

# Questions & Answers about relocation

## **1. We are going to be relocating soon. When should we tell our children?**

As soon as you are sure that you are going to relocate, you should tell your children. This gives them time to think about the change and prepare themselves for the move.

Telling them about the move also gives you a chance to talk about what the change will mean. It gives your children a chance to start asking questions. Tell them that it is okay to share their feelings and to ask questions.

## **2. What are some ways to help my children prepare for a move to a new installation?**

You can help your children by finding the new location on a map or reading about the place in books or on the Internet. Some Family Centers will have videotapes about other installa-

tions around the country.

Let your children help plan the move or think of ways to celebrate it. This might include making one more trip to a favorite park, library, or ice cream store, and finding the best pizza, locate the video store, or park in the new location.

Your children may also find it helpful to read books or watch videos about moving.

## **3. My son says he wants to stay here. He doesn't want to move away from his friends. How should I handle this?**

Moving is especially hard on children because they hate to leave their friends. It is important for you to tell your son that you know how much he will miss his friends.

It is good for you to remember that children, in general, tend to make new friends easily

after the move, but it probably won't help to tell your son that right now. He needs to go through this loss and deal with his feelings. You can help him by letting him be sad and by thinking of ways that he can enjoy his remaining time with his friends. Help him plan ways to stay in touch with them after the move through letters, phone calls, and e-mail. Help your son make a list of friends' phone numbers and e-mail and street addresses.

## **4. One of my friends is moving soon and she doesn't want to move. She has been saying this to the kids, as well. I think this is making it harder on everybody. Am I right?**

Children learn how to handle stress and change by watching adults, especially parents. If a parent complains about the move, then the children are less likely to want to move.

Parents have to work through these feelings. If you or someone you know is having a very hard time with a move, seek help from the Family Center in your installation or other professionals.

To learn more  
about this topic,  
please contact:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:



[www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil)

Also, although it may be hard to hide your feelings from your children, they should not be told that the move is bad or won't work. This can make the move harder for them. You may not feel good about the move, but try not to show your bias. The more you can encourage your children about the move, the more you can begin to see the positive side as well.

**5. We are moving out of the United States in the next few months. We have never lived outside of the U.S. We are worried and I think this is making the kids worry. How do we handle this?**

Moving to a new country can be both exciting and scary, especially if you have never lived out of the country. First, try to find a family that has visited or lived in the country. They can help you to know what to expect. Sometimes this is the biggest worry. The more you find out what life will be like, the better you will feel.

If you can't find anyone to talk to, then look for books, explore the Internet, or find videos. There are usually lots of places to find out about other countries.

When looking for information, find out what the people of the country are like. What do they eat? What do they wear? What language do they speak? Share this information with your children. As you talk with your children, show them good ways to deal with worries.

**6. We are moving next week. Sometimes during a move everything gets very stressful. Is there anything we can do to make this time less stressful?**

Moving can be stressful. You may feel overwhelmed at times. Think about ways that you and your family have dealt with stressful times in the past.

During a move, some families even have a special night out, go to a movie, or have a picnic to get away from all the other changes.

Try to keep some of the same routines. This may be hard because everything is new and you may be in temporary quarters or be waiting for belongings. Find some things that can be the same—read favorite books, watch favorite videos, go to church, sing songs, and have the usual bedtimes and mealtimes. Some activities will be different, but try making these the same as quickly as possible. Find a morning routine that works and stick with it. Find an evening routine or bedtime routine that works. Your whole family will benefit from these routines.

**7. It seems like the first month or so after the move our household is out of order. No one can find anything, nothing seems normal, and everyone has a short temper. What can we do?**

After a move, most families experience stressful moments. These may be brief or they may

last for some time. If you have made lots of changes and one spouse has been deployed as well, it may be too much change to handle. You can overcome all the stress, but it will take time. You can regain order by finding new routines that help you and your family handle feelings of loss, fear, and stress that come from moving.

To deal with all the emotions that usually come with a move, think about ways you and your family have successfully handled similar situations in the past. Who can you tell about your worries and frustrations? What things do you enjoy doing as a family that make you feel like you belong together? What fun activities help you forget about troubles? Where can your family get support and assistance, like childcare centers, schools, religious institutions, and Family Centers? Don't struggle with these issues alone. There are many people in your new community who can help.

**8. We have been relocated for about three months now. We have some new routines and many things have settled down, but my kids seem to have been talking a lot about things they miss at the last installation—friends, places to eat, and things to do. Is this normal?**

It is normal and healthy to think about old friends and old places. Part of the way that people work through change is

by thinking of the good people and times they had in the past. We all get used to new places by understanding what has changed and what has stayed the same. Moving always involves some grief over losses and it takes time to work through grief.

**9. We are moving next week. This is our first “military” move as a family. I am worried about our kids fitting in when we move. What can we do to learn about the new location?**

This time can be both exciting and stressful. You may have friends who have already told you their moving “horror stories.” Take heart: moving can be a time for your family to come together and learn new ways to deal with change. These are good lessons for you and, especially, your children. Much of life is about making positive choices regarding change.

Getting to know the new place is important and it may help to think of it as an adventure game. You need to search the neighborhood to find out who your neighbors are, and where to play, eat, buy groceries, and have fun. A good way to get to know your new community and its people is to get involved with some activity or organization such as joining a church or volunteering. Meet your children’s school principal and new teachers and find out about volunteering at school. You can help with Scouts and

community groups or at recreation centers and childcare facilities. Find something that you like to do and help your children do the same.

**10. My children are doing so well in their school, but now we are moving. I am very concerned that they get good teachers and that they get adjusted to the new school. It is so hard to move in the middle of the year. What can I do to help them?**

Besides worrying about making friends, school-age children often fear meeting new teachers and getting started in a new school. It is especially hard to move in the middle of the year because other kids will already have their friends and activities. Find out if your children’s school has any special programs for new students. If they don’t have a program in place, ask your children’s teachers or the school counselor if they can find students to act as “buddies” for the first few weeks in the new school. Many times, children whose parents also serve in the military are very aware of the adjustments to school and will automatically help other new students. When you meet the new teachers, let them know some helpful information about your children’s interests, personality, etc., so they can be as effective as possible in establishing a good working relationship.

Other things that will help make your child’s academic adjustment go more smoothly is

to make sure you get report cards, school records, individual education plans, and other information from your current school before moving. Write down the names of textbooks and the pages of the book where your children left off. The more information you can provide to the teachers in the new school, the quicker they will be able to fit the child in and help them continue to learn. If you make the move without this information, remember you can always call the old school and talk to teachers and counselors.

Keep in touch with teachers at the new school and keep track of your children’s progress. Let them know your concerns. Teachers want parents to be involved with their children.

**Sources:**

- Cornille, T.A. (1993). Support systems and the relocation process for children and families. *Marriage and Family Review*, 19, 281-298.
- Humke, C., & Schaefer, C. (1995). Relocation: A review of the effects of residential mobility on children and adolescents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 32, 16-24.
- Verycrusse, N.J., & Chandler, L.A. (1992). Coping strategies used by adolescents in dealing with family relocation overseas. *Journal of Adolescence*, 15, 67-82.