



Military Family Lifestyle Survey



Education Access and Quality

2022 Comprehensive Report

Military Children's Education

In collaboration with

S Syracuse University

D'Aniello Institute for
Veterans & Military Families

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The majority (74%) of active-duty military families with at least one child enrolled in grades K-12 report they do not know about the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children. However, those who have used the Interstate Compact to advocate for their child report positive outcomes.

The majority (74%) of active-duty family respondents with children ages 20 years or younger report they have at least one child enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12). See Table 1 for a snapshot of K-12 education statistics for active-duty family respondents' oldest child enrolled in K-12 education for the 2021-2022 school year.





Knowledge of the Interstate Compact

Military families' knowledge of the Interstate Compact varies by several factors, including grade level of the oldest child and whether the child had an IEP or 504 Plan, as well as the active-duty family respondent's current state of residence, race, and branch of service.^e

The Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children (Interstate Compact) has been adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

"It provides consistency across states and was drafted with the intent to avoid conflict with

Table 1: Snapshot of K-12 Education for the 2021-2022 School Year
Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education

	Oldest child is enrolled in kindergarten-grade 5	(n=1,587)	51%
	Oldest child is enrolled in grades 6-8		23%
	Oldest child is enrolled in grades 9-12		26%
	Oldest child attends public school	(n=1,579)	70%
	Oldest child attends Department of Defense Education Administration (DoDEA) school		9%
	Oldest child attends private school, including virtual/online private school		8%
	Oldest child attends another type of school (for example, international school, host nation school, enrolled in charter school for homeschool kids)		2%
	Oldest child is homeschooled		12%
	Oldest child attends school in-person ^a	(n=1,357)	93%
	Oldest child has attended four or fewer schools ^b	(n=1,249)	69%
	Oldest child has attended five or more schools		31%
	Oldest child has an IEP and/or 504 Plan ^{a,c}	(n=1,284)	23%
	Oldest child is enrolled in EFMP ^d	(n=1,584)	20%

All statistics refer to the respondent's oldest child enrolled in K-12 education.

^{a,b} Only shown to those whose oldest child was enrolled in a public, private, or DoDEA school.

^c Compared to 15% of all public school students ages 3-21 who receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the U.S.

^d This proportion is similar to the proportion of youth with a special healthcare need in the U.S. population (19%). Children with a special healthcare need are defined as "those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally." <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/programs-impact/nsch-data-brief-children-youth-special-health-care-needs.pdf>.

^e While our data suggest differences among these subgroups, results are not generalizable as our subgroups may represent a skewed sample of respondents. For example, differences in racial/ethnic groups could be explained by differences in rank, age of the child, etc.

existing state codes where possible. It replaces widely varying policies that affect transitioning military students and supports uniform treatment for military-connected students as they transfer between school districts and member states.^f While the Interstate Compact is not exhaustive in its coverage, it addresses the key issues encountered by military families in the areas of eligibility, enrollment, placement and graduation.”¹



Table 2: Proportion Who Do Not Know About the Interstate Compact, by Grade of Oldest Child

Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education

Oldest child in grades K-5 (n=791)	80%
Oldest child is in grades 6-8 (n=354)	72%
Oldest child is in grades 9-12 (n=406)	63%

Question Text: Do you know about the Interstate Compact?

on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Interstate Compact) nearly three-quarters (74%) of active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education said no.

Knowledge of the Interstate Compact was highest among active-duty family respondents whose oldest child enrolled in K-12 was in grades 9-12 in the 2021-2022 school year (37% know about the Interstate Compact, 63% do not know).

Table 3: Proportion who Do Not Know about the Interstate Compact, by Branch^h

Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education

Air Force (n=364)	76%
Army (n=512)	74%
Navy (n=366)	71%
Marine Corps (n=158)	69%

Question Text: Do you know about the Interstate Compact?

