

## Speaker Notes

Title of Presentation: Children and Moving

**Page 1** – none.

**Page 2** – none.

**Page 3** – none.

**Page 4** – The statistics for number of families moving in the US was taken from “*Understanding Children: Moving to a New Home*,” Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist, Iowa State University, University Extension.

**Page 5** – The circumstances of the move should be taken into consideration as well. If the move is due to a deployment, emotions can be especially high. Children can have more concerns about the new location if it is very different from where they are. Example: moving to a new country, moving from a big city to a small town, or moving from a small town to a big city.

**Page 6** – **One of the inevitable parts of military life is that families will be faced with moving either due to a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or deployment:** this can increase anxiety, as with each move there is anticipation of the next move. It can be difficult for some children to get a sense of really settling in when they know they’ll be uprooted again.

**Military kids may be the only child in their new school who is from a military family – this can lead to feelings of social isolation** – feeling different from everyone else. Also, the other children don’t have the shared experiences of having a parent who is deployed.

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- **Your children get to make a fresh start:** Even if they had problems at their old school or with peers, they get to leave them behind and get a new start.
- **Make new friends:** It’s nice to stay in touch with old friends, but it’s also nice to make new friends too, and it can be exciting to meet and become friends with new kids.
- **Get involved in new activities:** Their old school may not have had a soccer team or a band. The new school may have lots of new activities they’ve never had an opportunity to be involved with before.
- **Discover a new neighborhood, city, state or country:** learning about a new area and exploring it can be exciting.
- **Move into a new house or apartment:** even though some children have concerns about the move, many find it exciting to move to a new house or apartment and set up their new room.

\*\* Can you think of other positive things?

**Page 8** – It is normal for children (as well as adults) to have mixed feelings about a move. It can definitely feel exciting, but there is typically some sense of loss and grieving regarding the home, school, friends, family left behind.

**Page 9** – It’s important to understand the significance of making new friends and saying goodbye to old friends. For school age children and teens, peers and fitting in with social groups is of great importance. At these ages, they begin to identify strongly with the peer group, so leaving a peer group and trying to find and fit in with a new peer group can be particularly challenging.

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- **Explain the process of how the move will work, where the military is sending you and why:** the more information your children have, the more in control they will feel. When talking to younger children use simple sentences and words and keep it brief. Tell them about the new home they will be living in and how long it will take to get there: Talking about the new home can help them get excited about the move.

- **Contact your local installation family center relocation manager:** they can provide information about the new assignment and communities in the area, including information about schools, child care, special needs services, school-age and youth programs and resources.
- **Find out if your new command can assign a sponsor to assist with your transition:** a sponsor can also find information about schools, child care and youth programs.

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- **Let your children know right away about the move:** they need time to adjust mentally and emotionally. It takes time to grieve and say goodbye to friends
- **Give them time to say goodbye to friends and family members they are leaving behind:** children need time to make the separation from family and friends. Saying goodbye is important – it allows for a smoother transition. Encourage them to exchange contact information.

**NOTE: teens** may be involved in romantic relationships and may have some additional difficulty in separating from these relationships. They may be angry and need more time to accept the move. Teens also are trying to separate from parents and bond with peers. They may have heightened concerns about fitting in with peers at the new location.

- **Let younger children take some of their favorite toys on the trip to the new duty station:** having their favorite toys is a comfort and also lets them know that their things will be in the new home.

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- **Let them decide or at least have input on how their new room will be arranged and decorated:** the more they are able to make their room their own, the more comfortable they will begin to feel.
- **Take them with you to explore the new neighborhood, city or town:** this can be fun for both of you as you learn about the community you now live in.
- **Give your children a specific job to do on moving day:** keeping busy can help to keep emotions in check, and having a feeling of participating also gives them a sense of control over things. This also lets them feel like they are an important part of the moving process.
- **Encourage your children to talk about their feelings and be understanding and accepting:** You will need to help younger children identify and name their feelings.

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- **Read story books about moving to younger children, and recommend books for older children and teens to read themselves:** a list of suggested books are listed in the “references” section.
- **Model the attitude and behavior you want your children to have:** If you feel stressed, it’s ok to let your children know that and then to show them how you work through it. Example: “I feel frustrated with packing today, but I’ve decided that I will just take it one step at a time.”
- **Give your child a farewell party:** this is a way to get everyone together at once and have some fun as they say goodbye.
- **Be patient:** it may take weeks or even months for you child to fully adjust and settle into the new situation. Let them know that it ok and normal to feel the way they feel.

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- **Keep routines as much as possible and try to avoid major life changes as much as possible:** children need routine. A move is a big enough change without adding other major changes if they are unnecessary.
- **Find extracurricular activities for your children to get involved in outside of school:** this is a good way to meet and make new friends.

