



Moving with kids during COVID-19

Defence Community Organisation

Change is an inevitable part of life, especially as a Defence family, where chances are you may relocate every couple of years.

Moving is a major life change and children, just like adults, may face challenges as they leave behind friends and familiar places and, in turn, adjust to a new school or make new friends.

The coronavirus pandemic has created additional changes to the way we live our lives and it is important to be aware that children may need additional help and support during this time.

Teaching children how to respond positively and adapt to change is an essential life skill. It can also be an opportunity for them to learn growth and resilience. There are several steps you can take to make the process of moving more manageable for children.

TALK ABOUT THE UPCOMING MOVE

Communicating openly and involving children in family preparations for the move is important to help them understand and cope with the change. Talking early on about the changes and why it is important for the family to move can help children to prepare and to think through what it means for them.

If your child is too young to understand the concept of a move, try acting it out with stuffed animals or reading a book about moving. Another way to help children adjust is to help them to actively identify the positives of the move, such as the chance to meet new friends or a fun activity to do in the new location.

CREATE A STORY

Another coping strategy to help children cope with moving and change, especially those who struggle, is to create 'social story'. A social

story is a short description of a particular situation, event or activity, which includes specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

One way to do this from afar is to print out pictures of the new location and to talk through and plan with your child what it will be like.

NAME AND TAME FEELINGS

Navigating change, like a big move, can bring out a range of emotions, such as excitement, worry or fear.

Listen and encourage children to express how they are feeling. You could create a 'worry box' or use a 'feeling faces' chart. Then find ways for your child to feel better and cope, such as favourite activities like bubbles, drawing, listening to music, taking some deep breathes or asking for a hug from a loved one.

INVOLVE CHILDREN IN THE PROCESS

Letting children help with the move, such as choosing where things will go in the new house or helping to pick a school, can help them to feel that they have involved, and that their choices are valued. Whether it's big or small decisions, having kids participate in



decision-making can help them to feel more in control and can boost their confidence.

STICK TO ROUTINE

During a big change, try and keep as much of your daily routines the same as possible. An important aspect of settling children into any environment is to make them feel safe and secure.

Children take comfort in routines and will feel more secure if bedtimes, mealtimes and other important rituals remain unchanged, like reading a book before bed. For aspects that you are unable to control, create a revised routine together as a family.

RESOURCES

If at any stage you begin to feel overwhelmed or unsure about your, or your kids', ability to cope the Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 to provide support on 1800 624 608.

There are a number of additional resources:

- [Moving schools—checklist for parents](#) is a handy checklist of things to do before you move from one school to the next
- [Moving schools—advice for parents](#) is a factsheet including tips and resources to help support children when they change schools
- DCO offers a range of resources for [Defence children](#), as well as resources around [moving and relocation](#)
- Kids Helpline provides confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling for young people aged 5–25 1800 55 1800
- [Raising Children Network](#) provides a range of parenting resources, such as videos, articles specifically on the topic of '[Coronavirus and families](#)' and apps by Australian experts
- [Queensland Health – Birdie and the virus](#) is a storybook series designed to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young children during the COVID-19 pandemic
- [Phoenix Australia](#) has a number of mental health resources in relation to COVID-19, such as [isolation activities for children and adolescents](#) and [taking care of yourself and your family](#).

Defence Community Organisation offers a wide range of support services to ADF members and their families.

For more information on this factsheet and other Defence Community Organisation support services visit www.defence.gov.au/dco or call the all-hours Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

