



Military Student Identifier Position Statement

Background

The **Military Child Education Coalition** (MCEC) is a 501(c)(3) global non-profit organization that provides evidence-informed programs, professional development, best practices, and resources customized to serve the needs of military-connected children¹. For over twenty-five years, MCEC has supported the identification and inclusion of all military-connected students by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle. The Military Student Identifier (MSI) was mandated in the **Every Student Succeeds Act**² (ESSA of 2015) to require that states and districts report on the performance on state assessments of students with a parent in the military. MSI is a critical tool for educators and policymakers to offer resources and direct strategies to support all military-connected students (K-12). MSI can also ensure academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs are recognized, supported and that appropriate responses are provided to all military-connected students. This student population includes the over 2.3 million youth caregivers who live with a wounded, ill or injured service member or veteran.³ A recent study by **RAND** found that about 40% of military and veteran connected children under 18 living in caregiver households help with caregiving tasks.⁴ The additional social, behavioral, and mental health challenges as well as extra responsibilities at home can be overwhelming and take the forefront to school success and the youth's own mental well-being.^{3,4}

Executive Summary

While the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of FY 2020, **Sec. 579**⁵ Annual Report Card removed the “on active duty” requirement for the ESSA of 2015 in an effort to expand the definition of military-connected students, the Code of Federal Regulations, **Title 34 §200.2(b)(1)(ii)(D)** and **§200.2(b)(1)(i)(I)**⁶ continues to include only students with a parent who is a member of the armed forces on active duty and serves on full-time National Guard duty. This conflicting information leads to ambiguity about who is included. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in data-reporting systems, and schools may inadvertently exclude students of reserve component members, veterans, youth caregivers, or Gold Star children.

Federal MSI Requirements

The Every Student Succeeds Act codified the recognition of military-connected students as a distinct subgroup for reporting purposes mandating the use of MSI. According to the Military Child Education Coalition⁷ ...

¹ Military Child Education Coalition (2024). What We Do. www.militarychild.org/about/

² Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 [Public Law 114-95. December 10, 2015] www.congress.gov/114/plaw/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf

³ Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Wounded Warrior Project, Lilly Endowment, Inc., & Mathematica (2021). *Hidden Helpers at the Frontlines of Caregiving: Supporting the Healthy Development of Children from Military and Veteran Caregiving Homes*. Mathematica. https://hiddenheroes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EDF_FinalReport.pdf

⁴ Ramchand, R. et al. (2024, September 24). America's military and veteran caregivers: Hidden heroes emerging from the shadows. RAND. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3212-1.html

⁵ National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020 [Public Law 116-92. December 20, 2019]. <https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ92/PLAW-116publ92.pdf>

⁶ (2020). Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter II, Part 200, Subpart A, Standards and Assessments §200.2. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/section-200.2>



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Schools regularly disaggregate student demographic and performance data to evaluate program effectiveness and to ensure appropriate tiered resources are available.

Recommendations

In accordance with the September 3, 2024 [U.S. Department of Education](#) guidance, at a minimum use a military-connected student definition in data reporting systems that include students with a parent on active duty, full-time or part-time National Guard or Reserve duty in the armed forces (Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force, Coast Guard).⁸ Additionally, MCEC strongly recommends identifying students (K-12) with a parent who is a military retiree (including retired Reserves) or veteran (including service members who died on active duty) to ensure support of Gold Star children and youth caregivers.

⁷ MCEC. (2025, March 5). *Frequently Asked Questions: Suggested Use for Military Student Identifier Code*. https://militarychild.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/MCEC_MSIFAQ_20250324.pdf

⁸ Schott, A. (2024, September 3). *Reporting DCL 9.4.24*. [Letter to Chief State School Officer]. U. S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/reporting-dcl-9424>