Furthermore, 69% of active-duty family respondents whose oldest child is enrolled in K-12 in a public, private, or DoDEA school and has an IEP and/or 504 Plan said they do not know about the Interstate Compact, compared to 73% of active-duty family respondents whose child does not have an IEP or 504 Plan.^g

Knowledge of the Interstate Compact also varied by branch, with a smaller proportion of respondents affiliated with the Marine Corps reporting they did not know about the Interstate Compact, in comparison with their peers

^f The Interstate Compact only applies to military students in public or DoDEA schools. Military children attending private, parochial, homeschool, or international schools are not covered by the Interstate Compact.

^g While our data suggest differences among these subgroups, results are not generalizable as our subgroups may represent a skewed sample of respondents. For example, differences in racial/ethnic groups could be explained by differences in rank, age of the child, etc.

^h Coast Guard and Space Force respondents were excluded from this analysis due to low sample sizes.



affiliated with the Air Force, Army, or Navy. Furthermore, a smaller proportion of respondents who currently reside in Virginia (65%), Hawaii (67%), and those residing outside of the country (61%) report they did not know about the Interstate Compact, compared to respondents currently residing in California (75%) and Texas (78%).ⁱ

Nearly four in five (79%) active-duty family respondents of color^j reported they did not know about the Interstate Compact compared to 71% of their white peers who were not in a multiracial/multiethnic family,^k which could indicate that families of color may have less access to information or receive less communication than their white peers,^l as found in previous research by Blue Star Families.²

Use of the Interstate Compact

Of those respondents who know about the Interstate Compact (only 26% of active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12), the most common ways they heard about it were via the internet (33%), from a School Liaison (28%), or from another military family (24%). Respondents who knew about the Interstate Compact were asked if they had used the Interstate Compact to advocate for their child(ren). Similar to the pattern seen in knowledge of the Interstate Compact, use of the Interstate Compact was higher among families who reported their oldest child enrolled in K-12 (at a public, private or DoDEA school) and has an IEP and/or 504 Plan compared to their peers who did not. Nearly a third (31%) of those respondents whose oldest child in K-12 has an IEP and/or 504 Plan reported they had used the Interstate Compact to advocate for any of their children compared to 21% whose oldest child did not have an IEP or 504 Plan. When asked to share their experience with using the Interstate Compact and the outcome, the top responses included:

Table 4: Reasons for Using the Interstate Compact: Most Common Themes Reported in Open-Ended Responses		
Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education		
30%	to ensure course placement	"I am using the interstate compact to force [the school] ^m to provide my child with her appropriate advanced math class. Otherwise they would not allow her to stay on her current advanced math track she started in Virginia. We PCS in a few weeks. When she starts 8th grade, she will be permitted to take her proper math class at the high school." — Active-Duty Navy Spouse
20%	to ensure placement in the gifted and talented program	"In transitioning from another state, I leveraged the compact to submit a body of evidence in support of identification as gifted/talented for placement in special programs prior to arrival. I also used the Compact to ensure transfer of IEP services in a timely and appropriate manner." — Veteran and Active-Duty Air Force Spouse
18%	to ensure transfer of credit/graduation on time	"Used the compact to ensure "Credits in certain subjects to graduate on time."" — Active-Duty Coast Guard Spouse

Question Text: Would you please share your experience with using the Interstate Compact to advocate for your child(ren) and what the outcome was?

ⁱ Only locations with 50 or more respondents were used for this comparison.

^j Active-duty family respondents of color include those who selected American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino/a/x or of Spanish origin, Middle Eastern or North African, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. They could also select white and/or a write-in option, but not as the only option.

^k White, non-Hispanic active-duty family respondents not in multiracial/multiethnic families are defined as respondents who only selected white (and no other answer choices) to the race/ethnicity select-all question and answered they are not a member of a multi-racial/ethnic family.

^l The differences could also be attributed to the results of subgroup differences such as age of the oldest child in K-12, distribution of respondents of color across branches, locations, etc.

^m Name of school redacted to protect privacy of the respondent.

