



## Help Military Families Manage Back-to-School Stress

Starting back to school can increase stress for any family. Military families often face an added stressor: changing schools frequently. Military children typically move six to nine times between kindergarten and their senior year in high school. Consider these suggestions to help military families in your care manage stress now and throughout the school year.

### Know the school system

School systems across the country can have very different policies regarding:

- Student enrollment requirements
- Guidelines for grade placement
- Attendance policies
- Eligibility for academic and athletic programs
- Graduation requirements

Encourage those in your care to gather information before their kids head off to school. Families can learn about school systems near their new duty station through websites such as [Military Installations](#) and [Neighborhood Navigator](#).

### Connect with support

One of the most important resources for military parents is the school liaison officer. A school liaison officer is the primary point of contact for school-related matters, and will coordinate

communication and problem-resolution between the local school system, military leadership, and the family.

### **Use resources for the kids**

Other programs have been developed to assist military children academically:

- [Tutor.com](#) is an online resource that provides access to professional tutors, day or night, and offers their services free to military families.
- The [Military Child Education Coalition](#) has many programs and resources for military families, including the [Parent to Parent](#) and [Student 2 Student](#) programs.
- Military children can connect online with a community of military children (ages six to 17) and access age-appropriate resources through [Military Kids Connect](#).

### **Establish a routine**

Your military clients likely appreciate how routines and orderly schedules can reduce stress. If they find that school mornings are hectic or their children are neglecting schoolwork, encourage them to take some time to consider their routines. Consistent schedules for bedtime and waking, doing homework, preparing school lunches, getting clothes ready, etc., eliminate considerable stress.

### **Be prepared**

With family routines in place, military families can take steps early to minimize the stress that schoolwork can cause for everyone. Offer these suggestions:

- Make sure they have contact information for their child's teachers and counselor.
- Designate a homework station and stock it with supplies.
- Look at any course descriptions or other class information the teacher hands out. If they see that projects are in the plans, have supplies ready early.
- Post a large calendar at home that helps the family keep track of tests, projects, school events, and extra-curricular activities.

### **Check in often with children**

Whether the military child is in kindergarten or high school, frequent conversations about what is happening at school may help keep the parents alert to trouble with a subject or with a teacher, peer pressure, bullying, and other school stressors. Rather than ask their child "How was school?", suggest that they try this conversation prompter at dinner:

Have everyone tell each other two things they really enjoyed about their day at school, work, or home, and two things they did not like.

## Stay healthy

Routines and preparedness reduce stress, but cannot eliminate it altogether. To minimize the impact of stress on the family's health, remind them to:

- Eat a balanced, nutritious diet.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Allow time for relaxation and fun.

*If you are interested in providing non-medical counseling to military service members and their families through Military OneSource, please email us at:*  
[mosproviderrelations@militaryonesource.com](mailto:mosproviderrelations@militaryonesource.com).