

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.
Act 501 of the Regular Session

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

As Engrossed: H3/10/25 H3/19/25

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1545

By: Representative K. Brown

By: Senator J. English

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND THE ARKANSAS MILITARY CHILD SCHOOL
TRANSITIONS ACT OF 2021; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO AMEND THE ARKANSAS MILITARY CHILD
SCHOOL TRANSITIONS ACT OF 2021.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings and intent.

(a) The General Assembly finds:

(1) Arkansas adopted the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children in 2013, but found it ineffective in supporting National Guard and highly mobile active-duty families;

(2) To untether support for military families, Arkansas established the Arkansas Military Child School Transitions Act of 2021, expanding eligibility and resources offered to uniformed services families;

(3) Arkansas is the only state that has taken an independent, parallel path outside of the compact to better serve our highly mobile uniformed services families;

(4) On December 31, 2024, the United States Department of Defense reported to the United States Congress that, "States could consider the benefits of implementing the Arkansas model for a statute outside the Compact"; and

(5) Arkansas is recognized for initiative, innovation, and responsiveness to meeting emerging needs of uniformed services families.

(b) This act further improves the Arkansas Military Child School



Transitions Act of 2021, § 6-28-101 et seq., by:

(1) Eliminating the one-year limitation on eligibility of children of Gold Star families and medically separated or retired families to be covered by this act;

(2) Allowing public schools to apply provisions of this act to all students who apply for enrollment in a public school in addition to those students who are dependents of members of the uniformed services;

(3) Defining actions for military services families to accomplish when applying for enrollment in advance of their arrival in Arkansas;

(4) Expanding authority of receiving districts' special education staff members to proactively collaborate with sending districts to facilitate a smooth transition of incoming students with disabilities; and

(5) Providing for the Purple Star School Program development and administration.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-28-105 is amended to read as follows:

6-28-105. Application.

(a) This chapter shall apply to dependent children of:

(1) Members of the active duty and activated reserve components of the uniformed services;

(2) ~~Members or veterans~~ Veterans of the uniformed services who were ~~severely~~ injured in the line of duty and are medically ~~discharged~~ separated or retired ~~for a period of one (1) year following the medical discharge or retirement;~~

(3) Members of the uniformed services who die while on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty ~~for a period of one (1) year following the death;~~

(4) Dual status military technicians; and

(5) Traditional members of the National Guard and reserve components of the ~~United States Armed Forces~~ armed forces who are relocating to the state for employment or to serve as a member of an Arkansas-based reserve component unit.

~~(b) This chapter shall not apply to the dependent children of:~~

~~(1) Inactive members of the National Guard and reserve components of the United States Armed Forces;~~

~~(2) Retired members of the uniformed services, except as provided under subdivision (a)(3) of this section; and~~

~~(3) Other United States Department of Defense personnel and other federal or state agency civilian and contract employees who are not considered members of the uniformed services.~~

~~(e)(1)(b)(1)~~ This chapter includes provisions and extends application eligibility beyond the scope of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, § 6-4-301 et seq.

(2) In complying with this chapter, sending districts and receiving districts may request the assistance of sending districts and receiving districts outside of the state to provide services to uniformed services families transferring to or from the state who are covered under this chapter but may not be covered under the interstate compact.

(c) A public school may extend the provisions of this chapter to all students relocating to the public school district or enrolling in the public school under the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, § 6-18-227, or the Public School Choice Act of 2015, § 6-18-1901 et seq.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-28-108 is amended to read as follows:
6-28-108. Advance enrollment.

~~(a)(1)~~ Members of the uniformed services shall under § 6-28-105 who wish to enroll their children in public school should, as soon as possible, provide advance notice to public schools regarding the enrollment of a student under this chapter to ensure the best opportunity for a smooth transition for their children.

(b) Upon receipt of official assignment notice or assignment orders, the parent, foster parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of a child, or person standing in loco parentis to a child of a member of the uniformed services may enroll, register, and coordinate education services for his or her child, including without limitation a child with special education needs or a child with a disability, in the public school of his or her choice by:

(1) Determining, in consultation with military and public school district officials, the public school in which he or she prefers to enroll his or her child according to requirements under § 6-18-1909;

(2) Contacting the public school's designated military family

education coordinator with any questions or issues raised or information needed by the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of a child, or person standing in loco parentis to a child; and

(3) Remotely submitting electronically an enrollment application for his or her child that shall include required documentation, including without limitation:

(A) A copy of the official military assignment notice or official assignment orders and military identification credentials of the member of the uniformed services;

(B) The child's unofficial education record and immunization records;

(C) Current coursework for the school in which the student is enrolled if the coursework is not included in the student's unofficial education record;

(D) A copy of the student's individualized education program, family service plan under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., or plan under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, as applicable; and

(E) A list of any extracurricular activities in which the student participates.