- **Teach your children your address and phone number before or as soon as you get to the new location:** It's important for them to be able to tell people where they live in case they become lost and your phone number if they need to contact you.
- **Encourage them to talk about their feelings:** Let them know it's ok to have angry or scared feelings- that all of their feelings are ok. Let them know you are there to listen and be supportive.

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**Children this age usually make the transition very well, however some children may:**

- **Pick up on your stress level:** even babies can sense when you are upset or angry.
- **Have behavior problems:** toddlers may act out as a reaction to the tension and upheaval in the home.
- **Have difficulty separating from caregiver other than yourself:** they may think the other caregiver is moving too, and be upset when they are no longer there.

**What to do:**

- **Give them special attention, play with them and give lots of hugs:** young children need lots of physical contact to feel safe and secure.
- **Keep their security items (blanket, teddy bear, etc.) nearby:** security items for young children are very important in order for them to feel safe.
- **Keep routines as much as possible:** the more routines are kept, the less stressful the child will be.

Page 16 – Preschoolers may:

- **Not fully understand what is happening:** preschoolers may have some basic understanding of what is happening, but cannot fully comprehend the mechanics of the move and the changes it will bring.
- **Get excited about the move:** especially if you are excited, your child may get excited thinking this is a new adventure.
- **Feel it is their fault if parents show frustration:** children this age may think their behavior caused the family to have to move.
- **Develop fears their belongings may be left behind:** it's helpful to let the children pack their own toys last and unpack their toys first at the new home. Explain their toys will be waiting for them when they get there.
- **Not understand that friends and neighbors won't make the move too:** Help them understand that friends, extended family and neighbors won't be going, but that you can still keep in touch. Also explain that they will have new neighbors and friends at the new home.

**What to do:**

- Let them help with packing and unpacking their things:
- Explain the move and why you're moving in simple language
- Read story books about moving
- Keep routines the same as much as possible

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**NOTE: Ask the participants if they can think of any other tips that might help.**

- **Keep in touch with friends from their old school:** Keeping in touch with old friends can help make the change easier. It's good to have a friend supporting your child while they are making the change. Ask them to write letters to their old friends, email, text or call each other. Send cassettes or videos. If possible arrange for a sleep-over or spend a weekend with each other.
- **Talk to you and let you know how they feel:** It's nice for them to know that they have someone on their side that they can depend on.

- **Call their new school:** This way they'll know what the school looks like and how to get around to the cafeteria, the gym and your classrooms. It will be one less "unknown" for them.
- **Go to your school's website and find out as much as you can:** Once again, this will help with the "unknowns."

**Page 18** – The biggest concern children usually have about a move is whether or not they will make new friends and fit in. School age and older children form their identities in large part by their peer groups.

- **Smile and be friendly to everyone they meet:** People are much more likely to want to get to know them if they seem like a nice and friendly person.
- **Join clubs or other groups inside and outside of school:** this is a great way to get to know other kids and for them to get to know your child. Types of clubs could include boy or girl scouts, chess club, theatre club or group, foreign language clubs such as French, Spanish or German.
- **Participate in sports:** soccer, basketball, tennis, volleyball, etc.
- **Take group classes:** music, art, dance, etc.
- **Let them know it takes time to make new friends:** close friendships usually don't happen overnight. It takes time to get to know someone.

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- **Be a good listener:** Everyone wants to feel like they've been listened to. It shows you are interested in them and in what they have to say.
- **Be positive when talking to others:** Most people don't like to be around people who complain all the time. Keep a positive attitude when meeting new people.
- **Ask people about themselves:** Asking people about themselves is a good way to get to know them and it shows you're a good listener. They can ask questions like, "Who's your favorite band?" "How long have you been at this school?" "What books are you reading?"
- **Accept people as they are:** Let them know they can still like people they disagree with. They can't expect that they will think alike and agree on everything, but they can still be friends.
- **Be helpful to others:** Tell them it feels nice when someone offers to help you with something. For example: If someone drops their books, they could offer to help pick them up or offer to help someone study for an exam.
- **Give complements:** One easy way to start a conversation is to say something nice to someone. Everyone feels good when they get a compliment. Ask them to think about how it feels when they get a compliment. They could say something like, "I really like your shirt," or "That was a great shot on the basket ball court today in gym class."
- **Decide to take charge:** If they decide to take steps to make things a little easier and less scary, they can start to feel a little more in control. Feeling in control of things usually helps us feel better. For example: if they are worried that no will sit with them at lunch, they can make a decision to speak to someone in one of their classes, tell them they are new and ask if they can sit with them. Odds are that they will be happy to have your child join them.

**Page 20** – Some kids get a little nervous when meeting new people. Let them know it's OK if they do. They'll be surprised how many other kids feel the same way. Most of all, tell them not to worry about being nervous – worrying about it too much can make them more nervous. Tell them to just accept that they are nervous and to tell themselves that it's OK. Then try some of the tips we've talked about.

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