

Module 2: About DoDEA

Lesson One: DoDEA Mission and Purpose

Lesson Two: DoDEA Schools

Lesson Three: The Role of the School Liaison

Module Overview: Welcome to Module 2: About DoDEA. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) was created by the Department of Defense (DoD) to educate the children of military and civilian families connected to the military throughout the world. DoDEA is a worldwide education system that educates students in grades PK–12, offering a wide range of programs and supports to students and families. As students transfer into and out of DoDEA schools from the public school system, School Liaisons can offer support to mitigate the impact of transitions. They serve as the primary liaison between community schools, commanding officers, and military families. They link the military family to individuals or groups who can solve whatever problem they confront.

The information in this module will provide the guidance necessary for these activities.

Learning Objectives: Through this module, School Liaisons will be able to:

- Describe the purpose and mission of DoDEA, outlining its structure and programs.
- Describe where DoDEA schools are located; their enrollment policies, curriculum standards, and assessments; and special programs and policies.
- Describe the School Liaison's role within DoDEA.
- For a given situation or issue involving a military family in transition, identify and describe protocols for communicating with local commands and determining resources and actions to pursue.

Lesson One: DoDEA Mission and Purpose

Lesson Overview: The Department of Defense Education Activities (DoDEA) mission is to provide information about schools and education support programs for military-connected children and families that School Liaisons support. An understanding of the history, purpose, and structure of this Federal initiative will help School Liaisons understand how to navigate its programs and services.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this lesson, School Liaisons will be able to:

- Describe the purpose and mission of DoDEA, outlining its structure and programs.

DoDEA's Background and History

The mission of the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is to plan, direct, coordinate, and manage schools and education-support programs for eligible dependents of U.S. military personnel and civilian personnel of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). DoDEA works to provide an exemplary education that inspires and prepares all DoDEA students for success in a dynamic, global environment. For over 60 years, DoDEA has put students at the center of all its work. This is reflected in all that the agency does, as documented in the guiding principles of its Community Strategic Plan (CSP):

- Success for all students
- Trust and respect for others
- Uncompromising advocacy for students
- Development of lifelong learners
- Equal access to quality, rigorous education
- New and motivating challenges to inspire excellence
- Teaching with high expectations
- Safe and stable learning environment

The history of DoDEA dates back to the end of World War II, with the establishment of the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS). At the end of the war, many military-connected parents stationed abroad organized small schools because there was no provision for their children's education at the time. At the same time, DoD established schools within the United States to serve families stationed at bases stateside. Those were known as Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS). In 1994, the two school systems were combined into a single agency, DoDEA.

Today, DoDEA operates 194 schools in 14 districts located in 12 foreign countries, 7 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico, serving about 84,000 students. All schools within DoDEA are fully accredited by U.S. accreditation agencies. Details about DoDEA schools and their operations and programs will be reviewed in Lesson 2.

DoDEA also oversees the implementation of the Non-DoD Schools Program (NDSP), which reimburses families posted in non-U.S. locations for the cost of tuition, books, fees, and other education-related expenses. Military-connected families often incur these expenses in locations where a DoDEA school is not easily accessible and there are not quality local school options. In addition to providing financial reimbursement, according to a pre-determined schedule, NDSP also provides guidance about local school options and helps coordinate services for service members' children with special needs.

Support for Non-DoDEA Military-Connected Students

DoDEA also offers programs to support the educational success of students who are not enrolled in DoDEA schools or part of NDSP—the majority of the 1.2 million children of military families. These programs and focus areas are described below.

DoDEA Educational Partnership Program

The mission of the Educational Partnership Program is to champion a world-class education for military children in public schools by supporting military-connected local education agencies. Local education agencies (LEAs) can refer to school districts, school divisions, and counties. Subsequently, in this module the term “school district,” or simply “district,” will be used. DoD shares its expertise, experience, and resources to assist military-connected children in their transitions to different schools, to sharpen the expertise of teachers and administrators in meeting the needs of military-connected children, to educate parents on the school district’s academic requirements, and to provide assistance to school districts on deployment support for military children. To do this, the Partnership Program provides support through grants, training, and resources to school districts, military commands, and School Liaisons. As such, the Partnership Branch Program works collaboratively with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to ease the transition and support the needs of military-connected students and provide resources to military-connected school districts. The Partnership Branch also works to resolve problems for students transferring from DoDEA schools to school districts.

