



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Building Belonging, Opportunity, and  
Readiness for Military-Connected Children



| MCEC<sup>®</sup>



MCEC Student 2 Student® Leaders with President and CEO Mary Bier at the Global Training Summit

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# LETTER FROM **LEADERSHIP**

## **From Board Chair Admiral Cecil Haney (Ret.) and President & CEO Mary Bier**

Military-connected children carry more than many people see. They step into new schools, new communities, and new routines with courage. At Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®), we believe they should not have to do that alone.

In 2025, MCEC continued to stand beside military-connected children, their families, and the educators who support them. We did that through student leadership, family programs, educator training, school partnerships, and advocacy that helps children feel seen, supported, and ready to thrive. Each part of our work is connected, creating an ecosystem of support that helps children build belonging, maintain continuity, and move forward with confidence.

This year also marked an important leadership transition. In January, Mary Bier stepped into the role of President and CEO, bringing both lived experience as a military spouse and parent and a deep commitment to the future of this work. Her leadership reflects a balance of continuity and innovation, building on MCEC's strong foundation while positioning the organization to reach more children with greater impact.

This was also a year of meaningful momentum for MCEC. We strengthened our financial position, deepened key partnerships, and secured important investments in our future, including a \$1 million capacity-building grant from Lilly Endowment. These steps are helping us build the systems, tools, and infrastructure needed to serve more children with even greater impact in the years ahead.

Supporting military-connected children is the right thing to do—it strengthens families, communities, and readiness across the force. To every donor, partner, educator, policymaker, and military family who believes in this mission, thank you. Your support makes this work possible. Together, we are helping military-connected children not only navigate change, but lead through it.

With gratitude and commitment,


**Cecil D. Haney**

Admiral, United States Navy (Retired)  
*Board Chair*


**Mary Bier, MBA**

President and Chief Executive Officer



# OUR MISSION

The Military Child Education Coalition<sup>®</sup> (MCEC<sup>®</sup>) supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.



## How Our Programs Create an Ecosystem of Support

Military-connected children do not experience school transitions, family stress, or academic change in isolation. That is why MCEC's work is designed as an ecosystem of support. We help students build connections, equip adults to respond well, and work at the systems level so support is stronger in every community a military family calls home.

- **Student 2 Student<sup>®</sup>** helps students find connection and belonging with their peers from day one
- **Educator training** gives school staff practical tools to support military-connected students well
- **Military Student Consultants** help families solve complex education challenges
- **Purple Star Schools** build lasting school-based support for military families
- **Advocacy and policy work** turns frontline experience into broader systems change

Together, these efforts help children feel seen, supported, and ready for what comes next.

# STRONG STEWARDSHIP FOR GREATER IMPACT

In 2025, MCEC strengthened its financial position through careful stewardship, disciplined decision-making, and a clear focus on mission impact. This progress reflects the shared commitment of our staff, board, donors, and partners to build a stronger foundation for the future.

Our approach was grounded in thoughtful resource allocation, strong financial oversight, and strategic investment in the programs and infrastructure that matter most. As a result, MCEC ended the year on solid footing and better positioned to grow its impact in the years ahead.

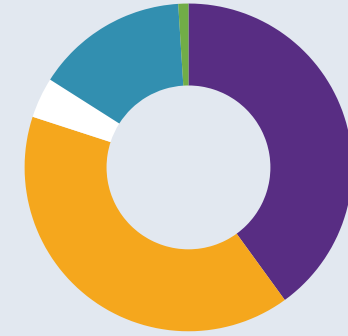
## How support was invested:



- 76% Program services
- 10% Management and general
- 14% Fundraising

FY25 Revenue **\$4,679,917**

## Revenue Sources:



- Government grants: 40%
- Foundation support: 40%
- Individual donors: 4%
- Corporate partnerships: 15%
- Membership and training fees: 1%

FY25 Expenses **\$4,247,222**

## Highlights from the year:



**\$1 million Lilly Endowment grant**  
to strengthen systems, evaluation, and scalable delivery



**National recognition from Fisher House Foundation**  
for innovation in serving military families



**Expanded partnership support from USAA**  
to increase impact and reach



**Major philanthropic and corporate investments**  
that increased momentum for the future

# MCEC YEAR IN REVIEW: 2025

## Supporting Military-Connected Children Every Day

Every day in 2025, MCEC helped military-connected children by supporting the adults, schools, and communities around them. Through training, consultation, resources, and partnership, we strengthened the systems that help children navigate transition with greater stability and support.

