THE MILITARY CHILD SPECIAL EDUCATION CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

The military lifestyle creates many challenges with providing consistency in education for children of active duty service members. These challenges are exponentially more difficult for military families with children with special needs. Although there are umbrella protections under federal and state laws, many military families are reporting that school districts are not providing the minimum support and services mandated by law for our most vulnerable children.

MILITARY FAMILIES AND READINESS

Children with exceptional needs require specialized educational services, but when services are disrupted, the required parental advocacy increases. Increased stress impacts operational readiness. According to an armed forces and society study, male military members’ work performance declined by 19 percent when under significant family-related stressors.[iii] A stressed force is a less ready force. Although protections are in place via the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission (Mi3C), because they are non-regulatory, the burden of advocacy falls on the shoulders of military parents.

TODAY’S CHALLENGE

Partners in PROMISE conducted the most thorough study on the military special education population to date.[i] Key findings highlighted how military PCS moves have a significant impact on special education:

- 90% of surveyed military families have experienced a move
- 79% of respondents said their child went without special education services for over a month after a military move

Additional delays in implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are prevalent. Each delay sets students back emotionally, educationally and developmentally. Our survey data indicates that the following recommendations will alleviate the stress placed upon our service members and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure advanced/remote school enrollment for military dependents with existing IEPs
- Allow active duty military dependents to maintain IEPs at a new duty station after a PCS for up to six months

CONTACT

To learn more about Partners in PROMISE or our 2021 Survey findings please email info@thepromisect.org

Michelle Ferman, Founder & Executive Director
Jennifer Burnell, Chief Operating Officer

SOURCES

[i] https://thepromisect.org/2021-survey/