DoDEA's Educational Partnership Program provides resources to military-connected school districts to enhance student learning in core subjects, transforming the responsiveness of educators to children of military families, improving parent and family engagement, and increasing virtual learning capabilities. Partnership resources have reached over 500 military-connected schools and over 500,000 students, many of whom are children from military families. The primary focus of the grant program is to enhance the education of military children, but all students who attend military-connected schools will benefit from the increased support. The Partnership Branch also is providing special education modules and related face-to-face training to public school educators. For more information, see the Resources section of this module.

DoD and ED Memorandum of Understanding

Recognizing that successful partnerships are characterized by an exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources, DoD and ED signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2008 to create a formal partnership between the two Departments to support the education of military students. The MOU provides a comprehensive and cohesive structure for collaboration between the two Federal Departments. Through the MOU, the Departments can better collaborate to improve the educational opportunities of military-connected students. Through the MOU, DoDEA and the Services are collaborating with ED to

- improve data collection on military-connected children in public schools;
- address concerns around public school facilities on military installations that need renovation or replacement;
- provide additional grant opportunities for military-connected school districts; and
- advance education policies in support of military-connected children on the National Security Council Military Family Interagency Policy Committee.

Interstate Compact on the Educational Opportunities for Military Children

Because military-connected children often encounter significant school challenges due to frequent relocations in the course of their family's service, DoD, working through the Council of State Governments, developed the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children to address issues associated with class placement, records transfer, immunization requirements, course placement, graduation requirements, exit testing, and extracurricular opportunities.

As of April 2011, 36 states have adopted the Interstate Compact and are in the process of implementing its requirements. The Compact reflects input from policy experts and stakeholders from 18 different organizations, including representatives of parents, teachers, school administrators, military families, and Federal, state and local officials. Each state appoints a representative to form a commission that oversees the implementation of the Compact.

DoDEA schools adhere to the Interstate Compact, except where prohibited by Federal law.

Lesson One Summary

Key Points:

- DoDEA’s mission is to plan, direct, coordinate, and manage schools and education-support programs for eligible dependents of U.S. military personnel and civilian personnel of the U.S. Department of Defense.
- DoDEA operates nearly 200 schools in 12 foreign countries and the United States, serving about 84,000 children.
- DoDEA oversees the Non-DoD Schools Program (NDSP), which reimburses families stationed abroad for the cost of most education-related expenses.
- DoDEA supports the educational needs of students who are not enrolled in DoDEA schools or NDSP through programs such as the DoDEA Educational Partnership Program.
- To support the education of military-connected students and ensure their educational opportunities, DoDEA and the U.S. Department of Education have a formal partnership for collaboration.
- DoD established the Interstate Compact on the Educational Opportunities of Military Children to address issues for military-connected children associated with transition and deployment.

Looking Forward: Next, learn about the programs and policies of DoDEA schools.

Lesson Two: DoDEA Schools

Lesson Overview: DoDEA schools serve eligible military-connected students through two school systems that are governed by Federal law, although the legislative requirements for DoDEA are not the same as those that govern the U.S. Department of Education. However, DoDEA's rigorous commitment to ensuring student achievement means that important policies and standards for curriculum, assessment, monitoring and reporting, and graduation requirements are in place and specialized programs are offered. School Liaisons need to know about these policies, standards, and programs to help inform eligible families about DoDEA schools.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this lesson School Liaisons will be able to:

- Describe where DoDEA schools are located; their enrollment policies, curriculum standards, and assessments; and special programs and policies.