Adherence to the Interstate Compact

Most families agree their children's schools are adhering to components of the Interstate Compact, though about half did not feel the school understood the unique challenges and impact of frequent moves on their child.

After asking if respondents knew about the Compact, they were then asked to rate their child's current school on certain elements that are included in the Interstate Compact (see Table 5). Despite the lack of knowledge of the Interstate Compact among respondents, nearly half or more of active-duty family respondents agree the school where their oldest child is/was enrolled in K-12 for 2021-2022 school year adheres to elements of the Interstate Compact requirements as seen in Table 5. However, less than half of active-duty family respondents felt their child was able to participate in extracurricular activities regardless of application deadlines.ⁿ It is important to note, involvement in extracurricular activities is known to positively impact a child's ability to build resilience, connect with their new school, and is positively correlated with cognitive and socioemotional outcomes for children and adolescents.^{3,4}



Table 5: Proportion Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Following Statements Related to the Interstate Compactⁿ

Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education

I was able to enroll my child using either official school records or unofficial (hand-delivered) school records. (n=909)	90%
My child's age did not prevent me from enrolling him/her based on grade level in previous school. (n=816)	87%
My school allowed me at least 30 days to provide immunization records. (n=891)	79%
My child was placed in a course program that was comparable to the program s/he had been placed in at the previous school (e.g. honors program, English as a Second Language program, Individualized Education Program (IEP), etc.) (n=709)	69%
My child was placed in specific courses that were equivalent to the courses s/he had been enrolled in at the previous schools (e.g. vocational learning, technical courses, honors, international baccalaureate, advanced placement, etc.) (n=729)	67%
My child's school was flexible when it came to course placement. (n=718)	59%
My child was able to participate in extracurricular activities regardless of application deadlines. (n=588)	49%

Question Text: Each of the following statements is a rule included in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Thinking about your oldest child currently enrolled in K-12, please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with the following statements regarding the transition into his/her current school.

Overall, most active-duty military families felt their oldest child's school was welcoming and felt comfortable advocating for their child, but about half did not feel the school understood the unique challenges and impact of frequent moves on their child.

ⁿ Analysis is based on a five point Likert scale from 1-5 where 1 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Neutral and 5= Strongly disagree. Percentages exclude respondents who did not answer and those who chose "I don't know".

Thriving in School

Knowledge of the Interstate Compact may be associated with a greater proportion reporting their child is “thriving in school,” despite the common military lifestyle challenge of frequent school changes.

Despite the recent reports of a dramatic decrease across the U.S. in national and state assessments due to a loss of learning during the COVID-19 lockdowns,⁵ the majority of active-duty family respondents (68%) reported their oldest child enrolled in K-12 during the 2021-2022 school year was thriving in school, especially for those who reported they knew about the Interstate Compact. A higher

percentage of active-duty family respondents who have knowledge of the Interstate Compact agree their oldest child enrolled in K-12 (in a public, private, or DoDEA school) is thriving compared to those who do not know about the Interstate Compact, regardless of the number of schools attended. It is important to note that children in older grade levels are more likely to have attended more schools and/or moved multiple times, and therefore their families are more likely to learn about the Compact.

Table 6: Proportion Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the Following Statements:^P

Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education

My child's school did an excellent job of welcoming my child. (n=1,325)	65%
My child's school was receptive when I advocated for my child. (n=1,235)	63%
My child's school understands the impact of frequent moves on my child. (n=1,293)	51%
My child's school understands the unique challenges of military families. (n=1,337)	52%

Question Text: The following statements are NOT rules included in the Interstate Compact. Thinking about your oldest child in K-12, please indicate to what extent you disagree or agree with the following statements with regards to the transition into that school.

