

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Alaska has joined an interstate compact designed to remove educational barriers that military families may face when they are deployed to a new state.

The Legislature passed, and then-Gov. Palin signed, House Bill 137 in 2009. It became effective immediately. Under the law, Alaska joined the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

This memo summarizes in plain language the law's requirements as they apply to school districts. It is intended as an introduction to the compact. The compact applies to public K-12 students.

A copy of the complete law, which contains the compact, is at <http://www.legis.state.ak.us/PDF/26/Bills/HB0137Z.PDF>. If you have questions, call Marcy Herman at 907-465-2803.

Who is served by the compact?

1. The families of active-duty members of uniformed services. This includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, as well as the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Public Health Services.
2. Families of members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty.
3. The compact's protections apply for a period of one year to families of members or veterans of the uniformed services who are medically discharged, die on active duty or as result of injuries suffered on active duty, or are retired.

Educational records and enrollment

If official records aren't immediately available, the students' old school must provide the military family with a copy of unofficial records to take to the students' new school. The new school must enroll and appropriately place the student based on the unofficial records, pending receipt of the official records. Schools should process requests for official records promptly.

New schools must provide the students with 30 days to obtain required immunizations.

New schools must allow students to continue their enrollment at the grade level commensurate with their grade level in the old school, regardless of the student's age. A student transferring after the start of the school year must enter the new school at the grade level of their old school.

New schools must initially honor students' placement in courses and programs from their old school such as honors, international baccalaureate, advanced placement, gifted and talented, English as a second language, and vocational, technical and career pathways. But new schools may evaluate students to ensure appropriate placement and continued enrollment in courses.

New schools must initially provide comparable services to students with a disability based on the students' Individualized Education Program. New schools must make reasonable accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities. But new schools may evaluate the students to ensure appropriate placement.

Administrators at the students' new district must have the flexibility to waive course and program requirements offered under the jurisdiction of the district.

Students whose parents or guardians are being deployed or returning from deployment must be granted additional excused absences to visit with their family.

Districts must make it easy for students to participate in extracurricular activities, regardless of application deadlines, if the students are otherwise qualified for the activity.

Graduation

New districts must waive specific courses required for graduation if the students have satisfactorily completed similar courses at the old district, or the new district must give a reasonable explanation for not granting a waiver. If a waiver is not granted, the new district must provide another way for the students to perform the coursework.

If students transfer in their senior year and are ineligible for graduation after all alternatives have been considered, the old and new district must ensure receipt of a diploma from the old district if the student has met the graduation requirements of the old district. If the old district is in a state that is not a member of the compact, the new district must make its best effort to help the student graduate on time.

Member states

As of September 2009, the following states are members: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.