~~(2)(c)~~ When a public school receives notice and an enrollment application from a military family under ~~subdivision (a)(1) of this section,~~ the public school shall ~~treat the notice as a provisional enrollment and provide the student with materials regarding:~~

(1) Provisionally enroll, provide placement for, and enter academic course requests on behalf of the incoming student based on the student's education record provided by his or her family or the sending district;

(2) Provide the uniformed services family with information either directly or on a Military Family link on the public school's or public school district's website regarding:

(A) ~~Academic courses~~ Career-ready pathways and other academic or education programs offered;

(B) ~~Electives~~ Required academic courses for each curriculum and elective course options;

(C) ~~Sports~~ School and community-sponsored extracurricular

activities, including without limitation individual and team sports, clubs, junior reserve officer training corps opportunities, and Purple Star School program ambassadors; and

(D) Contact information for the designated military family education coordinator and the Purple Star School program military family education facilitator, if applicable; and

~~(D)~~(E) Other relevant information regarding the public school.

~~(3)~~(d) A public school:

~~(A)~~(1) Shall, in determining the acceptance of a student's enrollment in the public school, consider the:

(A) The student's enrollment application date and the anticipated date of enrollment of a the student under subdivision (a)(1) subsection (a) of this section in light of;

~~(i)~~(B) Class sizes;

~~(ii)~~(C) Course prerequisites or conflicts; and

~~(iii)~~(D) The availability of elective courses;

~~(B)~~(2)(A) May preregister a student in anticipation of the student's enrollment under subdivision (a)(1) of this section; and Shall not deny a student enrollment in the public school or the public school district under this section unless there is a lack of capacity.

(B) A lack of capacity may be claimed by a public school district only if:

(i) The public school district has reached the maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the Standards for Accreditation for Public Schools and School Districts, state rules, or other applicable federal regulations; and

(ii) The claim of lack of capacity is timely and consistent with state and federal law;

~~(C)~~(3) May seek waivers from the State Board of Education to accommodate a student under this section, including without limitation required class ratios Shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, military family status, or disability;

(4) Notify a prospective student's family in writing regarding whether the student's enrollment has been accepted or rejected within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the student's enrollment application and

supporting documentation; and

(5) As soon as practicable, request that a sending district provide a student's official education record as specified by § 6-28-107 to confirm the student's provisional enrollment, placement, and course preregistration conditions.

~~(b)(1)~~(e)(1) A student under this section shall receive equitable access to academic courses.

(2)(A) A receiving district may enter academic course requests on behalf of an incoming student under this section based on the student's transcript of information sent by the student's family or the student's sending district.

(B) Special power of attorney relative to the guardianship of a student is sufficient for purposes of enrollment and all other actions requiring parental participation and consent.

~~(e)(1)~~(f)(1) A receiving district shall not charge local tuition to a student who transitions to the receiving district under this section and who has been placed in the care of a noncustodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent.

(2) A student who has been placed in the care of a noncustodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent may continue to attend the school in which he or she was enrolled while residing with the custodial parent.

~~(d)~~(g) A receiving district shall ensure a student who transitions under this section has the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, regardless of application deadlines, and to the extent that the student is otherwise qualified.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-28-109 is amended to read as follows:

6-28-109. Virtual course enrollment.

(a) At the request of a military family, a receiving district may enroll an inbound transitioning child of a military family in virtual distance-learning or digital coursework, if available, to facilitate a smooth transition between the student's previous coursework and the curriculum best suited to ensure educational success in his or her new school.

(b) To prevent a student from losing course credit due to absences, a

public school may approve a student who has been granted one (1) or more excused absences to:

- (1) Access school coursework virtually; or
- (2) Transfer to a virtual coursework program.

SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-28-113(b), concerning requirements a receiving district must adhere to with regard to a student's special education services under the Arkansas Military Child School Transitions Act of 2021, is amended to read as follows:

(b) A receiving district:

(1) Shall make reasonable accommodations and modifications to address the needs of incoming students with disabilities under this section; ~~and~~

(2) May perform subsequent evaluations to ensure a student who transitions under this chapter has been appropriately placed in the receiving district as soon as possible upon the student's arrival at the receiving district;

(3) May request a meeting with a student's parents or legal guardians and the individualized education program team at the sending district from which the student transferred before the student's arrival at the receiving district;

(4) May, upon review of a student's existing individualized education program and with parental consent, request an evaluation by the sending district, if the student is still enrolled in the sending district;

(5) May request an in-person meeting with the student's parents or legal guardians and the student to confirm planned services upon the adoption by the public school of the student's existing or amended individualized education program; and

(6) May take any other action to ensure a student's smooth transition under this chapter.

SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-28-116 is amended to read as follows:

6-28-116. ~~New student reception programs~~— Military family education coordinators.

(a) A Each public school ~~with twenty (20) or more children of military~~

~~families enrolled as students under this chapter or a public school district with at least three thousand (3,000) enrolled public school students district and open-enrollment public charter school shall:~~

~~(1) Incorporate into the policies of the public school district specific procedures that outline actions to take in support of students who are the children of military families who transition to and from the public school district; and~~

~~(2)(A)(1) Designate in each public school district a military family education coordinator to serve as the primary point of contact for each child of a military family and his or her parent or legal guardian;~~

~~(2) Annually by September 1 provide to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education the name and contact information of the military family education coordinator; and~~

~~(3) Post in a section designated for Military Families on the website of the public school the contact information for the military family education coordinator.~~

~~(B)(b) The Each public school military family education coordinator shall:~~

~~(i)(1) Have Possess specialized knowledge regarding the educational needs ~~of children of military families and the obstacles that children of military families face in obtaining an education~~ and unique challenges faced by children of uniformed services families; and~~

~~(ii)(2) Be included in the establishment and adoption of a public school district's and public school's parent and family engagement plan as required under § 6-15-1702; and~~

~~(3) Serve as a navigator for uniformed services families by:~~

~~(A) Connecting the uniformed services families to appropriate public school resources; and~~

~~(B) Connecting families with other uniformed services families in the public school upon request.~~

~~(C) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall supply relevant resources for the orientation and training of public school military family education coordinators under this section.~~

SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 6-28-117 is amended to read as follows:

6-28-117. Reporting enrollment of children of members of the ~~uniformed~~

services armed forces – Definition.

(a) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall require a public school to report the enrollment of a student ~~who is a child of a uniformed services family~~ with a parent who is an active duty or reserve component member of the armed forces as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6311, as it existed on January 1, 2025:

(1) In the Arkansas Public School Computer Network; or

(2) As established by rule if the public school or public school district does not report information through the Arkansas Public School Computer Network.

(b) As used in this section, "armed forces" means a member of the active duty or reserve components of the United States Army, United States Navy, United States Air Force, United States Marine Corps, United States Space Force, United States Coast Guard, and National Guard.

SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 6-28-204(b), concerning the duties of the Arkansas Council for Military Children is amended to read as follows:

(b) The duties of the council are to:

(1) Assist state and local education agencies in the promotion ~~and~~, communication, delivery, and assessment of the provisions of this chapter to inform state education authorities, public school district officials, military commanders, and uniformed services families by:

(A) Assisting in the development, publication, and distribution through schools and military commands of a digital family guidebook that provides information on the provisions of this chapter;

(B) At least biennially publicly surveying uniformed services families to assess awareness of this chapter, provisions of the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, § 6-18-227, provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015, § 6-18-1901 et seq., available military family resources, and unmet uniformed services family needs; and

(C) Developing and promulgating student arrival and departure surveys of uniformed services families to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of this chapter and other related programs;

(2) Assist state and local education agencies with the orientation and training of district military family education coordinators and school military education facilitators on provisions of this chapter;

(3) Develop and promote the Purple Star School program as required by § 6-28-302;

~~(3)(4)~~ Assist in the development and delivery of programs that inform current and former uniformed services families, including Gold Star families, ~~of the need for self-identification in order to assure accurate accounting of children of uniformed services families enrolled in public school districts~~ to self-identify to assure:

(A) They are recognized for their service; and

(B) That the student is accounted for in all applicable programs for which the student qualifies; and

~~(4)(5)~~ Assist in the development and administration of programs recognizing education agencies, public schools, and leaders who have established or contributed to programs facilitating successful school transitions of children of uniformed services families.

SECTION 9. Arkansas Code § 6-28-204(i), concerning administrative staff to support the Chair of the Arkansas Council for Military Children, is amended to read as follows:

(i) The council shall post on its website or post by utilizing another form of public notice, including without limitation social media, information for uniformed services families, including without limitation information regarding:

(1) The purpose, duties, membership composition, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes of the council;

(2) Resources to assist uniformed services families with making decisions concerning school choice and educational freedom accounts;

(3) Guidance for advance enrollment;

(4) Contact information for military family education coordinators; and

(5) Purple Star School Program highlights and contact information for military family education facilitators.

(j) The division shall provide administrative staff support to the Chair of the Arkansas Council for Military Children to assist with the achievement of the purpose and the administration of duties of the council.

