



Military-connected children encounter many changes, including frequent moves, a parent's deployment, a parent being gone frequently, or a parent leaving the military. The injury or loss of a parent may be a reality for some military-connected children.

All these changes affect children emotionally, socially, and academically. Young children may not understand the situation, but they experience the change along with a loss of comfort, stability, and certainty.

While we often cannot control changes, we can control our reactions to them. Consider the following suggestions to support your child through change.

- Communicate. Reassure children that they are not alone; caring adults will stay connected to them and are interested in helping them. Remind children that you love them unconditionally and support them.
- Be honest and share age-appropriate information to help young children understand what is happening and why. Use visuals for very young children like pictures or role play with puppets.
- Prepare for school changes by building a portfolio together with your child.
- Help young children understand and express their emotions. Check the [Well-being Toolkit](#) for resources and tips on supporting children.
- Use stories to help young children understand change and feelings. Choose stories your child can identify with. For example, when you are moving, choose books about moving. Looking at pictures and reading about others who have gone through similar situations can be very effective to help children understand and imitate positive coping skills as well as develop empathy.
- Keeping routines helps children adjust to changes by providing predictability and stability.
- Children cannot control the changes; therefore, give back some control where you can. Allow children to make their own choices about things like what to wear or which toy to take on the plane.
- When a child is hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, navigating change is more difficult. Teach children to listen to their bodies and use the acronym HALT to decide if they are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.
- Spend quality time with your child as often as possible.

## POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

The military lifestyle has many positives. Adjusting to new communities helps military-connected children learn to be flexible and open-minded. Family is a central source of support for many military-connected children during frequent transitions and separations from their servicemember parents.

Families know that changes are part of the military lifestyle, and this can strengthen the bond between children and parents. Military-connected children also have the opportunity to experience connection and belonging in the military community by contributing or volunteering. Check your installation's Youth Programs for opportunities to connect with peers and families.



## SUPPORT

There are a variety of organizations and tools that can help military families.

- [Sesame Street for Military Families](#) created a website to support military families and their young children. Topics include relocation, deployments, long-term caregiving and more.
- Youth Caregivers are children, youth, and young adults (up to age 18) who are actively involved in or currently impacted by the care needs of a wounded, ill, or injured veteran. Check the [Hidden Helpers](#) website for resources.
- [Operation Purple® Camp](#) offers military kids a free week of camp where they connect with other kids, just like them.
- [FOCUS](#) (Families OverComing Under Stress) provides resilience training to military children and families.
- Sometimes major changes can push families to the limits. Reaching out for help models that strong people seek support and guidance. Don't hesitate to reach out for help by contacting a physician or counselor. The [Military and Family Life Counseling Program](#) (MFLC) supports Service Members, their families and survivors with non-medical counseling worldwide.

## VIDEO

- 6 tips to help your children control their emotions:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4n2MiGgDUl>

<p><b>MCEC Resources</b></p> 	<p><b>MCEC Website</b></p> 	<p><b>MCEC Military Student Consultant</b> – personalized support for military families</p> 
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References available upon request.

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