DoDEA Schools' Structure and Chain of Command

DoDEA schools serve eligible Department of Defense (DoD) military and civilian dependents from preschool through grade 12 through two school systems:

The DoD Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) for eligible dependents at locations within the continental United States where DoD operates schools. The *DDESS* system serves approximately 27,000 students in 64 schools located in 7 states, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. (Map: <http://dodea.edu/home/downloads/amerMap.pdf>)

The DoD Dependents Schools (DoDDS) for dependents outside the continental United States:

- DoDDS – Europe operates 82 schools within five districts throughout Europe, serving over 35,000 school-age children of active duty military and civilian employees. (Map: <http://www.dodea.edu/home/downloads/eurMap.pdf>)
- DoDDS – Pacific, the smallest of the three DoDEA schools regions, covers Bahrain, Japan, and Korea. A total of about 24,000 students are served in about 48 schools. (Map: <http://www.dodea.edu/home/downloads/pacMap.pdf>)

A director, area supervisor, and district superintendent heads each geographic region. DoDEA headquarters, located in Arlington, Virginia, oversees all operations.

Enrollment

The following conditions must be met to qualify to enroll in a DoDEA school: the enrolling sponsor must be on extended active duty or a full-time Federal civilian employee, the sponsor must be residing in permanent living quarters on the installation, and the student must be the sponsor's dependent. DoDEA schools enroll children in kindergarten at age 5 and in first grade at age 6.

Stateside, DoD Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) provide a universal pre-school program to all students who are 4 years old. Overseas, DoDEA provides two specialized programs for preschool age children in overseas (DoDDS) locations:

1. Preschool Services for Children With Disabilities (PSCD) provides specially designed instruction, support, and services to students with an identified disability requiring an individually designed instructional program to meet their unique learning needs. To be eligible for PSCD
 - the child must have an identified disability;
 - the disability must adversely (negatively) affect the child's educational performance; and
 - the child must need a specially designed instructional program.
2. Sure Start is a preschool program modeled after the Head Start program stateside. Although the program is appropriate for all preschool children, it targets preschoolers who are "at risk" for later school failure because of economic circumstance or other health and/or family factors.
 - Sure Start's first responsibility is to the 4-year-old child of a military or eligible Department of Defense employee whose rank is Enlisted (E) E1 to E4; General Schedule (GS) GS1 to GS4; or Non Appropriated Fund (NAF), NAF 1 to NAF 2, *rank equivalent at the date of application.
 - Any sponsor in the range of E5 to E9, GS5 to GS9, or NAF 3–4 rank equivalent who wishes to apply for the program is eligible to do so with the understanding that first priority is given to those children whose sponsor is in the E1 to E4 or GS1 to GS4.

Other Key DoDEA Schools Policies

DoDEA schools are not required to follow the rules and regulations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) because they do not receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education. However, DoDEA schools maintain important and rigorous policies for curriculum, student assessment, internal monitoring, external reporting, and graduation requirements. School Liaisons need to be aware of these policies in order to inform military families about what they can expect from DoDEA schools.

Curriculum

The agency has developed rigorous and demanding curriculum standards in all core subjects. The curriculum standards provide a framework for advancing every student to the highest levels of achievement by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level or within a course of study. The DoDEA standards for each content area are based on current research and best practices and are aligned with national standards. DoDEA recognizes that standards are important because they provide clear expectations for instruction, assessment, and student work and represent an essential component in the process of continuous improvement for student performance and achievement. The standards also form the basis for assessment of student and school progress.

Student Assessment

DoDEA assesses students using the TerraNova, which is a standardized norm-referenced test that is administered to students in grades 3–11. It contains multiple-choice and constructed-response questions that are specifically designed to assess skills in each core subject area (English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). Also administered is the TerraNova CAT Plus Mathematics Computation Test, which is a standardized norm-referenced test that is administered to DoDEA English learners (ELs). The TerraNova is administered in a number of U.S. school districts. Thus the performance of DoDEA schools can be compared with national averages. DoDEA students in grades 3–11 scored substantially higher than the national average (50th percentile) in all subject areas on the most recent test (2010).

DoDEA students also participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, which is administered in every state and many large school districts periodically in core subjects. Results from the most recent test in science show DoDEA's fourth and eighth graders scored higher than the national averages, with fourth graders' average score at 159 compared to an average score for the nation of 149. DoDEA's average score for eighth graders was 162 compared to a national average score of 149.

