



## **Who are Military-Connected Students?**

- Military-connected students are: children in P-6 schools, adolescents in Middle and High School and students who are adolescents or young adults in Trade Schools, or Institutions of Higher Education (2 or 4 year schools) that are official dependents of a Military Service member. A military-connected student has one degree of separation from their military sponsor; the connection may be biological, because of an adoption, through foster parenting or with in loco parentis authorization.
- There are currently 2,000,000 military-connected students whose parents are active duty, members of the National Guard or Reserves or Veterans of the United States Military.
  - 1,381,584 of the military-connected students are 4-18 years old;
  - Over 80% of these children – 1,105,267 students – attend P-12 public schools;
  - Every school district in this country has military-connected students; and
  - Approximately 10-12% of military-connected students are served in special education programs.
- There are an additional 144,191<sup>1</sup> military-connected students age 19-23. Research shows that approximately 70%<sup>2</sup> of youth attend college or university, which, equates to 100,934 military-connected students enrolled in post-secondary education in 2009.

## **Educational Challenges Surrounding Military-Connected Students**

Military-connected students face the following challenges:

- separations from a parent or caregiver due to deployments;
- High mobility rates – active duty families move every two to three years (This is approximately three times more often than the civilian population<sup>3</sup>. Students often experience six to nine moves during their P-12 school education);
- Academic and social challenges attributed to frequent school changes, deployment of a parent(s), return of a deployed parent, injury to or death of a parent, etc. ;
- Difficulties qualifying for, receiving, or continuing special needs services due to differences in regulation interpretations, testing required to enroll in or receive special needs services, and resource availability in school districts;
- Understanding and interpreting new school regulations and policies ;
- Elevated stress – making new friends and finding a new peer group in a new school; adjustment to a new school, community, and home;
- At-risk for depression and anxiety due to relocation, deployment of a parent(s), etc.; and,
- Adjusting to curriculum and instructional methods or school climate/culture that may differ from school to school.

## **Challenges for Educators**

- New educators (teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, principals, and others) may not be aware of the social, emotional, and learning challenges specific to military-connected students.
- Often P-12 schools are not aware of who their military-connected students are or how to support the unique needs of those students.
- Additionally, higher education institutions may not be aware of which students are military-connected nor prepared to address the unique needs of these students.

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<sup>1</sup> Defense Manpower Data Center, DRS#5800, May 2011 table.

<sup>2</sup> Rate of students attending college or university (70%) came from the U.S. National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> R. Collins. *Five things school leaders can do to promote academics*. Retrieved from <https://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=9012>.