



Okaloosa County School District
Registration Information for Military Families
July, 2024

The Okaloosa County School District (OCSD) welcomes all military families transitioning or experiencing a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) into our area. Our goal is to make the educational transition for students of active duty military personnel as seamless as possible. We believe that Okaloosa County is a terrific place to live and raise a family, and whether your family is here for two years or ten, we pledge to be of service to you and your children throughout your time here.

Many OCSD schools were awarded Florida Purple Star Schools of Distinction status from the Florida Department of Education based on defined criteria. To see the criteria and view a list of Purple Star Schools please visit our [Military Families](#) link on our district website.

1. In accordance with §1003.05, *Florida Statutes* – **Assistance to transitioning students from military families**
 - a. A student whose parent is transferred or is pending transfer to a military installation within a school district while on active military duty pursuant to an official military order shall be considered a resident of the school district for purposes of enrollment when the order is submitted to the school district and shall be provided preferential treatment in the Controlled Open Enrollment process of the school district pursuant to s. 1002.31.
 - b. The District’s Board-approved Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) period extends from January 15 – February 15 each year. COE is used when a family wants to attend a school outside of their attendance zone. Beyond that period, families may seek enrollment in any school that has available capacity. If a limited number of seats are available, preferential treatment will be given to students who are dependents of active duty military who are transferring into Okaloosa County along with any other categories as defined by statute. (See #3 is interested in obtaining a seat in a school outside of your zoned school)
 - c. 2023 Legislative Updates:
 - 1 Dependent children of active duty military personnel who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria for special academic programs offered through public schools – must be enrolled in such program if the student’s parent is transferred to the state during the school year.
 - 2 A student whose parent is transferred with the state after the controlled open enrollment window may enroll in any school within the state.

§1003.05, *Florida Statutes*

2. *How do I find out which school serves my new address?*

- a. Visit www.okaloosaschools.com; *Parents/Students* drop down menu; >**School Site Locator** and type in the residential address to find the Elementary, Middle, and High Schools that service that address.
- b. A portal for beginning the registration process for your student(s) is available at www.okaloosaschools.com. The portal is called FOCUS, and a link can be found on the left-hand side of our website below the scrolling gallery. The installation School Liaison can assist in directing PCSing families to this registration portal. Parents will create a parent account first and then register their student(s). Final registration is completed at the school site. For PCSing families, the registration process can be completed without a known address. Visit our Focus webpage, <https://www2.okaloosaschools.com/page/focus-parents> for step-by-step instructions and how-to videos to walk you through this process.
- c. If a military family resides in temporary military housing, they can enroll their student in the school that serves the temporary housing location address may transfer their student to the zoned school once it has been determined.
- d. If you are PCSing and your Okaloosa County address is known, please provide it in the online registration process. Once the family arrives, verification of address within a school's attendance zone should be provided to the school. A contract to purchase a home, or a lease/rental agreement would be sufficient to provide an address. **A second form of documentation is required but can be postponed for families PCSing to the area until it is able to be obtained.**
- e. For those who have an established residence, an In-County Deed, mortgage/HUD statement, monthly mortgage statement, or residential rental/lease agreement, covering the current year residency would be the primary method to verify residency. Any of the following can be provided as the second form of documentation when it is available to complete enrollment:
 - i. Automobile or Homeowner's insurance policy or bill, In-County, dated within the last 30 days;
 - ii. Parent/legal guardian driver's license ID card with the stated current address as that of the registering address;
 - iii. Mail from employment and /or financial institutions; including checking, savings, property tax record, credit card statements or investment account statements, In-County, dated within the last 30 days;
 - iv. Mail from Federal, State, County or City government agencies (including city and county agencies), to an In-County address, dated within the last 30 days.

This documentation is NOT provided during the online enrollment process but is provided later at the school to complete enrollment.

3. *How do I get approval to enroll my student at a school in an attendance zone that is different from where I will be living?*

To attend a school other than the one in which a student is zoned to attend, the parent must make the request through the Controlled Open Enrollment (COE) process.

