

## Supporting Our Military Children



Servicemembers are not the only ones who make enormous sacrifices to protect our nation. Military spouses and military children make regular sacrifices to support their servicemember through numerous deployments and PCS moves.

That's why April is the Month of the Military Child.

April is a month to honor and support military children and acknowledge the sacrifices they make and the challenges they overcome. This year, the [Department of Defense Education Activity](#) has designated April 19 as "Purple Up Day," and encourages people to wear purple to show support for military children. Installations may also host events at community centers and schools to support their children throughout the month.

While April 19 is a dedicated day and April a dedicated month to celebrate military children, they face challenges year-round, and as such, a variety of organizations and coalitions exist to support these children whenever they need it most and to help them thrive during times of transition or separation.

The [Military Child Education Coalition](#) is made up of public and private schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and military installations across the nation and exists to help military children thrive during and after periods of transition. Specifically, their Student 2 Student programs bring military and non-military children together and pave the way for educational transitions. Students are provided with resources for academic success, opportunities for community outreach, and a friend to eat with on their first day at their new school.

Military installations are often home to **youth centers**, which may be equipped with gymnasiums, fitness rooms, computer labs with tutoring services, game rooms, and music rooms. These centers offer children a place to congregate and hang out with other children their age. When an installation does not have a dedicated youth center, it is likely located near a **4-H Program**. 4-H Programs are community programs that allow children to complete hands-on projects and develop leadership skills under the



guidance of a mentor. Servicemembers and spouses can reach out to [4-H Military Liaisons](#) to learn more about local 4-H programs.

**Summer camps**, like those hosted by the National Military Family Association ([Operation Purple Camp](#) and [Operation Purple Family Retreats](#)), the [4-H Military Partnership](#), and [Military Teen Adventure Camps](#) help children develop leadership skills, build their confidence, and learn something new – plus there is the added ability to make friends with other children who share their circumstances.

[Operation Homefront](#) has two initiatives that distribute goods to military children: The **Back-to-School Brigade** distributes donated backpacks and school supplies and the **Holiday Toy Drive** provides gifts to children during the holidays. Operation Homefront also awards the Military Child of the Year award each year to children who have excelled in academia, volunteerism, and leadership while dealing with the everyday challenges of military life. The award consists of a monetary amount and other donated gifts.

Virtually, [Military Kids Connect](#) provides activities and videos on topics from moving and deployment to stress, healthy decisions, and relationships for children between the ages of six and 17 years old. Each topic also hosts a message board where children can ask questions and offer advice to others; these boards are moderated and no personally identifying information is ever shared. Teenagers can take advantage of Military Kids Connect's social media pages.

[Military OneSource](#) provides valuable information to military parents when it comes to raising their children. Topics vary from the broad topic of finding childcare to details on the Advance Child Tax Credit that parents may be eligible to receive. Military OneSource also offers [resources specific to education and employment](#) that can help children succeed academically and professionally regardless of their location.

For children who may benefit from talking to a specialist, the [Military and Family Life Counseling Program](#) connects military children with behavioral and family life counselors who can provide support when students are struggling to perform academically or are having trouble forming relationships. They are specifically trained to help children with life skills, bullying, and adjusting to changes, and are well versed on deployment, divorce, and grief.

There are numerous other resources and organizations that provide scholarships and monetary support because they want to see military children succeed. Within the military community, Family Readiness Groups provide support to children and families during deployments, homecomings, times of crisis, and times of transition; they also organize social events and create a sense of community within a unit. Teachers, doctors, and other military spouses can also be valuable resources.

Navy Mutual is proud to protect military families and celebrate the military child. If you'd like to speak with a representative about protecting your child's financial future, [schedule an appointment today](#).