58,608

TOTAL REACH

Professionals trained and families supported across all MCEC programs

31,646

DIRECT REACH

Educators, parents, and professionals directly engaged through training, consultation, and resources

26,962

INDIRECT REACH

Students and families reached through the professionals and systems MCEC helped strengthen



# STORIES OF IMPACT

Behind every number is a child, a family, or a community changed by support that arrived at the right moment. These stories show what happens when military-connected children are met with belonging, guidance, and opportunity.



Olivia V., LTG Sean Gainey, and Emma D. at 2025 MCEC Global Training Summit Atlanta

## Student Story: From Belonging to Leadership

**Audrey U.**

Virginia Allred Stacey Junior/Senior High School

Audrey U. first joined Student 2 Student® in sixth grade. What began as connection grew into confidence, leadership, and purpose.

In 2025, Audrey attended the Caregiving Youth Student Leadership Program, joined MCEC's Student Advisory Council, and took the stage at the Global Training Summit to share what military-connected students need most. Her voice brought lived experience into a room of educators and leaders, reminding everyone that when students are given the chance to lead, they do.

Audrey will be enlisting in the United States Air Force, with plans to pursue a career in aviation, intelligence, or medicine. She is waiting to learn which pathway will be the right fit for her. Serving in the military has been a dream of hers since second grade.

*"The Caregiving Youth Student Leadership Program helped me discover the power of my voice, the strength of my experiences, and the impact I can make when I'm willing to step up and lead." — Audrey U.*

**Programs & Milestones** Student 2 Student® · Caregiving Youth Student Leadership Program · Student Advisory Council · Global Training Summit Speaker



Audrey U. (Left) and Dawn P. (Right) at 2025 MCEC Global Training Summit Austin

# STORIES OF IMPACT

## Parent Perspective: A Welcome That Changed Everything

For one military family in Huntsville, Alabama, a warm welcome at school changed the course of a transition. When their children arrived in a mostly civilian community, Student 2 Student® ambassadors met them on day one, sat with them at lunch, and helped them feel they belonged.

That moment stayed with the family. In time, their children joined S2S themselves, welcoming other students the same way they had once been welcomed.

*"[Student 2 Student®] made such an impact on our boys. They joined Student 2 Student the next year and became the students welcoming others... As a parent and educator, I feel so passionate about making sure military-connected students feel welcomed and supported as soon as they arrive." – Brooke Sigler*

## Parent and Family Engagement by the Numbers:

 **3,553**  
parents, caregivers  
and children reached

 **1,096**  
learned skills through  
Speedometry

 **1,238**  
participated in  
parent workshops

 **623**  
connected through  
Tell Me A Story®

### Why it matters

When parents feel informed, supported, and confident, children benefit. These programs help caregivers ask better questions, advocate more effectively, and navigate school transitions with greater confidence.

## Building Support That Travels With Military Families

Military families move often, but support should not have a new zip code when they do. MCEC works across all 50 states to help ensure that military-connected children can find understanding, resources, and opportunity wherever they land.

South Carolina offers one strong example. Through five years of partnership with the South Carolina Department of Veterans' Affairs and local leaders, the state has grown to 585 Purple Star Schools. That progress reflects what is possible when state agencies, school liaison teams, educators, and MCEC Community Coordinators work together with a shared purpose.

For funders and partners, this is an important part of the MCEC story: we do not just deliver programs. We help build lasting systems of support.

*"In South Carolina, we take it personally to spread awareness, strengthen our resources, and put in the work to create lasting generational impact for our military-connected students and families." — Jason Fowler, Deputy Director of Military Affairs, South Carolina Department of Veterans' Affairs*



MCEC South Carolina staff, SC MIC3 Commissioner, Dr. Tremekia Priester (second from right) and Jason Fowler (far right)



# PROGRAM IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

## Professional Development & Training

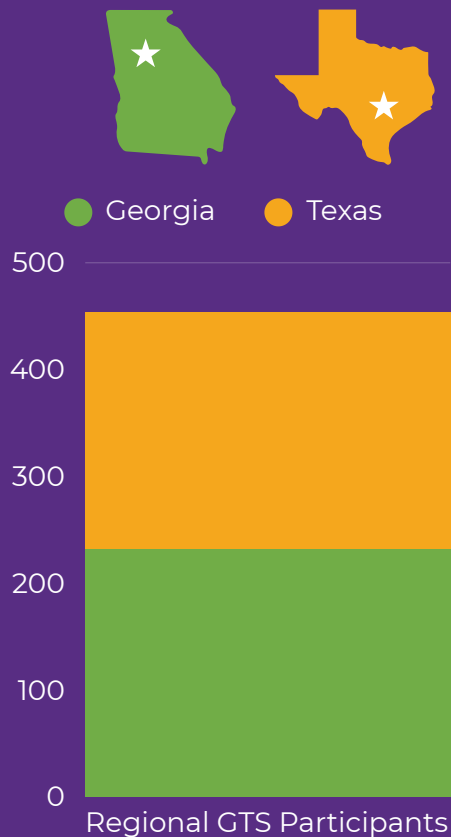
In 2025, MCEC trained **2,218 professionals** to better support military-connected students through workshops, summits, and specialized learning experiences.

