

The Evolution of the Military Interstate Compact and Commission: From Inception to Mission Driven

by Cherise Imai, Executive Director

The journey of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (the Compact) has been one of progressive collaboration, determination, and a shared commitment to improving educational transitions for military-connected students. Developed by the U.S. Department of Defense in collaboration with the Council of State Governments and the National Center for Interstate Compacts, the model compact statute was launched in 2007 to states as a way to address the unique challenges faced by military children in the education system. Children of military families often face frequent relocations, disruptions in their education, and varying state requirements that can hinder their academic progress. The goal of the Compact was simple yet profound: to streamline educational standards and provide consistency across state lines to ensure that military-connected children would experience a seamless education, no matter where they were stationed. By 2015, the Compact was fully adopted by all 50 states and Washington, D.C., marking a significant milestone in its mission to support military families. As Japanese writer Ryunosuke Satoro said it best, *"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean."* This spirit of unity and shared responsibility has been at the heart of the Compact's success from the beginning.

The Compact's Founding: A Vision for Military Families

The Compact was officially adopted in 2008 to address the challenges military children face in their educational journeys. Children of military families often face frequent relocations, disruptions in their education, and varying state requirements that can hinder their academic progress. The goal of the Compact was simple yet profound: to streamline educational standards and provide consistency across state lines to ensure that military-connected children would experience a seamless education, no matter where they were stationed.

By 2010, all 50 states and Washington, D.C. had joined the Compact, marking a historic achievement. The Compact's success was not just about legislative action but about creating a foundation for inter-state cooperation and mutual support for military families. A key aspect of the Compact's success has been the establishment of the **Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)**, which serves as the governing body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Compact's principles.

The First Strategic Plan: Laying the Foundation for Growth (2015-2020)

In 2015, the MIC3 embarked on the development of its first Strategic Plan, laying out the framework for how the Commission would operate and grow in the years ahead. This initial plan was built on the recognition that, while the Compact had been adopted, much work remained to ensure that the principles of the Compact were fully integrated into the educational systems across all states. The first strategic plan focused on **building awareness**, **enhancing outreach**, and **establishing stronger partnerships** with military families, schools, and local communities.

This foundational plan set the stage for subsequent improvements in the support and advocacy for military-connected students. The MIC3 also focused on improving the **state council structure**, ensuring that each state had a dedicated council to implement and advocate for the Compact's principles.

The Second Strategic Plan: Expanding Reach and Impact (2020-2023)

With the first plan completed, the Commission moved to the development of its second Strategic Plan, which was launched in 2020. This plan was guided by a commitment to **expand the reach and impact of the Compact** across the nation. The second plan acknowledged the need for greater alignment of educational policies and increased training for educators and school administrators to effectively support military families.

Key objectives of the second strategic plan included:

1. **Expanding Outreach** - Increasing awareness of the Compact's benefits to military families and schools nationwide.
2. **Developing Resources** - Offering resources and training materials to educators and administrators to help them better support military children.
3. **Strengthening Collaboration** - Fostering stronger partnerships at local, state, and national levels to support educational success for military-connected children.

The second plan also emphasized the need for data collection and analysis to **better understand the challenges military children face and to inform the development of future programs**. The success of this phase of the Compact's growth was marked by continued progress in collaboration across states, with the MIC3 establishing more formal relationships with federal agencies, educational organizations, and military entities.

The Third Strategic Plan: Fostering Innovation, Resilience, and Sustainability (2023-2025)

The **2023-2025 Strategic Plan** marked another critical milestone for the MIC3 and its ongoing mission to support military-connected students. The third plan was not just about building on past successes but about **setting the course for future growth and sustainability**. It aimed to address evolving challenges, such as the changing landscape of education post-pandemic, the growing importance of mental health, and the need to ensure educational systems remain adaptable in the face of emerging challenges.

The priorities of the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan focused on:

1. **Deepening Impact** - Expanding successful initiatives and ensuring that the support offered reaches more students, families, and schools.
2. **Sustaining Growth** - Strengthening financial and operational systems to ensure long-term sustainability for the Commission's efforts.
3. **Fostering Innovation and Resilience** - Anticipating challenges and adapting strategies to ensure the continued effectiveness of the Compact and its initiatives.

Notable achievements under this plan included **enhanced digital outreach, increased training opportunities for schools, parents, and stakeholders**, and the development of new strategies for **engaging with military families** in increasingly diverse and virtual environments. These initiatives have ensured that the Compact is prepared to meet the evolving needs of military families and their children, now and into the future.

One of the standout features of the third plan was its emphasis on **fostering resilience** in the face of educational disruptions. The MIC3 adapted quickly to these challenges, offering new ways to support military families through digital tools, virtual training sessions, and increased communication.

Looking Ahead: The Fourth Strategic Plan (2025-2028)

In October 2025, the MIC3 will launch its fourth strategic plan, building upon the successes of the previous plans while addressing emerging challenges. As the needs of military families continue to



evolve, the fourth plan will focus on further refining strategies to ensure that the educational transitions for military-connected children remain as smooth and supportive as possible.

The new plan will build on the foundation laid by the previous three, with an even greater emphasis on **data-driven decision-making**, **expanding partnerships** across educational and military sectors, and **leveraging new technologies** to create even more impactful initiatives.

Conclusion: A Legacy of Collaboration and Commitment

From its inception, the Compact and the MIC3 have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting military-connected students and their families. The development of the strategic plans has been a crucial element in ensuring that the vision for consistent, high-quality education for military children is not only realized but continues to evolve.

As we look forward to the launch of the fourth strategic plan, the momentum of collaboration, innovation, and resilience continues to propel the MIC3 toward a future where military-connected students have the educational opportunities they deserve, regardless of where they call home.

With each plan, each initiative, and each new partnership, we have proven that, together, we can make a difference in the lives of military children. And as the Commission prepares for its next chapter, it is clear that the journey of progress will continue, one drop at a time, forming a powerful ocean of opportunity.