DoDEA high school students also take the SAT and PSAT. Results from the 2010 exam show DoD students' combined average score at 1,503—up 8 points from 2009. However, the results were 6 points lower than the national average score of 1,509, due to a 17-point difference in math scores.

DoDEA students consistently score above the national average on the NAEP. Minority students have been especially successful, scoring at or near the highest in the nation in mathematics. DoDEA students also maintain a high school graduation rate of approximately 97 percent.

Internal Monitoring and External Reporting

DoDEA schools report data annually, and every 5 years they host an on-site validation visit led by education experts from the United States. Following the on-site visits, the experts send a report that includes recommendations for improvements to each of the schools visited. DoDEA also conducts internal monitoring of educational programs to ensure high-quality implementation of new programs and overall effectiveness of existing programs. Monitoring activities may include, but are not limited to, the following activities: surveys, interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and the analysis of achievement and training data.

DoDEA has also launched a Web-based reporting system called School Report Cards (SRCs). The SRCs were created as a part of DoDEA's push toward greater accountability to parents and stakeholders. They are designed to help families who may be transitioning to DoDEA schools by giving them an overview of a new school before their child enters the classroom. The SRCs also contain valuable information that will be of use to military leaders at the headquarters, area, and district levels so that they can become familiar with the schools that they will be visiting. DoDEA's SRCs are very similar to the school report cards that are required by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. They both list school contact information, school improvement goals, a school's student-demographic profile, and student academic performance on standardized tests. In the future, it is anticipated that the DoDEA SRCs will include expanded data on graduation rates, attendance rates, and information on elementary and middle schools.

Graduation Requirements

DoDEA students must earn 26 credits or 8 semesters of coursework and maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average in core subjects such as mathematics, reading, social studies, and science in order to earn a high school diploma. The requirements include 6 credits of electives.

Specialized Programs

To further support the academic needs and ensure academic success for students of DoDEA schools, specialized programs are offered by DoDEA schools, including summer remedial support for students, online course offerings, and an Advanced Placement (AP) Program.

Summer School Program

Since 2005, DoDEA has offered a free 4-week, half-day Summer Enrichment Program for students in grades K–8. This summer enrichment program emphasizes mathematics and language arts skills. The classes are designed to enrich and reinforce student learning through engaging in high-interest, hands-on activities focusing on reading, math skills and science content. In addition, DoDEA also offers summer online classes for high school students who are at risk of not meeting graduation requirements.

DoDEA Virtual High School

The goal of the DoDEA Virtual High School is to address the educational needs of military-dependent students in transition via a fully accredited Virtual School program. The objective is to provide flexibility through a comprehensive "diploma-granting" high school program. Future plans include expansion to a middle and upper elementary program.

The Virtual High School also assists transitioning DoDEA students by allowing them to take classes they need regardless of their location, enabling students to take courses that might not be available in their community, and it provides flexibility in scheduling. The Virtual High School uses the same criteria for eligibility as DoDEA schools. The Virtual School is not an option if a required course is being offered in a traditional DoDEA classroom, unless there are scheduling conflicts.

The DoDEA virtual school model requires that students interact simultaneously with teachers to participate in live, online discussions and video or audio chats. Web-conferencing tools enhance online instruction and provide students and teachers with opportunities to interact via the Internet. The Virtual High School also allows students to do work on their own at home. Teachers for the Virtual School are stationed at three hubs for the Virtual High School to accommodate the three different areas of the world that DoDEA serves: Wiesbaden, Germany; Camp Humphries, Korea; and DoDEA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

School Liaisons should contact DoDEA for more detailed information about the *Virtual School* enrollment criteria and course offerings. (<http://www.dodea.edu/education/virtualSchool.cfm>).

Advanced Placement Program

The Advanced Placement's (AP) college-level courses and exams allow students to earn college credit in more than thirty 30 courses. The program gives students an opportunity to get a head start on college-level work, stand out in the admissions process, and demonstrate their readiness for college. At the end of the course, students take a rigorous exam; if they earn at least a 3 (on a 1 to 5 scale), they can earn college-level course credit. To ensure all students have access to the final exam, DoDEA covers the additional cost of the test.