### Key areas included:

- School transitions
- Exceptional needs support
- Social-emotional wellbeing
- Caregiver and deployment-related challenges
- Purple Star School implementation

### Why it matters:

Each trained educator is better prepared to recognize the needs of military-connected students and respond with confidence. That impact reaches far beyond a single training session and into classrooms, schools, and communities over time.



## MCEC Global Training Summit

In 2025, MCEC brought together **454 attendees** across two regional Global Training Summits in Atlanta, Georgia, and Austin, Texas. These gatherings connected educators, student leaders, and community partners around a shared goal: better support for military-connected children.

The student voice remained at the center. Students spoke from lived experience, joined leaders on stage, and helped shape conversations about what belonging, transition support, and readiness truly look like in practice.

### Why it matters:

When educators and community leaders learn together, good ideas travel. That shared learning helps strengthen support for military-connected children in every place they live and learn.



Georgia: **232** participants

Texas: **222** participants

Educators, student leaders, advisors, and community partners representing multiple states and school communities nationwide

# OUTREACH & SPEAKERS BUREAU

*"Our commitment to military families is in some ways no different than our moral commitment to all children."  
— Mike Morath, Texas Commissioner of Education*

In 2025, MCEC reached more than **5,000** individuals through presentations in schools, military installations, and communities nationwide.

These engagements raise awareness, strengthen partnerships, and help more communities understand and support military-connected students.

## **Why it matters**

Many schools and communities want to support military families, but do not always know how. These presentations help turn awareness into action.



*Kyra Bush, VP Education Services, H-E-B Community Event*



*Mary Bier, President & CEO, 360 Summit in South Carolina*



*Month of the Military Child x H-E-B Operation Appreciation Event*

# DIRECT STUDENT & FAMILY SERVICES

## Military Student Consultants

MCEC's Military Student Consultants provided **1,246 direct consultations** in 2025, helping families navigate school transitions, special education services, college planning, credit recovery, and other complex education challenges. In addition, **2,765 professionals** received support to better serve military-connected students.

### Why it matters:

At critical moments, the right guidance can keep a student on track. Whether helping a family transfer records, navigate an individualized education program, or prepare for college, these consultations provide clarity when it matters most.

### From frontline support to systems change

The insights MCEC gathers through this work do not stop with one family. They help inform advocacy, strengthen guidance for schools, and shape broader policy conversations that can improve outcomes for military-connected students everywhere.

 **1,246**  
direct consultations  
provided by MCEC  
Military Student  
Consultants

 **2,765**  
professionals  
received support

## Community Coordinators

MCEC Community Coordinators made **18,179 connections** in 2025 through workshops, presentations, school support, and relationship-building across military-connected communities.

### Why it matters:

These connections help turn good intentions into local action. Community Coordinators strengthen ties between schools, installations, and families so support is not temporary or isolated, but woven into the fabric of the community.

 **18,179**  
connections made  
by MCEC Community  
Coordinators



# STUDENT PROGRAMS

## Student 2 Student® Leadership

In 2025, **993 students** participated in Student 2 Student® leadership experiences, including mentor training, mini-lessons on transition and friendship, leadership jamborees, and STEM Watchers programming. MCEC also trained **129 schools** to implement S2S programs.

With more than **650 active S2S groups globally**, this peer-to-peer model continues to help military-connected students feel welcomed, connected, and less alone.

### Why it matters:

For a student arriving at a new school, belonging can begin with one peer who knows how to say, “You are welcome here.” That moment can change everything.

## Caregiving Youth Student Leadership Program

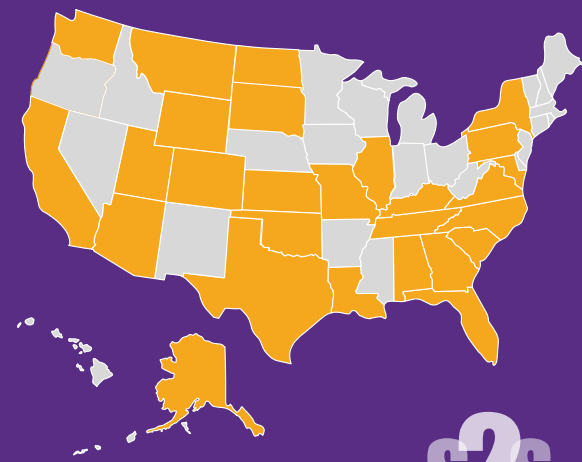
MCEC’s Caregiving Youth Student Leadership Program (CYSLP) supports high school students who take on caregiving roles within their families. These students often carry significant responsibility while navigating school, transitions, and personal growth.

