

February 9, 2022

Dear Chief State School Officer:

As our nation continues to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, military-connected students and families have never needed us more. In this work, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) and your state share critical core values with the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), especially keeping students and their success at the center of everything we do. Importantly, MIC3 helps to remove barriers to school success for military-connected students, and this makes an incredible difference in the lives and learning of our children and youth.

Our military-connected students are resilient and know how to grow and thrive in new school environments. To do so, they need the tools and resources that we, as education leaders, must provide to support them in these new environments. In October 2021, the Department released [\*Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs\*](#) to provide the field with focused information and resources to enhance the promotion of mental health and social and emotional well-being among students. Together, we can be even more intentional and comprehensive in meeting their social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs.

It is also particularly important that we meet the unique needs of military-connected students with disabilities, consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the [MIC3 Compact Rules](#). Now more than ever, it is imperative that students with disabilities are identified, located, and evaluated, and provided with special education and related services in the least restrictive environment, as students with disabilities retain these and other rights and protections under IDEA and Section 504 irrespective of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department has published several policy guidance documents to support states' implementation of IDEA during the COVID-19 pandemic, including on [child find](#) and the development and implementation of [individualized education programs](#). Similarly, the Department has provided guidance describing Section 504's nondiscrimination requirements and guarantee that students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities.

Additional resources for supporting military-connected students with disabilities and their families can be found at <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/military/>.

Amid the pandemic, MIC3 continues to address relevant issues for transferring military families while enhancing efforts to assist active reserve and national guard component families. I am heartened that all 50 states and the District of Columbia have committed to better serve military-connected families and students by signing the Compact. And I am grateful that MIC3, through outreach and training, increased awareness of the Compact, paving the way for more military-connected families to learn about and understand the resources available to them.

Now is the time to move toward full implementation of the Compact in each state. We have made great strides to arrive at this moment, and we must stay focused and keep pushing forward. Every state fully implementing the Compact is the way ahead.

To do so, consider these crucial action steps:

- Review the Compact and identify ways to make district and state policies and procedures consistent with the guidelines and rules set forth under the Compact;
- Honor and respect the previous academic standing and accomplishments of military-connected children new to districts by supporting their enrollment, eligibility, and placement in extra-curricular activities, special education programs, rigorous coursework, and career pathway programs, while monitoring their progress toward reaching graduation requirements;
- Involve district and school leaders, teachers, school counselors, social workers, coaches, school nurses, and administrators at all levels in efforts to better address the needs of military-connected children; and
- Provide professional development and training to educators and staff on how to recognize and respond to the needs of military-connected students.

These action steps might also be beneficial for other highly mobile students, such as students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and migratory students, and I ask that you considered applying these critical and beneficial practices to serve those students as well.

Finally, I also encourage you to share your promising practices with regard to the implementation of the Compact and serving military-connected children. Your work may be highlighted on the Compact's website ([www.mic3.net](http://www.mic3.net)). Please email your stories to Jermaine Sullivan ([jermaine.sullivan@ed.gov](mailto:jermaine.sullivan@ed.gov)), the Department's military affairs lead, with a short paragraph describing the impact of the Compact in your community.

The Department will continue to support MIC3 as it champions military-connected students and their families and strives to meet their needs, and we appreciate your partnership in this effort.

Sincerely,

Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.  
U.S. Secretary of Education