Lesson Two Summary

Key Points:

- DoDEA schools are overseen by headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, and serve eligible students through two school systems that are operated overseas and in the U.S., respectively.
- DoDEA schools are not required to follow the rules and regulations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) because they do not receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education.
- To enroll in a DoDEA school, the enrolling sponsor must be on extended active duty or a full-time Federal citizen employee; the sponsor must be residing on the installation; and the student must be the sponsor's dependent.
- DoDEA offers specialized programs in overseas locations for preschool-age children with disabilities or who are deemed "at risk."
- DoDEA has developed rigorous and demanding curriculum standards in all core subjects that align with national standards and are based on current research and best practices.
- DoDEA assesses students using the TerraNova, a standardized norm-referenced test, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, a test that is administered in every state.
- DoDEA schools report data annually and conduct internal monitoring of educational programs and use a web-based reporting system that is similar to those required by ESEA called School Report Cards (SRCs).
- DoDEA students must earn 26 credits or eight semesters of coursework and maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average in order to earn a high school diploma.
- DoDEA offers specialized programs to provide DoDEA school students with remedial options, flexibility, and challenging curriculum, including a Summer School Program, DoDEA Virtual High School, and an Advanced Placement (AP) Program.
- DoDEA Virtual School is a fully accredited Virtual High School that addresses the educational needs of military-dependent students in transition.

Looking Forward: Next, learn about the role and responsibilities of the School Liaison within DoDEA.

Lesson Three: The Role of the School Liaison

Lesson Overview: School Liaisons play an important role in supporting the mission of DoDEA and ensuring that military families have knowledge of available and appropriate resources and support. Understanding the role of the School Liaison within DoDEA and the communication protocols associated with it are fundamental to the work of the School Liaison.

Objectives:

Upon completing this lesson, School Liaisons will be able to:

- Describe the School Liaison's role within DoDEA.
- For a given situation or issue involving a military family in transition, identify and describe protocols for communicating with local commands and determining resources and actions to pursue.

School Liaison Officers and DoDEA

School Liaison Officers assist the installation commanding officer by interacting and building relationships with school districts to support military families. School Liaisons are responsible for

- providing information to parents,
- making referrals to appropriate agencies,
- educating families,
- communicating with installation officers and commanders,
- encouraging parental advocacy, and
- developing and maintaining relationships with school districts.

School Liaisons and the Protocols of Communication

School Liaisons should follow the general chain of command of their installation and service branch. Issues that require contact and input from DoDEA headquarters should be channeled by the installation School Liaison through the chain of command for coordination and response. Additionally, School Liaisons must consistently communicate with installation officers and commanders to provide updates and recommendations regarding

- the transfer of military families with school-age children in and out of the installation;
- any particular needs of families with children with special needs;
- local education-related committees, task forces, and/or networks in which the School Liaison is taking part;
- issues related to the local installation-school Memoranda of Understanding; and
- state education policy changes and/or trends that may affect local school governance, school choices and/or operations.

School Liaisons should also follow protocol outside of the installation, especially in dealing with school systems. Depending on the issue, School Liaisons may first guide parents to advocate for themselves and directly address their child's teacher, school guidance counselor, assistant principals, and ultimately the principal about an issue. If needed, School Liaisons can also provide assistance by providing families with relevant literature and resources so that they are equipped with an understanding of school policies and procedures. School Liaisons are a key component in creating win-win partnerships between school districts and installations and military families to serve the unique needs of military-connected children. This requires School Liaisons to effectively communicate to create and coordinate or facilitate ongoing dialogue with school leaders.

