

School Transitions during COVID-19: A Toolkit for Military-Connected Families

## MIC3 Student Advocacy Script

### The Need

The process of PCSing with school-aged children can be challenging in the best of times. With the uncertainties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the task of transitioning your student from one school to the next will have added complexities. This script is designed to support you in advocating more effectively for your child's academic success and smooth school transition by providing you with some key talking points and other guidance on the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission ("MIC3" or "the Compact").

Being prepared can help: make yourself aware of how the Compact can assist military-connected families with these transitions and consider the conversation checklists and prompts as a strong starting point. **You are the expert on your child's needs.** Don't be afraid to adapt this resource to best fit your situation.

### Tool Description

This tool provides a set of communication suggestions to support you in adopting a clear, firm, and collaborative approach with your student's school staff. The tool includes a checklist on how to prepare for a meeting with your school, tips for introducing yourself, and a suggested script for likely conversations.

# MIC3 Student Advocacy Script

## Pre-Meeting Checklist

In the context of COVID-19, the Compact can be a central factor in how you advocate for your child and how your new school responds to meet your child's needs. Keep in mind, though, that school staff may be less confident than usual about how to enroll or place your child after a period of remote learning in which many states waived testing and other typical requirements. You will need to be prepared to show that your child met the requirements of your sending school or state and that those requirements should be honored by your new school.

- Draft a list of objectives for the meeting. Some useful objectives might be to:
  - Introduce yourself, your child, and your reason for moving
  - Share relevant MIC3 information (e.g., student's progress towards graduation or student's Kindergarten completion for first grade enrollment)
  - Preview student's exceptional needs (if applicable and beneficial)
- Collect and organize your child's relevant school records and other documentation (e.g., testing waiver from sending school)
- Review graduation requirements (if you have a rising senior)
- Review the school, district, and state websites for up-to-date information on COVID-19 related planning and school reopening status
- Check the new school, district, and state department of education websites for any military-related contact or School Liaison Officer information and contact them if appropriate
- Identify your state's MIC3 Commissioner using the MIC3 website's [interactive map](#)
- Review and highlight relevant sections of the Military Interstate Compact

## Introducing Yourself

As we all know, first impressions are important. Building a relationship between your family and the new school's staff may be particularly challenging in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and possible distance learning. When face-to-face meetings with school administrators are impossible or limited, consider a simple email greeting that proposes a video meeting or phone call.

In your communications with the school, remember to:

- Acknowledge the difficulties of the current educational landscape,
- Share your unique circumstances and how you are preparing for the transition, and
- Name the supports you need from the school.

The template below provides a sample introductory email to a school administrator and can also serve as talking points for an introductory phone or video-conference meeting. Deciding to whom to send this email may be challenging because job titles for the person in charge of student enrollment can vary greatly from school to school and may be even trickier as roles shift with the demands and physical changes brought on by the pandemic. If you are unsure, start by reaching out to the school secretary, who can usually direct you to the right person.

Subject line: Enrollment Meeting Request RE: [Student Name]

Email text:

Hello Dr./Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to begin the enrollment process for my child, [Student Name], for the [Level] grade this fall at [School Name]. I am reaching out to introduce myself and my child! We are a military-connected family, so we like to open and maintain a strong line of communication with school administration.

We are transferring from [Sending District Name] in [Sending State] where [Student Name] completed the [Level] grade last school year. I would love to set up a time to discuss [Student Name]'s enrollment at [Receiving School Name], share my student's records, and ask a few other clarifying questions I have about [immunizations, class requirements, course equivalents, supports for my student's special needs, etc.].

The last few months have been complicated and challenging for all of us. We're hoping we'll be able to work with you to make [Student Name]'s transition as smooth as possible. Thank you in advance for your patience, flexibility, and help.

The following dates and times work for me:

- [Date, time]
- [Date, time]
- [Date, time]

If none of these proposed times work for you, please share times that might work better for your schedule.

I look forward to speaking soon and in the meantime, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Best regards,  
 [Your Full Name]  
 [Your Contact Information]

## Explaining MIC3 to School Officials

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) is an agreement among all 50 states and Washington, D.C. to ease school transitions by creating consistency for families in how schools handle enrollment, course placement, extra-curricular activities, and graduation for military-connected children in U.S. public schools. The Compact provides for flexibility for military-connected families to ease and condense school transition processes.

Each section below addresses a common challenge faced by transitioning families and offers one way you might describe how MIC3 is designed to help your family in this situation. Lean on this for the necessary information and suggested language, but as you prepare for your conversation or meeting, think about how to make the script your own!

### Enrollment Conversations

#### Securing Transcripts from your Sending School

**If your sending school says:** We have a backlog of transcript requests, and we won't be able to send your student's transcripts to the new school for two months.

**You say:** I understand that you are very busy right now. According to the Military Interstate Compact, you are required to send official records within 10 business days of receiving the new school's request.

