Every Child in Focus

How PTAs Can Better Support Military Families

National PTA’s Every Child in Focus is centered on strengthening family engagement in schools by celebrating important cultural distinctions and achievements, while highlighting solutions to potential educational issues. This April, we turn our focus to military families and the unique challenges they face in supporting student success.

Based on National PTA’s Standards for Family-School Partnerships, let’s explore ways PTAs can welcome and support military families in the school community.

**Standard 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community**
- Make it a point to welcome families new to the community and provide information about the school.
- Consider having a committee to assist new families, especially for those who transition midyear.
- When a family has to leave your school, ask how you can help ease the transition. Reach out to the new school and PTA to let them know that the family is coming.

**Standard 2: Communicating Effectively**
- Find ways to use technology (e.g., Skype, Facetime, email) to help deployed parents keep in touch with what is happening at school and participate in meetings if their schedules allow.
- Provide resources to help teachers communicate with families about sensitive issues, such as deployment.

**Standard 3: Supporting Student Success**
- Support the school administration in finding ways to include caregivers who may be deployed or working from another city in parent-teacher conferences.
- Make personal calls to families to ensure they understand the role they can play in supporting their students’ success at school.
- Educate teachers to increase their sensitivity during classroom discussions about issues such as war, casualties, and other aspects of military action.

**Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child**
- Host a “get to know you” event so families can meet key leaders from the school community.
- Provide schools and parents with their respective rights and responsibilities under the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

**Standard 5: Sharing Power**
- Think about your leadership calendar. Do families who arrive midyear, or those who will only be at your school for a year or two, have equal opportunities to participate in school governance?
- Be sure your PTA board and committee meeting times and locations are flexible to accommodate military schedules.

**Standard 6: Collaborating with Community**
- Partner with agencies in the community to share resources that might help military families.
- Use family-serving professionals and volunteers to conduct training for families to help them build resiliency skills.