Lesson Three Summary

Key Points:

- School Liaisons assist installation commanding officers by interacting and building relationships with school districts to support military families as well as building an action plan to meet the needs of installation families.
- School Liaisons are responsible for providing information to parents, making referrals to appropriate agencies, educating families, communicating with installation officers and commanders, encouraging parental advocacy, and developing and maintaining relationships with school districts.
- School Liaisons should follow the general chain of command of their installation and service branch and provide updates and recommendations regarding the transfer of military families with school-age children in and out of the installation, particular needs of families with children with special needs, local education-related committees, task forces and/or networks in which the School Liaison is taking part, issues related to the local installation-school MOU, and state education policy changes and/or trends that may affect local school governance, school choices and/or operations.
- School Liaisons should follow protocol outside of the installation, especially when dealing with school systems.

Looking Forward: Next, check your understanding of the lessons presented in this module.

Module Summary

Module Overview:

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) was created by the Department of Defense (DoD) to educate the children of military and civilian families connected to the military throughout the world. DoDEA is a worldwide education system that educates students in grades PK–12, offering a wide range of programs and supports to students and families. As students transfer into and out of DoDEA schools from the public school system, School Liaisons can offer support to mitigate the impact of transitions. School Liaisons serve as the primary liaison between community schools, commanding officers, and military families. They link the military family to individuals or groups who can solve whatever problem they confront.

Key Points:

- DoDEA’s mission is to plan, direct, coordinate, and manage schools and education-support programs for eligible dependents of U.S. military personnel and civilian personnel of the U.S. Department of Defense.
- DoDEA operates 194 schools in 12 foreign countries and the United States, serving about 84,000 children.
- DoDEA oversees the Non-DoD Schools Program (NDSP), which reimburses families stationed abroad for the cost of most education-related expenses.
- DoDEA supports the education of students who are not enrolled in DoDEA schools or NDSP through programs such as the DoDEA Educational Partnership Program.
- To support the education of military-connected students and ensure their educational opportunities, DoDEA and the U.S. Department of Education have a formal partnership for collaboration.
- The Interstate Compact on the Educational Opportunities of Military Children was established to address issues for military-connected children associated with transition and deployment.
- DoDEA schools are overseen by headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, and serve eligible students through two school systems that are operated overseas and in the U.S., respectively.
- DoDEA schools are not required to follow the rules and regulations of ESEA because they do not receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education.
- To enroll in a DoDEA school, the enrolling sponsor must be on extended active duty or a full-time Federal citizen employee, the sponsor must be residing on the installation, and the student must be the sponsor’s dependent.
- DoDEA offers specialized programs in overseas locations for preschool-age children with disabilities or who are deemed “at risk.”
- DoDEA has developed rigorous and demanding curriculum standards in all core subjects that align with national standards and are based on current research and best practices.
- DoDEA assesses students using the TerraNova, a standardized norm-referenced test, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, a test that is administered in every state.
- DoDEA schools report data annually and conduct internal monitoring of educational programs using a web-based reporting system that is similar to those required by ESEA called School Report Cards (SRCs).

- DoDEA students must earn 26 credits or 8 semesters of coursework and maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average in order to earn a high school diploma.
- DoDEA offers specialized programs to provide DoDEA schools' students with remedial options, flexibility, and challenging curriculum including a Summer School Program, DoDEA Virtual School, and an Advanced Placement (AP) Program.
- DoDEA Virtual School is a fully accredited Virtual High School that addresses the educational needs of military-dependent students in transition.
- School Liaisons assist installation commanding officers by interacting and building relationships with school districts to support military families as well as building an action plan to meet the needs of installation families.
- School Liaisons are responsible for providing information to parents, making referrals to appropriate agencies, educating families, communicating with installation officers and commanders, encouraging parental advocacy, and developing and maintaining relationships with school districts.
- School Liaisons should follow the general chain of command of their installation and service branch and provide updates and recommendations regarding the transfer of military families with school-age children in and out of the installation, particular needs of families with children with special needs, local education-related committees, task forces and/or networks in which the School Liaison is taking part, issues related to the local installation-school MOU, and state education policy changes and/or trends that may affect local school governance, school choices and/or operations.
- School Liaisons should follow protocol outside of the installation, especially when dealing with school systems.

Looking Forward: Next, learn about the Non-DoD Schools Program, which provides support and financial assistance to eligible military families stationed overseas.