

# Resolving Education Transition Issues for Military Children

MONTANA COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

### Purpose

In 2013, the Montana Legislature approved Senate Bill 203, which established Montana's participation in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The purpose of the compact is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. The state's participation in the compact is intended to facilitate:

- the timely enrollment of children of military families;
- the student placement process;
- the student's qualification and eligibility for enrollment, education programs, extracurricular academic, and athletics; and
- the student's on-time graduation.

### Students Covered by the Compact

Children of active duty members of the uniformed services, National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders, and members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired for one year are eligible for assistance under the compact.

### Extracurricular Activities

The Montana High School Association (MHSA) has found that the more administrators understand the unique challenges facing a military-connected student, the easier it is to work with the MHSA on eligibility issues.

### Compact Rule 6.102

Under the compact, state and local education agencies must facilitate the opportunity for transitioning military students to participate in extracurricular activities, regardless of application deadlines, to the extent that the student is otherwise qualified. School districts should work in consultation with MHSA in implementing this rule.



### MHSA - Related Issues

#### **Tryouts (coming after teams have been selected):**

The receiving school shall facilitate the opportunity for inclusion in extracurricular activities regardless of deadlines if the child is otherwise qualified.

**Practices:** For the purpose of meeting the MHSA minimum number of initial practices, transfer students' sport-specific practices count towards those practices with verification from an administrator from the transferring school.

**Other coach or district prerequisites:** The school shall facilitate the opportunity for inclusion in extracurricular activities regardless of deadlines if the child is otherwise qualified.

#### **MHSA Age Rule, Academic Rule, and Semester**

**Rules:** These rules will be enforced as written.

**MHSA Transfer Rule:** Military children who transfer with their parents are varsity-eligible in the attendance area where they reside. Military children who must move to live with relatives because of deployments etc. may be declared varsity-eligible if the school to which they transfer files a hardship petition with the MHSA on the student's behalf. Although the receiving school must demonstrate reasonable accommodation, there is no requirement to hold open or create additional spaces.

## Education Issues

The compact addresses key education transition issues encountered by military families including enrollment, placement, attendance and graduation. The compact is not intended to impact curriculum or local standards of education.

**Transfer of Education Records:** Official transcripts for military-connected children often come from other states or overseas. Parents will have unofficial or “hand-carried” records sent to them by the Custodian of Records at the Department of Defense. The receiving school must enroll and appropriately place a student pending validation of official records. The school in the sending state must furnish official education records within 10 days. A student is given 30 calendar days from the date of enrollment to provide immunization records.

**Course sequencing:** The receiving school shall honor placement based on the student’s previous enrollment and/or educational assessments. The school is not barred from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement and continued enrollment.

**Graduation Requirements:** Graduation requirements vary from state to state. The graduation of military-connected students who transfer during their junior or senior year may be jeopardized if they are unable, due to state/local policies or scheduling constraints, to enroll in the necessary coursework. However, specific required courses must be waived if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed. If a waiver is denied, the receiving school must provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so the student may graduate on time. The Montana Digital Academy may offer coursework that can help the student meet the district’s graduation requirements.

### **Kindergarten and First Grade Entrance Age**

**Variations:** The student shall be allowed to continue their enrollment at grade level in the receiving state, commensurate with their grade level (including kindergarten) from a local education agency in the sending state at the time of transition, regardless of age.

In the case of a kindergarten student, the child must have been enrolled and attended school in the sending state in order to assure continued attendance in kindergarten in the receiving state.

### Montana's Compact Commissioner

Governor Steve Bullock has named Retired Brigadier General Harold Stearns to serve as Montana's Commissioner to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. In addition to serving in the military, Gen. Stearns has taught at the K-12 and postsecondary level.

The compact commissioner is responsible for the administration and management of the state’s participation in Interstate Compact. Gen. Stearns is an advocate for students, their families and schools to ensure that a military-connected student’s rights under the compact are upheld in Montana.

*Retired Brigadier  
General Hal Stearns*  
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### **Council Membership**

The members of the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, established in 20-1-230, MCA, include:

- Brigadier General (Ret.) Harold Stearns, Compact Commissioner, appointed by the Governor
- Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau, appointed by the Governor
- Vacant, Malmstrom Air Force Base, appointed by the Governor
- Captain Dan Bushnell, Montana National Guard, appointed by the Governor
- Superintendent Tammy Lacey, Great Falls Public Schools, appointed by the Governor
- Senator Edward Buttrey, Great Falls, appointed by the Senate President
- Representative Jean Price, Great Falls, appointed by the Council
- Mark Beckman, Exec. Director, Montana High School Association, appointed by the Council
- Leisa Drain, School Liaison Officer, Malmstrom AFB, appointed by the Council

