

North Carolina School Health Program Manual

Section E, Students at Risk, Chapter 11, Military Affiliated Students

Military Affiliated Students¹

Military connected children (MCC) are those who have one or more parent who serves in one of the seven components of the Armed Forces of the United States. Parents may serve on either active duty or in one of the Reserve Components (RC) of the military. Both have a likelihood of deployment or assignments that may take them away from home.

North Carolina has many children whose parents serve on active duty in one of the Armed Forces since the state has the fourth largest active military population in the country, after California, Florida, and Texas (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2023). The vast majority of these active duty connected children reside in school districts that surround active duty installations (<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/student-support/nc-supports-military-children>) and have access to a variety of support services, including health care, Department of Defense (DOD)-supported childcare, and other activities.

There are an additional ~20,000 North Carolina residents who serve in the National Guard or one of the Reserve Components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps. RC and their families live in communities spread across the state without a daily interaction with anyone associated with or on a military installation as do those serving on active duty. RC-connected families tend to have less acculturation to the military, thus may be considered more vulnerable during times of separation than their active-duty counterparts, despite their geographical stability (Veri, et al., 2021).

There is abundant literature reporting that children of active-duty families experience greater mental health challenges than their civilian peers due to frequent moves, deployments, housing, and financial instability (The Bob Woodruff Foundation, 2023). These children also experience problems with access to mental health providers despite having military-provided health care insurance.

There is less literature available related to stresses impacting RC-connected children. However, what is available suggests that these children tend to exhibit anxiety at levels greater than that reported by active duty connected children (Veri, et. al., 2021). They may also experience educational impacts such as lower grades or academic assessment scores and report higher rates of physical illness among other issues. There are fewer community-based support networks with familiarity to military culture for those in the RC than for those with an active duty affiliation. Civilian-centric schools frequently are not aware of military connected children in their student population, nor are military liaison counselors located in these school districts.

North Carolina adopted use of the Military Student Identifier (MSI) for active duty-connected children as created by Congress in 2015 and updated in 2020 to include RC-connected students (Wilmoth, et. al., 2023). Notifying schools that their students are military connected is a

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voluntary act by parents. Reporting of the MSI of active-duty affiliated children coupled with a complex formula brings federal impact dollars to those school districts but not for those with an RC connection. Use of the MSI can alert school personnel to these children and ensure they receive appropriate supports.

North Carolina has a robust, annually renewable, Purple Star Award Program that recognizes schools that demonstrate a commitment to military students and families (<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/student-support/nc-supports-military-children/purple-star-award>). This program serves as a way to educate and inform school personnel about the unique challenges of military connected children.

Additional Resources

Military Child Education Coalition: <https://www.militarychild.org>

NC Department of Public Instruction, Purple Star Award Schools: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/student-support/nc-supports-military-children/purple-star-award>

New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs: *School Nurse Care Toolkit to Increase Awareness & Support to Military Children*.
https://dmna.ny.gov/family/docs/educators/School_Nurse_Toolkit.pdf

References

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2023, July 5). *NC Supports Military Children*. <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/student-support/nc-supports-military-children>

The Bob Woodruff Foundation (2023, April 23). *Stand SMART for heroes: Spotlight on military children's mental health*. <https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/stand-smart-military-childrens-mental-health/>.

Veri, S., Muthoni, C., Boyd, A.S., Wilmoth, M.C. (2021). A scoping review of the effects of military deployment on reserve component children and families. *Child and Youth Care Forum*, 50, 743-777. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-020-09590-1>.

Wilmoth, M.C., Phonyiam, R., Bian, W. (2023). Invited Commentary: North Carolina's Reserve Component- connected children – Are our schools prepared to meet their needs? *North Carolina Medical Journal*, 84 (6), pg. 384-386. <https://ncmedicaljournal.com/article/89213-north-carolina-s-reserve-component-connected-children-are-our-schools-prepared-to-meet-their-needs>