

The Honorable Jack Reed  
728 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
2264 Rayburn House Office Bldg  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
205 Russell Senate Office Bldg  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers  
2469 Rayburn House Office Bldg  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515



**Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Rogers,**

We, the undersigned veteran and military service organizations representing service members, veterans, retirees, their families and survivors, thank you for your continued efforts to improve the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), a vital program that supports over 130,000 EFMP family members across all service branches. We appreciate your commitment in strengthening the program by including provisions in the 2021 NDAA to standardize the program throughout the military, as well as provide much needed access to respite care services and special education resources.

But there is still a lot of work to be done. We know that many military families struggle with frequent transitions associated with service to our nation. Military children transition alongside their parents, and experience education gaps while dealing with parents' deployments. In the general education classroom, these "normal" military educational challenges are addressed with increased parent and teacher sensitivity training and customized resources. However, the additional issues faced by special needs families are not as straightforward.

Military children enrolled in the EFMP Program often have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), providing an additional layer of challenges for those needing to access special education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Those unique challenges were highlighted a year ago during military spouse testimonies at the EFMP Hearing before the House Armed Services Committee Military Personnel Subcommittee.

Attached is a summary of recent survey findings and the impact frequent military moves have on military students in special education. We learned that moves leave over 79 percent without special education services for over a month. In shortening the gaps in education delivery, we can help military students have the same access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) as their civilian counterparts.

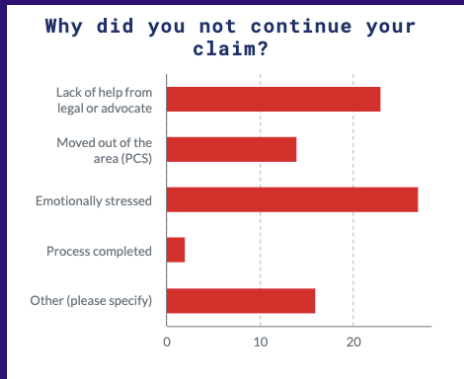
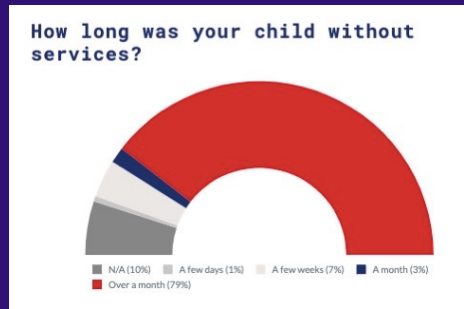
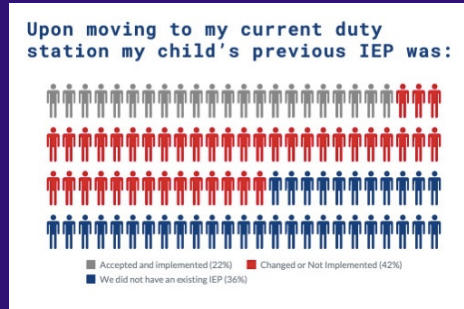
We believe removing education hurdles that are unique to our military children with special needs will positively impact mission readiness, troop retention, and future recruitment. Those who fight for our country should not also have to fight for something as elementary as their children's education. We appreciate your continued commitment to those who serve our nation and our military families.

Sincerely,

[The Undersigned Organizations]

Partners in PROMISE  
American Red Cross  
APA Division 19 (Society for Military Psychology)  
Blue Star Families  
Code of Support Foundation  
Decoding Dyslexia Georgia  
The Dyslexia Life  
Easterseals DC MD VA  
Easterseals National Office  
The Elizabeth Dole Foundation  
Exceptional Families of the Military  
GeorgiaCAN  
The Independence Fund  
Military Child Education Coalition  
Military Kids-Special Education Alliance  
Modern Military Association of America  
PsychArmor  
Psych Hub  
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors  
Travis Manion Foundation  
United Through Reading

# PARTNERS IN PROMISE 2021 KEY SURVEY FINDINGS [i]



**"Fear and Anticipation" - An EFMP Story**

"Parents walk a delicate line being a squeaky wheel and advocating. Do I bring muffins to lessen the blow before I lay into a director or just let it happen because she needs to feel the pain of failure to prompt change? How do I effectively communicate how painful it is to watch my son be miserable, unchallenged, and shuffled around? Every time we come down on orders I just know there's so very little I can count on. The fear and anticipation are daunting. I love being a military family. I love the new experiences of moving around. I love that my sons will grow up with a bucket full of different experiences. But I hate that they have had to be more resilient than most adults are capable of in a lifetime."

- Army Spouse [i]

## PRESS RELEASE AND ISSUE PAPER

<https://thepromiseact.org/wp-content/uploads/Press-Release-2021-Survey-Findings-Partners-in-PROMISE.pdf>

<https://thepromiseact.org/2021/01/partners-in-promise-mcec-special-education-issue-paper/>

# THE MILITARY CHILD SPECIAL EDUCATION CRISIS

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## INTRODUCTION

The military lifestyle creates many challenges with providing consistency in education for children of active duty service members. These challenges are exponentially more difficult for military families with children with special needs. Although there are umbrella protections under federal and state laws, many military families are reporting that school districts are not providing the minimum support and services mandated by law for our most vulnerable children.

## MILITARY FAMILIES AND READINESS

Children with exceptional needs require specialized educational services, but when services are disrupted, the required parental advocacy increases. Increased stress impacts operational readiness. According to an armed forces and society study, male military members' work performance declined by 19 percent when under significant family-related stressors.[ii]. A stressed force is a less ready force. Although protections are in place via the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MiC3), because they are non-regulatory, the burden of advocacy falls on the shoulders of military parents.

## TODAY'S CHALLENGE

Partners in PROMISE conducted the most thorough study on the military special education population to date.[i]. Key findings highlighted how military PCS moves have a significant impact on special education:

- 90% of surveyed military families have experienced a move
- 79% of respondents said their child went without special education services for over a month after a military move

Additional delays in implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are prevalent. Each delay sets students back emotionally, educationally and developmentally. Our survey data indicates that the following recommendations will alleviate the stress placed upon our service members and their families.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure advanced/remote school enrollment for military dependents with existing IEPs
- Allow active duty military dependents to maintain IEPs at a new duty station after a PCS for up to six months

## CONTACT

To learn more about Partners in PROMISE or our 2021 Survey findings please email [info@thepromiseact.org](mailto:info@thepromiseact.org)

Michelle Norman, Founder & Executive Director  
Jennifer Barnhill, Chief Operating Officer

## SOURCES

- [i] <https://thepromiseact.org/2021-survey/>  
[ii] <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1050341.pdf>