



# OUR EDUCATION STORY PT 2: EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS? HELP IS HERE (MIL SPOUSE EDITION)

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## EPISODE TAKEAWAYS:

1. **Individualized Education Plan (or Program)** is also known as an IEP. This is a plan or program developed to ensure that a child with an identified disability or exceptional needs who is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services. Here's a great [article](#) by Suzie Dalien spelling out the *7 Steps of The IEP Process*.
2. **504 Plan** - Section 504 is a federal law that protects the civil rights of persons with disabilities. The Act prohibits any organization that receives federal funds from discriminating against otherwise qualified individuals because of a disability. School programs and activities are subject to this law. The 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.
3. **Accommodations** - Changes that the teacher can make to help your child learn more effectively. For example: they may rearrange the classroom, let your child take more time for tests, or give them certain types of learning aids. Accommodations are NOT changes to the education content itself. They can be used for class instruction, homework and testing, including college entrance tests like the SAT or ACT.
4. **Student relocation portfolio** - In addition to the all-powerful PCS binder it's definitely worth your time to create a Student Relocation Portfolio. You should include many of the following items to make sure crucial information is at your fingertips
  - a. Medical info like asthma plan or seizure plan
  - b. Your child's current IEP or 504
  - c. A letter from your child's current educator to help aid in the transition to the new school. Explain what things work, what things definitely don't work or are triggers.

- d. Personal bits of info about your child that help the new educator bond with your child. Info like favorite color or favorite superhero can go a long way to developing a relationship.

## 5. Resources and Programs

- a. [\*\*Military Child Education Coalition \(MCEC\)\*\*](#) - MCEC supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.
- b. [\*\*Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission \(MIC3\)\*\*](#) - The Council of State Governments (CSG), in cooperation with the US Department of Defense, drafted this Interstate Compact to address some of the educational challenges transitioning children of military families face. Since July 2006, CSG worked with a variety of federal, state and local officials as well as national stakeholder organizations representing education groups and military families to create the new interstate agreement.
- c. **Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)** - is a mandatory U.S. Department of Defense enrollment program that works with other military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical, and personnel services worldwide to U.S. military families with special needs.
- d. [\*\*EFMP & Me\*\*](#) - Use this tool to navigate through the Department of Defense's network of services and support for families with special needs.
- e. [\*\*Military OneSource\*\*](#) from the Department of Defense is your 24/7 gateway to trusted information, resources and confidential help. When MilLife happens, it's your "first line of support" — giving service members and military families tools to stay well and thrive.
- f. [\*\*Parent Center Hub\*\*](#) - Also known as the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR). All the materials found on the CPIR Hub have been created and archived for Parent Centers around the country to help them provide support and services to the families they serve. The CPIR employs a user-centered process, gathering the perspectives of our experienced audience—Parent Center staff members and other experts—every step of the way, to create products and services that increase Parent Centers' knowledge and capacity in specific domains.

- g. School Liaison Officers – we mentioned them in the last episode and the same applies here. They can be incredible sources of information and if they don't know the answer, they often know who to contact.
- 6. **Student relocation portfolio** - In addition to the all-powerful PCS binder, it's definitely worth your time to create a Student Relocation Portfolio. You should include many of the following items to make sure crucial information is at your fingertips
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  - d. Personal bits of info about your child that help the new educator bond with your child. Info like favorite color or favorite superhero can go a long way to developing a relationship.
- 7. Don't forget social media as a resource and access to parent networks and groups. Many times these are people who have been in the community for some time and have built successful and fruitful networks that they are happy include you in. The local parent teacher association/organization is a great place to start finding families with needs similar to yours.
- 8. Together is your watchword. You, working with the education staff and including your military child as part of the process is one of the best ways to advocate for your child and ensure that they can advocate for themselves and succeed.