Through this program, students build leadership skills, connect with peers who understand their experience, and gain confidence as they prepare for college, careers, and life beyond high school.

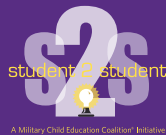
### Why it matters

Caregiving youth are often unseen. This program ensures they are supported, developed as leaders, and equipped for what comes next.

## Student 2 Student® Clubs



■ S2S club locations



S2S attendees at MCEC 2025 UTSA Jamboree



2025 CYSLP in San Antonio, TX

# PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

In 2025, MCEC reached **3,553** parents and caregivers through workshops, literacy programs, and learning experiences.



- 1,238 participated in parent workshops
- 623 connected through Tell Me A Story®
- 1,096 built skills through Speedometry
- 596 reached through other engagements



**3,553**  
parents and  
caregivers reached

## Purple Star Schools: A Commitment Families Can Feel

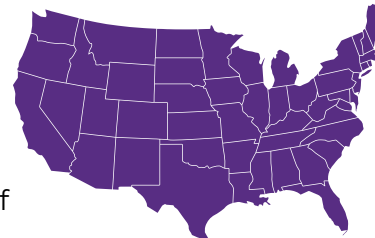
Across the country, Purple Star Schools are showing military families that support can be built into the school experience. These schools commit to serving military-connected students with intention through designated points of contact, transition support, staff training, and visible recognition of military life.

As the **National Advocate for Purple Star Schools**, MCEC helps champion this work across the country through direct school support, state-level partnership, and on-the-ground coordination in military-connected communities. MCEC works to strengthen awareness, expand adoption, and help schools build the internal capacity to serve military-connected students well.

### Why it matters

For military families, a Purple Star School designation sends a clear message: we are ready for your child here. That kind of confidence supports not only students and families, but the broader readiness of the military community.

**Purple Star Schools are present across 44 states**, with active participation and designation models continuing to grow nationwide.



**44** state  
presence  
for Purple Star Schools



*Tell Me A Story® Programming*



*Columbia 360 Parent Workshop & Training*

# TRUSTED EXPERTISE. NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED IMPACT.

MCEC provided more than **22,000 touchpoints of support** to educators, counselors, and professionals serving military-connected students.

This included direct consultations, training, and ongoing guidance through Military Student Consultants and Community Coordinators.

## Why it matters:

When professionals have access to the right expertise at the right time, they are better equipped to support students through transitions, challenges, and critical academic moments.

## National Recognition for Innovation

### Fisher Service Award

In 2025, MCEC was honored with the **Fisher Service Award**, a national recognition that celebrates innovative programs strengthening military and veteran communities.

MCEC was recognized for its **Caregiving Youth Student Leadership Program**, which supports high school students in military families who take on caregiving roles. The program equips these students with leadership skills, resources, and confidence as they prepare for college, careers, and life beyond high school.

By supporting caregiving youth, MCEC helps ensure that students who carry significant responsibility at home are also given the opportunity to grow, lead, and thrive.



*From L-R, Gen. Christopher Mahoney (Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), Mary Bier (President and CEO at the Military Child Education Coalition), Kelly Facer (SVP Sightline Media Group / Military Times), David Coker (President at the Fisher House Foundation)*



*Mary Bier, President and CEO at the Military Child Education Coalition*

*Gen. Christopher Mahoney, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

# Partners in This Mission

MCEC's work is made possible by a broad network of partners who believe military-connected children deserve strong support, steady opportunity, and every chance to thrive. We are deeply grateful for the trust of the organizations, agencies, and individuals who stand with us in this work.

## Major Donors and Key Partners

U.S. Department of Defense

U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force

Military installation commands worldwide

Defense-State Liaison Office

State education agencies across all 50 states

School districts nationwide

DoDEA (Department of Defense Education Activity)

Council of Chief State School Officers

National education associations

USAA

May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust

Fisher House Foundation

Lilly Endowment

Wounded Warrior Project

Textron, Inc.

Sid W. Richardson Foundation

Beldon Roofing

H-E-B

Star Super Market

BAE Systems, Inc.

