

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Army

## Adjustment and Achievement Associated With Mobility in Military Families

Marchant, K. H., & Medway, F. J. (1987). Adjustment and achievement associated with mobility in military families. *Psychology in the Schools, 24*(3), 289-294. doi:10.1002/1520-6807(198707)24:33.0.co;2-a

**SUMMARY:** Army families participated in a study regarding their history of geographic mobility, identification with Army life, personal well-being, and their children's school achievement and social competence. Frequent relocation was not found to negatively impact well-being for Service members, their spouses, or children.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- There was a relationship between total moves a child had experienced in his or her life and school achievement such that more moves were associated with greater academic achievement.
- Children who often moved further than 500 miles away had lower social competence than youth who typically moved fewer than 500 miles.
- Parental identification with the military was related to higher youth social competence, but not with youth school achievement.
- The frequency of family moves was not related to Service member and spouse well-being.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Enhance the ease of military children and family's adjustment in moving to new locations by providing welcoming social events to facilitate new social connections
- Offer mentoring programs such that children who are new to an installation could be matched with established children who could help them feel welcome
- Develop workshops for families who have recently experienced a relocation in order to help parents develop skills to assist their children during the transition

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend monitoring of the wellbeing of all family members after a military-related move, including following them over time to track adjustment
- Encourage the development of programs that help families and children transition between schools for military related moves
- Promote training for professionals who work with military families regarding the challenges those families may face around relocations

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



## METHODS

- Superintendents from the three elementary schools at Fort Jackson Army Base recruited English-speaking families in which the child was enrolled in grades two, four, and six. The rate of participation was 24%.
- The Service member and spouse separately completed measures of mobility history, well-being, and identification with the military as well as completing a combined measure of the social competence of one of their children.
- Children's school achievement was assessed via an achievement test administered at school.
- Data were analyzed to examine relationships among total life moves; location, distance and recency of latest move; and social competence scores.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Forty families participated. Of the Service members, 90% were male.
- Of the participants, 90% were in the enlisted ranks.
- The Service member parent had been in the military, on average, 13 years.
- No additional demographic data were presented.

## LIMITATIONS

- Limited demographic data were presented, so it is unclear which populations these findings extend to.
- All the families who participated were in the Army; results may not apply to other military branch members.
- Participants opted in to the study; these families may differ from families who chose not to participate in important ways that may influence results.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the impact of transitioning from military to non-military schools on youth school achievement and competence
- Use a longitudinal design to investigate the long-term academic outcomes associated with family moves
- Investigate the efficacy of programs that aim to ease the transitions around relocations

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>