**If your sending school replies:** I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do.

**You say:** Can you please reach out to my new school with a quick email to let them know? You can send that to [Name] at [email address].

#### Submitting Documentation to Enroll Your Student at Your New School

**If your receiving school says:** We can't enroll your child because we don't have your child's official transcript.

**You say:** Yes, there's quite a backlog of requests at our old school. We do have an unofficial copy of our records. I'm sure you know this, but since we're a military-connected family, you can rely on these unofficial documents for enrollment and placement, at least until the official records arrive.

**If the receiving school says:** Okay. We still won't be able to enroll your child without all of the required immunizations to attend school.

**You say:** What are the immunization requirements in [State]?

**If the school says:** The requirements are [immunizations required] for your student.

**You say:** Thanks for making me aware of your school’s immunization requirements. The Military Interstate Compact requires all schools to allow military-connected students a 30-day grace period when it comes to immunization requirements. We are currently in the process of getting [name immunization(s)]. I have scheduled an appointment on [date], and I will send you proof of immunization as soon as I can get it. In the meantime, we should be able to get my child enrolled.

**[OR, in the case of missing documentation]**

**You say:** Thanks for making me aware of your school’s immunization requirements. The Military Interstate Compact requires all schools to allow military-connected students a 30-day grace period when it comes to immunization requirements. My student has actually already received that immunization, but I am in process of getting the proof of immunization. I will send it as soon as I can get it. In the meantime, we should be able to get my child enrolled.

**[OR, in the case of medical office closure]**

**You say:** Thanks for making me aware of your school’s immunization requirements. The Military Interstate Compact requires all schools to allow military-connected students a 30-day grace period when it comes to immunization requirements. As you’re probably aware, medical facilities are currently closed for non-essential care due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I will be sure to get my student in as soon as this changes. In the meantime, we should be able to get my child enrolled.

## Placement and Attendance Conversations

### Ensuring Your Student is Promoted to First Grade

**If your receiving school says:** We are not sure if we are comfortable promoting your child from Kindergarten to first grade because of the difference in requirements between your sending school district and our school district.

**[OR]**

**If your receiving school says:** Your child doesn’t meet our district’s requirement that all first graders must be six years old by the time school starts. We’ll place your child in Kindergarten.

**You say:** Thanks. I understand your state and district requirements, but my child completed Kindergarten and was eligible to enroll in first grade in our prior district. Since we’re a military-connected family – and covered by the Military Interstate Compact – my child is eligible to enroll in first grade and is not required to repeat Kindergarten.

### Ensuring Your Student is Placed in Appropriate Courses

**If your receiving school says:** Based on our standards your student is not eligible to participate in [higher-level content courses like trigonometry, honors courses, AP courses].

**You say:** What are the standards that my student doesn't meet?

**Your receiving school says:** Your student is missing [Standards] required to participate in [higher-level content courses like trigonometry, honors courses, AP courses].

**You say:** Thanks for notifying me of this variation in standards. My child is military-connected, and under the Military Interstate Compact schools are encouraged to honor our previous placement in [course placement] unless you separately determine that my child is not eligible or cannot do the work. Can I put you in contact with our previous school to confirm the placement and my child's readiness?

[OR]

**You say:** Thanks for notifying me of this variation in standards. My child has not completed a course that covers [standards]. Is there another advanced level course for which my child might be eligible?

## The Graduation Conversation

**If your receiving school says:** Your student isn't going to be eligible for graduation at the end of this year because he/she hasn't completed [graduation requirement] for [High School Name]. We're going to place your student in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

**You say:** I've reviewed your graduation requirements and compared [graduation requirement] to my child's previous coursework. [Graduation requirement] is very similar to [previous course], which my child took and passed at our previous school. As a military-connected student, my child is covered under the Military Interstate Compact, which encourages you to be flexible in accepting credits from a previous school to meet your graduation requirements. Can you move forward with accepting this other course for the requirement?

## Other Tough Conversations

There is always a chance, no matter how prepared and polite and compelling you are, that a school administrator refuses to comply with the Compact or simply does not understand that there is flexibility to do so. In these cases, you can explain to your school or district administrators that they are failing to comply with the guidelines set by the Compact. Contact the district's military liaison if there is one – and consider contacting your SLO or the state's MIC3 commissioner, too.

## Stepping Back: Tips for Advocacy Conversations

The scripts above follow a set of foundational principles for how to have this kind of conversation with your new school. As you prepare and hold similar conversations about other topics, remember to:

- Make an appointment.
- Document what your child has completed and accomplished.
- Plan what you're going to say ahead of time. Be clear about what you want to achieve.
- Choose your words carefully. Try to start with something positive.

- Work to build a sense of partnership and negotiate solutions.
- Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.
- Summarize what you have discussed.
- Verbalize and put in print your plan for a follow-up.