SECTION 10. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 28, is amended to add

additional sections to read as follows:

Subchapter 3 – Purple Star School Program

6-28-301. Purple Star School Program.

(a) Each public school with twenty (20) or more children of military families enrolled annually by October 1 shall:

(1) Adopt the Purple Star School Program developed by the Arkansas Council for Military Children and approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education; and

(2) Survey arriving and departing uniform services families to assess the effectiveness of programs and services under this chapter as specified by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.

(b) The purpose of the Purple Star School Program shall be to:

(1) Assist children of uniformed services families by addressing the educational, social, and emotional challenges the children of uniformed services families face during their transition to a new school; and

(2) Keep children of uniformed services families on track to enroll and excel in college, enter the workforce, and become life-ready.

(c) The council-developed Purple Star School Program required under subsection (a) of this section shall:

(1) Require each public school to designate a military family education facilitator to:

(A) Identify military-connected students who are enrolled in the public school and inform public school teachers of those students;

(B) Serve as the Purple Star School Program point of contact for the public school, each child of a military family, and the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of, or person standing in loco parentis to a child of a military family; and

(C) Assist in determining and coordinating public school services and programs for military-connected students;

(2) Require a designated public school district military family education facilitator, public school military family education coordinator, and public school staff to complete council-recommended and division-approved initial and continuing education on identifying the needs and unique challenges faced by children of members of the uniformed services;

(3) Require each public school district to include on its

website a "Military Families" section that informs uniformed services families of:

(A) The student enrollment application process;

(B) Available education pathways;

(C) Notable public school or public school district Purple Star School Programs;

(D) Public school district military family education coordinator contact information; and

(E) Public school military family education facilitator contact information;

(4)(A) Require each public school or public school district to establish a volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador program that shall be open to all enrolled students who want to contribute.

(B) The volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador program required under subdivision (c)(4)(A) of this section shall:

(i) Connect and welcome inbound students ahead of their transition to a public school;

(ii) Assist with the provision of new student orientation; and

(iii) Assist new students with establishing social connections at their new school;

(5) Establish school and community events to honor and recognize members of the uniformed services and military-connected students;

(6) Ensure that a public school or public school district appoints a volunteer uniformed services member, military spouse, or representative from a military installation or unit to serve on the school community and family engagement committee;

(7) Ensure that a public school district's or public school's parent and family engagement plan required under § 6-15-1702 addresses relevant military family issues and resources; and

(8) Require public schools and public school districts to collaborate with military commands to encourage uniformed services families to self-identify their military status.

(d) The Purple Star School Program required under subsection (a) of this section may authorize public schools and public school districts to expand their Purple Star School Program to include community-level

initiatives, including without limitation:

(1) Engaging community organizations, local businesses, and military installations to enhance resources and support for military-connected students and their families;

(2) Organizing community events that raise awareness of military-connected students and their contributions; and

(3) Establishing partnerships with regional stakeholders to enhance Purple Star School Program efforts while fulfilling all requirements for the Purple Star School Program established by the division.

(e) As used in this section, a "military-connected student" is:

(1) An incoming or a currently enrolled student who is a child or dependent of a current or former active or reserve component uniformed services member;

(2) A child of a uniformed services member who died while on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty;

(3) A student who is a sibling of a uniformed services member;

(4) A student who has enlisted in the uniformed services; or

(5) A Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadet.

6-28-302. Arkansas Council for Military Children – Purple Star School Program – Duties.

The Arkansas Council for Military Children shall:

(1) Develop and review biennially and amend as necessary the Purple Star School Program model;

(2) When developing, reviewing, and amending the Purple Star School Program as required under subdivision (1) of this section, incorporate provisions prescribed by the council, the Military Child Education Coalition, and other relevant, recognized authorities;

(3) Use the Purple Star School Program's application and renewal process along with interdistrict collaboration events to drive continuous improvement of the program;

(4) Define required and optional Purple Star School Program provisions established by § 6-28-301 and performance standards;

(5) Establish phase-in timing and training, if required, when adopting or amending Purple Star School Program provisions; and

(6) Establish a recognition program for public schools, public

school districts, and private schools that meet Purple Star School Program standards as defined and evaluated by the council.

6-28-303. Division of Elementary and Secondary Education – Purple Star School Program – Duties.

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall:

(1) Provide relevant resources for the orientation and training of public school district military family education coordinators and public school military family education facilitators under this chapter;

(2) Administer the Purple Star School Program;

(3) Provide administrative and logistical support to the Arkansas Council for Military Children to develop the program; and

(4) Promulgate and incorporate Purple Star School program rules into the rules the division promulgates under this chapter.

/s/K. Brown

APPROVED: 4/10/25