Veterans United Fund

The Boeing Company

Pentagon Federal Credit Union Foundation

College Board

Oshkosh Defense Corporation

Defense Credit Union Council

LiteFighter Tactical

CSX

ADS

Systems, Planning & Analysis

American Water Charitable Foundation

Delta Dental

General Dynamics

Mason Brown Family Foundation

Association of Military Banks of America

United States Military Academy

United States Air Force Academy

University of Texas San Antonio

# LOOKING FORWARD

MCEC is entering its next chapter with clarity and purpose. Our focus is not only on reaching more military-connected children, but on serving them with stronger evidence, smarter systems, and deeper impact.

## In the years ahead, we are investing in:

- programs designed for measurable outcomes
- technology and data systems that support scale
- research and learning that strengthen what works
- diversified funding that supports long-term sustainability

With support from partners like Lilly Endowment and others, MCEC is building the foundation for a future in which more military-connected children can access continuity, belonging, and opportunity.

We invite partners and supporters to join us in this next chapter as we expand what is possible for military-connected children.



*S2S Student at MCEC GTS in Atlanta, Georgia*

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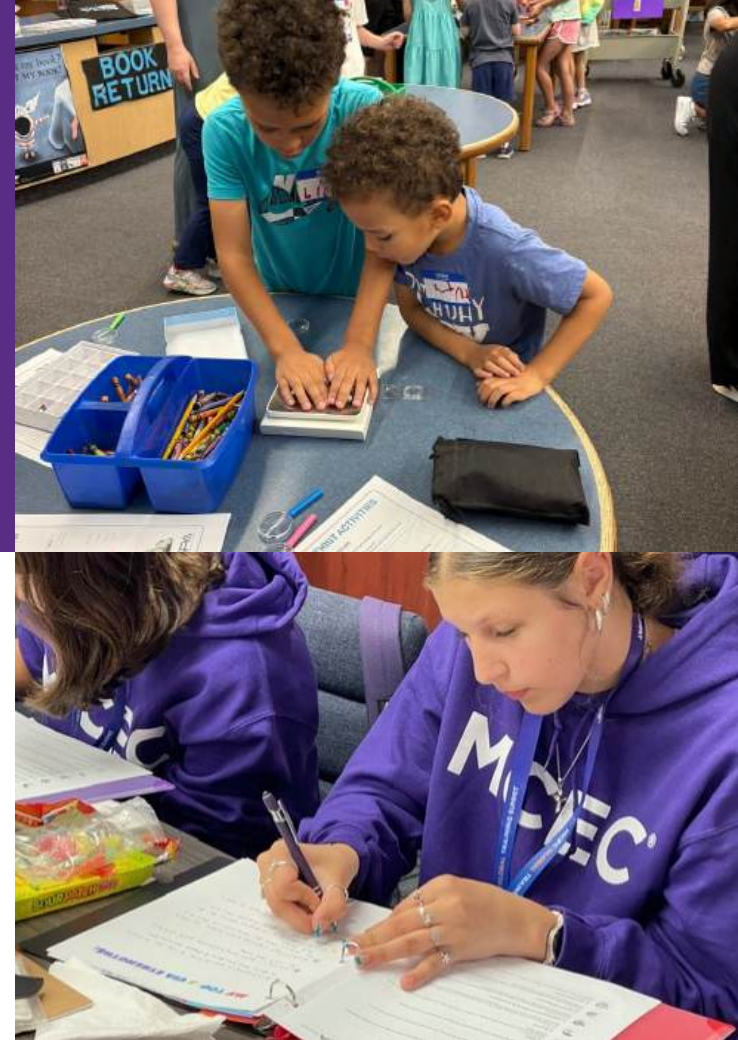
# With Gratitude

MCEC's mission moves forward each day because of a dedicated team who bring heart, skill, and deep commitment to this work. From direct support and training to operations, strategy, and partnership-building, their efforts make a meaningful difference in the lives of military-connected children and families every day.



# Join us in advancing belonging—and readiness—for military-connected children

With rising mobility, mental health challenges, and educator strain, support systems for military-connected children have never been more critical. Whether you are a funder, educator, policymaker, or military family, there is a role for you in strengthening outcomes for military-connected children. Your involvement directly expands access to belonging, stability, and opportunity for the children who serve our nation.



**Partner with MCEC** Scale impact across systems



**Donate**

Fund student belonging



**Become a member**

Join the network advancing readiness



**Follow and share our work**

Amplify the voice of military children



**Email:**

[info@militarychild.org](mailto:info@militarychild.org)

**Website:**

[MilitaryChild.org](https://militarychild.org)



The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.

***"None of us are alone - and by using our voices, we can make sure no one else ever feels like they are." — Audrey U., Student 2 Student® Member***