Can States Remove Barriers to the Educational Success of Children of Military Families Due to Frequent Moves and Deployment of their Parents?

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Military life presents difficult educational challenges to children who can be subject to frequent moves during their parent’s military career. Each state has a different standard for accepting or rejecting previously earned educational credits and school-year hours. Each state has a different standard for sharing school records and transcripts. Yet, at the same time, the routine of the school environment can be a source of stability for military children as they cope with the disruptive challenges caused by frequent moves.

The Compact is a statutory agreement among the 36 states that have enacted it, on an issue of common concern - the education of military children.

The Purpose Clause of the Compact hopes to remove these barriers to educational success by having member states do such things as:

- Facilitate the timely enrollment of children of military families and ensuring that they are not placed at a disadvantage due to difficulty in the transfer of education records from the previous school district(s) or variations in entrance/age requirements
- Facilitate the qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and participation in extracurricular academic, athletic, and social activities
- Facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families
- Provide for the uniform collection and sharing of information between and among member states, schools, and military families under the Compact
- Promote flexibility and cooperation between the educational system, parents and the student in order to achieve educational success for the student from a military family

Currently the following 36 states have signed on to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The Hawaii law is repealed July 1, 2011. The Nevada law is effective January 1, 2011.

In addition, Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania recently proposed but have not yet enacted such legislation.

In 2009, North Dakota passed a law directing its Legislative Council to study the Compact, as well as its administration, enforcement, cost, and its impact on state laws, school districts, schools, and children of both military and civilian families.

The Compact is a relatively recent law. It became effective in the first 11 states in 2008. Time will tell if it has been able to facilitate the educational success of military children, but it is certainly a step in the right direction.