family structure – may be less involvement from parent at home, or child may feel the need to be strong for remaining parent
- Limited opportunities to attend extracurricular activities
- Living with extended family
- Worry about financial resources

Virginia Laws



- § 22.1-360. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

- Facilitates the timely enrollment of children of military families and ensures that they are not placed at a disadvantage due to difficulty in the transfer of education records from the previous school district(s) or variations in entrance/age requirements.
- Facilitates the student placement process through which children of military families are not disadvantaged by variations in attendance requirements, scheduling, sequencing, grading, course content, or assessment.
- Facilitates the qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and participation in extracurricular academic, athletic, and social activities.
- Facilitates the on-time graduation of children of military families.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children



Eligibility

Children of:

- active duty members of the uniformed services
- National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders
- Members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired for (1) year.

- Applies to public schools only.

Interstate Compact – Educational Records

What is covered?

- Parents can receive a copy of unofficial records
- Receiving school must accept the unofficial records to enroll and place the student pending validation by official records
- Sending school must send official records within 10 business days of receiving a request from the receiving school
- 30 day grace period for immunizations

What is not covered?

- Waiver of physical or TB test

Interstate Compact – Kindergarten and First Grade Entrance Age

What is covered?

- A student can continue in the same grade in the receiving state regardless of entrance age requirements if he or she has enrolled (registered) in kindergarten or 1st grade in a public school in the sending state and as long the student meets age requirements in the sending state

What is not covered?

- A student who has not registered for kindergarten, even though they are of eligible age to have started

See http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/guidance_training/index.shtml for more information.

Interstate Compact – Kindergarten and First Grade Entrance Age (Cont.)

What is covered?

- A student may enroll in the next grade regardless of age requirements, if he or she has successfully completed the prerequisite grade level in the sending state

What is not covered?

Interstate Compact – Course and Educational Program Placement

What is covered?

- Receiving school shall initially honor placement in courses or programs based on the student's enrollment/participation/ placement in like programs in the sending school and/or educational assessments conducted in the sending school
- Receiving school may subsequently perform an evaluation to ensure the appropriate placement and continued enrollment

What is not covered?

- Although the receiving school must demonstrate reasonable accommodation, there is no requirement to create a program or additional space

Interstate Compact – Special Education Services

What is covered?

- Receiving school shall initially provide comparable services identified in the students' IEP or 504 from the sending school
- Receiving state may subsequently perform an evaluation to ensure the appropriate placement of the student

What is not covered?

- A requirement to provide the exact programs as sending school
- Anything above the requirements in the IDEA

Interstate Compact – Placement Flexibility and Absences

What is covered?

- Allowing flexibility to the school division to waive course or program prerequisites or other preconditions for placement
- Additional excused absences, at the discretion of the superintendent, due to parent's deployment

What is not covered?

- Mandatory waivers of prerequisites or preconditions

Interstate Compact – Eligibility

What is covered?

- School division cannot charge tuition to military children placed in care of a non-custodial parent or person serving “in loco parentis”
- Special power of attorney for guardianship is sufficient for enrollment and all other actions requiring parental participation or consent
- Student can continue to attend his or her current school even if living with a non-custodial parent or person serving “in loco parentis”

What is not covered?

Interstate Compact – Eligibility

What is covered?

- State and school division shall facilitate opportunities for military childrens' inclusion in extracurricular activities regardless of application deadlines

What is not covered?

- State student athletic associations

Interstate Compact – Graduation

What is covered?

- School divisions shall waive courses required for graduation if similar course work has been completed in sending school, or if denied, must provide an alternative means for acquiring course work so graduation may occur on time
- For transfers during senior year when student is ineligible to graduate from receiving school, allowing the student to receive a diploma from the sending school if sending state graduation requirements have been met

What is not covered?

- Mandatory waivers of course work
- Changing graduation requirements in the receiving school division

See http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/guidance_training/index.shtml for more information.

Interstate Compact – Graduation Cont.



- If student received a passing score on an exit or end of course exam (as part of state's accountability system), the student should be given credit and not required to take SOL.
- If student received a passing score on a National norm-referenced achievement test (Terra Nova), the student should be given credit and not required to take SOL.
- Substitute tests approved by the Board -
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/

See http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/guidance_training/index.shtml for more information.

What else can schools do?



- Wall of Honor – have student bring in a picture and short description of their service member
- Invite a member of the military to speak to a school assembly
- Establish a welcoming committee for new military students
- Adopt a Ship/Unit – set up a pen pal and care package program with a local unit/ship
- Create a Patriotic Day at school
- Celebrate the “Month of the Military Child” in April
- Display “proud to be a military kid” artwork
- Arrange a field trip to a nearby installation

Resources



Virginia Department of Education Website

www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/

Includes:

- Guidance Documents & Training Materials
- Virginia Laws Related to the Education of Military Children
- School Liaison Officers Contact Information
- Model Programs & Initiatives
- Military Family Resources



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