

Relocation for Military Families

Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

refers to a service member's assignment to a new duty station in a new location for a period of no less than six months. A PCS may often last one to three years.

Temporary Duty assignments last six months or fewer (TD acronyms vary by branch).

Deployment: refers to the activities required to move military personnel and materials from a home installation to a specified destination; when used by military families it refers to a mission for the military member only. Not every deployment is to a war zone.

Families usually move with the service member when the Service Member receives PCS orders, but don't accompany the service member for Temporary Duty Assignments and deployments.

Most families who chose military life enjoy the chance to explore new locations; each move can be an adventure, especially when traveling to a new country.



Relocation affects many aspects of life for military families including housing, nonmilitary spouse employment, schools and activities for children, childcare, and services for children with special needs.

- **Housing:** at large military installations, housing is provided. Families have a choice between living on the installation or in a community nearby.

If there is a wait list for installation housing the family will be placed in temporary lodging facilities (TLF). At times, temporary housing will be in a different public school district than the one children will attend once housing becomes available.

- **Employment:** for the non-military spouse, employment is disrupted. The Department of Defense (DoD) recognizes this and offers preferential hiring for certain government positions and a variety of support programs.
- **Childcare:** having reliable, trustworthy childcare is essential when the non-military spouse is working, in school, or looking for work. DoD provides on-installation childcare and child and youth activity programs. Wait lists for on-installations and approved off-installation sites are an issue in many locations which DoD addresses through a variety of supports:
- **Schools:** Curriculum differences between schools in different duty stations can result in military children being academically out of sync with their peers. Frequent moves can therefore impact children's academic success. There can also be issues with credit transfers, graduation requirements, and eligibility for grade entry, sports programs, etc.

[The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#) is a voluntary agreement between states and the military to ease relocation issues faced by all military children, including those with disabilities. All 50 states have signed on to the Compact. Because this is such a new agreement, some school districts are still unaware of it. If issues arise, the School Liaison Officer (see below) at the new duty station can intervene to help the family.

- **Children** repeatedly leave friends and valuable extracurricular activities, and start over, which can impact children's emotional and social development. Extended families can be left behind, removing important supports.

Relocation and children with special medical and educational needs:

When military families have a member with special needs they are required to enroll in the [EFMP \(Exceptional Family Member Program\)](#). One facet of this program is matching the special medical or educational needs of family members with resources at a new duty assignment. Enrollment in the EFMP doesn't, however, assure that the family will always be able to move with the military parent.

If the military member has an occupation or skill that is needed in a particular location, and moving to that location would be detrimental to the family member with special needs, the family may be separated from the service member.

If the appropriate medical or educational services the family member needs are not available in a new location, service members and their families have four choices:

- Move and accept the lack of services
- Leave the family behind and have the service member move to the new location
- File a request for Compassionate Reassignment to get the service member's new assignment reconsidered
- Ask to be released from the military because of hardship

Continuity of services for a child with special needs: IFSPs, IEPs and 504 plans:

[The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#) is a voluntary agreement between states and the military to ease relocation issues faced by all military children, including those with disabilities). One stipulation of the Compact is the temporary provision of the IEP services being implemented (to the extent possible) the same as those the student had in their previous school until a new IEP can be developed.

504 plans, although not specifically covered under the compact, are treated similarly. However, for children birth to three the

Compact doesn't apply and the new installation EI provider is not required to provide services until they have determined the child is eligible.

As a Parent Center it may benefit you to help military personnel (below) understand the requirements under IDEA as well as those provided through the Compact.

Military resources for relocation:

Resources do exist to help all military families when relocating. They are located at each installation, and although program names and titles may differ somewhat from branch to branch, their functions are very similar.

- **The School Liaison Officer (SLO)**, is an advisor to local school districts on the needs of military children. S/he knows the ropes about the local public and private schools and homeschooling options and is an excellent parent resource. One of the best services you can offer military families in your area is to make contact with the SLOs and build professional relationships with them. Contact [Branch \(MPTAC\)](#) for current contact information for installations near you.
- **The EFMP Coordinator** or similar personnel at the local installation. EFMP Coordinators should definitely be on your contact list. [Branch \(MPTAC\)](#) will have up-to-date contact listings.
- **Family Resource Centers:** These are also sometimes known as community service centers. There is one on each installation and they offer support on concerns ranging from relocation to domestic violence.
- **Reserve Component Family Programs:** will provide family services in a number of ways: through facility-based locations, website or by telephone. While these access points deliver a limited number of direct services to members and their families, they can provide referrals to other FRS resources. Contact [Branch \(MPTAC\)](#) for current contact information.
- [The Special Needs Parent Toolkit](#) (from the Exceptional Family Member Program) is a good resource for parents. There's an entire chapter on relocation.