



Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Legislative Requirement:

As required by 20-1-231, MCA this report provides a summary of the state's participation in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and the activities and discussions of the Montana Council on Educational for Military Children during the 2025-2026 school year.

Background:

In 2013, the Montana Legislature approved Senate Bill 203, which enacted into law the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The purpose of the Interstate Compact is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families due to frequent moves and deployments of their parents. The state's participation in the compact is intended to facilitate:

- the timely enrollment of children of military families;
- the student placement process;
- the student's qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and extracurricular academic, athletic and social activities; and
- the student's on-time graduation.

Council Membership:

One of the requirements of participation in the Interstate Compact is for each state to create a council on educational opportunity for military children. The members of the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children for the 2025-2026 school year included:

- Ray L. Shaw, Ret. Sergeant (USAF), Compact Commissioner
- Col Brian R. Low – 341st Mission Support Group Commander, Malmstrom AFB, US DoD Military Representative
- Susie Hedalen, State Superintendent, Montana Office of Public Instruction
- Brian Michelotti, Executive Director, Montana High School Association
- Heather Hoyer, Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools
- Representative Ed Buttrey, Montana House of Representatives
- Brad Livingston, Brigadier General (BG) Ret.
- Lisa Sapp, School Liaison, Malmstrom Air Force Base, US DoD Appointee

This summer Brad Livingston, Brigadier General (BG) Ret, resigned from the council due to time commitments. Governor Greg Gianforte named Kaleigh A. Koeppen, MAJ, AN, MTARNG, J9, Director of Soldier and Family Support, to the council in August.

Purple Star Information:

In 2020, the Montana council voted to adopt the Purple Star School designation program. The Purple Star School Designation for military-friendly schools recognizes schools that show a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation's military. Schools that earn the award will receive a special Purple Star recognition to display onsite in honor of students of military families. This designation is valid for three years. Purple Star champions are individuals in the school community that go above and beyond for military students

The Montana Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission are accepting Purple Star School Designation applications until October 31, 2026. Awardees will be announced in November 2026.

- [Purple Up Month of the Military Child handout \(PDF\)](#)
- [Purple Star Schools Award designation rules \(PDF\)](#)
- [Purple Star Champion Award designation rules \(PDF\)](#)

2024-2025 Purple Star Schools:

- Holy Spirit Catholic School (Great Falls)
- Riverview Elementary School (Great Falls)
- Joliet Public Schools (Joliet, MT)

2024-2025 Purple Star Champions

- Mark Yeager, Great Falls Public Schools CTE Pathways Advisor
- Tara Murillo, Great Falls Public Schools Librarian at Chief Joseph Elementary School
- Montana Johnson, Great Falls Public Schools Counselor at Morningside Elementary

2025-2026 Purple Star Schools:

- Troy High School, Troy
- Whitehall High School, Whitehall
- Central Elementary School, Helena
- Chief Joseph Elementary School, Great Falls (Purple Star Renewal)

2025-2026 Purple Star Champions

- Jackie Mainwaring, Executive Director - Great Falls Public Schools
- Kelli O'Brien, Military and Family Life Counselor - Chief Joseph Elementary School

- Lisa Sapp, School Liaison Specialist at Malmstrom Air Force Base

Council Information

- [Montana MIC3 Webpage](#)
- [Montana State Council Bylaws \(PDF\)](#)

The MT State Council met on the following dates to conduct business over the last year:

- November 15, 2024: Virtual
- April 10, 2025: Purple Up Event & Virtual Meeting
- May 15, 2025: Lisa Sapp, School Liaison, Malmstrom Air Force Base, presented to the Board of Public Education.
- July 30, 2025: Virtual
- November 4, 2025: Virtual
- April 15, 2026: In person at Great Falls District Office Building & Purple Up Event
 - Guest: Tammie L. Perreault, Northwest Regional Liaison (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY) Defense - State Liaison Office

2025 Legislation Regarding Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

- HB118: Revise the Montana interstate compact on educational opportunities for military children
- Representative Ed Buttrey
- Effective Date: April 3, 2025
- Summary: HB118 revises the interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children. It clarifies the commission's authority to determine an annual assessment in an amount equal to a per-student amount multiplied by the number of children in military families in Montana. The bill also updates citations to the United States code.

Military Connected Students & Family

Montana all branches of military servicemembers: active duty, guard/reserve, and retirees

- Spouses: 11,264
- Children: 10,526

Zip codes with the most military connected spouses & children (2025):

- 59405: 3,704
- 59404: 2,108
- 59602 1,387
- 59901: 990

Points of contact regarding issues related to the Compact in Montana are:

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