Table 7: Child Thriving in School, by Number of Schools Attended and Knowledge of Interstate Compact

Active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 education

Number of Schools Attended	Know About Compact	Child is Thriving
4 or fewer	Yes (n=185)	76%
	No (n=660)	69%
5 or more	Yes (n=153)	67%
	No (n=224)	57%

Extended Impacts of COVID-19

Absenteeism due to COVID-19 impacted children's thriving, but COVID-19 lockdowns instigated remote enrollment of relocating military children, an unexpected positive outcome for military families.

Absenteeism due to COVID-19 quarantines and isolations impacted respondent's perspective of their child's thriving. Similar to their civilian counterparts, military children continued to experience absenteeism due to COVID-19 quarantines and isolations during the 2021-2022 school year.⁶ For those attending in-person during the 2021-2022 school year, 71% of respondents who reported their oldest child had zero days of virtual schooling due

^P Analysis is based on a five point Likert scale where Strongly Disagree = 1 and Strongly Agree = 5. Calculations exclude respondents who did not answer and those who selected "Does not apply".

to COVID-19 quarantines indicated that their child was thriving in their school, compared to those who reported that their child had six or more days of virtual schooling due to COVID-19 quarantines (66%).

However, COVID-19 lockdowns created an unexpected positive change for active-duty families. Military family respondents in the 2020 MFLS⁷ noted how convenient it was for them to be able to enroll their children in school remotely before arriving at their new location. In the current survey, active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 during the 2021-2022 school year were asked if they used remote enrollment to enroll their child in their new school. Nearly half (46%) of active-duty family respondents reported they used remote enrollment for their oldest child who is/was enrolled in K-12 for the 2021-2022 school year and of those who used it, 74% felt it was beneficial to their family.

Although many active-duty family respondents with at least one child enrolled in K-12 during the 2021-2022 school year did not know about the Interstate Compact, most respondents did agree their oldest child enrolled in K-12 was thriving in their school. That said, the responses to the qualitative question about using the Interstate Compact indicates that the results were positive for those who used the compact to advocate for their child. The data here suggests most schools are adhering to the Interstate Compact, however, for those families in a school/school district that is not adhering to aspects of the Interstate Compact, being aware of the Interstate Compact can be a powerful tool for families to advocate for their children.

Limitations

Knowledge or use of the Interstate Compact may not be related to their current state of residence or their children's current type of school. The Interstate Compact only applies to military students in public or DoDEA schools. Age/grade of the child, different family experiences, number of moves or years of service, region, and special education needs⁹ could impact knowledge of the Interstate Compact and their child's current school's adherence to the elements within the Interstate Compact. Many of the differences among subgroups (branch, race/ethnicity) could be impacted by these variables as well. While parents were asked to provide qualitative data on their use of the Interstate Compact, it was not limited to the school their oldest child in grades K-12 was attending during the 2021-2022 school year.

⁹ The Interstate Compact does not supersede federal law and adheres to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Recommendations

For States

- **Appoint a Compact Commissioner in a timely fashion and designate a point of contact embedded within the state's Department of Education.***
- Adhere to the Interstate Compact's requirements to ensure all positions are filled and regularly host a State Council.
- Encourage schools, school districts, and military families to participate in the MIC3 online training to improve their understanding of the protections of the Interstate Compact.
- Pass the Advance Enrollment initiative to allow military families to remotely enroll their children on an expanded timeline and without proof of physical residence as 34 states have already done.

For the Department of Defense

- Encourage key people — Defense State Liaisons (DSLs), School Liaisons (SLs), Ombudsman, Key Spouses, etc. — to be knowledgeable about and ready to speak to the protections afforded by the Interstate Compact.
- Update informational websites and resources to include most recent updates to the Interstate Compact.
- Publish information for parents and young adults/teenagers to help them understand their rights and self-advocate.

For Military Families

- Engage in self-education related to the Interstate Compact, including by taking the MIC3 online training to understand the protections associated with the Interstate Compact.
- Engage in self advocacy and prepare your young adult children to self advocate.

*More information in Recommendations Chapter of Comprehensive Report

Endnotes

- 1 Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission. Resume. <https://mic3.net/publications>
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