- a. Go to www.okaloosaschools.com; *Parents/Students* drop down menu; >*Registration*>*Controlled Open Enrollment*, or look for the Controlled Open Enrollment news story on the district's website.
- b. View the list of schools with available seats (School Capacity Report).
- c. The initial Controlled Open Enrollment application period for 2024-2025 is from January 15 – February 15. After that time, parents can continue to apply for schools with available seats.
- d. View the video on how to create a Parent Portal Account, enroll your student, and then request an available seat through COE.
- e. Parents PCSing into the area will not need to know their new local address to request enrollment in a school that has available seats.
- f. Families who apply for a seat between January 15 and February 15 will be notified of approval by February 20 via the email connected to their Parent Portal.
- g. At any time, the parent is encouraged to reach out to the school for assistance.
- h. **Parents are responsible for transportation to and from school when requesting attendance outside of their attendance zone through COE.**

4. *What if the school I wish for my student to attend does not have available seats?*

- a. The way to ensure that your student has a seat in a particular school is to live in that school's attendance zone.
- b. If that is not the case, the parent may request an electronic Hardship Appeal application.
- c. Parents of students new to the district (never enrolled) must complete the online application for enrollment prior to requesting a hardship appeal.
- d. To request a Hardship Appeal application, send the following information to COE@okaloosaschools.com:
 - 1) Child's first and last name
 - 2) Child's date of birth
 - 3) School that you want the child to attend
 - 4) Grade level the child will be going into
 - 5) Email associated with the Parent Portal that the child is linked to
- e. The parent will receive an email response acknowledging the request and the COE Hardship Appeal Application should be available in your parent portal.
- f. Log into your parent portal to complete the application for the requested student. If you have requested a waiver for multiple students you will need to complete the form in its entirety for each student.
- g. Please keep in mind that schools at capacity do not have space for students who live outside of the attendance zone. In some cases, it may be close to the beginning of the school year before a Hardship approval can be granted, if at all.

5. *What if I don't have an address yet but I want to get my student registered at a school?*

- a. Military families PCSing into the area can register without an address at any school that has available seats.
- b. Those schools with available seats are posted on the [Controlled Open Enrollment](#) webpage in the School Capacity Report.
- c. Families who are in temporary housing may register at the school whose zone includes the temporary lodging (motel, condo, TLF, etc.) if desired.

- d. However, if a more permanent residence is being established, it is recommended that enrollment wait until the permanent residence is established if at all possible so that the student may attend the school that serves that residence.
 - e. The district recognizes that families moving to temporary lodging near the beginning of the school year may have no option but to register with the school serving that location. If a move to a permanent residence occurs before the school year begins, the student enrollment should be transferred to the school that serves the permanent address.
6. ***How will I complete the registration process once I have selected the school my student will attend?***
 - a. School personnel will be available throughout the summer to assist military families in completing their registration. The parent can complete the vast majority of the registration process online and can provide needed signatures as late as the beginning of the school year if needed based on the parent's active-duty situation.
7. ***Will I be able to communicate with someone from the school prior to arriving to the area if I need to?***
 - a. Yes. Registrars, Guidance Counselors, or a school administrator will be available during the summer to help with class schedules.
8. ***What OCSD Charter Schools are available, and what is the enrollment process/and is transportation provided?***
 - a. A list of public charter schools in Okaloosa County is available on our website www.okaloosaschools.com in the *Schools* drop down menu. The links provided will take parents to the individual charter school's website. Information on enrollment can be provided by the charter school, please contact them directly.
9. ***What is the process for a PSCing new student that already has an IEP from their previous school? Will the student receive their accommodations upon enrollment?***
 - a. When a student enrolls in a District school with an IEP, the school will provide comparable services to the best of its ability. A transfer IEP meeting will be held within 30 days to review and create an IEP for the student in our district. It will be helpful if you can provide a copy of the current IEP to the school when enrolling the student.
 - b. The Staffing Specialist assigned to each school assists with this process. The school's Guidance Counselor and Registrar should be notified by the parent if the student is coming with an active IEP. Once a student is enrolled, the school will set up a transfer IEP meeting with the parent within 30 days to either keep or adjust the accommodations as needed.
10. ***What is the process for a student to receive special education services through an IEP if that is not currently the case?***
 - a. The State of Florida utilizes the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process which allocates resources in direct proportion to student needs. If a student is showing academic or behavioral needs, the student is referred to the MTSS Team at the school. This team will discuss the needs and implement strategies and interventions to support the student. Based on student's progress, interventions may be added or changed. A specific timeline is not set due to the individual needs of each student. Some students are successful with

the tiered support, while other students are referred for assessment to consider ESE eligibility.

- b. If, instead, a parent requests that the school conduct an evaluation to determine whether their child is a child with a disability in need of special education and related services, the school district must within 30 days, unless the parent and the school agree otherwise in writing, obtain consent for the evaluation or provide the parent with written notice in accordance with Rule 6A-6.03311, F.A.C., explaining its refusal to conduct the evaluation.

The District's ESE Policies and Procedures document that covers this information and more is available on our ESE Department webpage. Your school's Exceptional Student Education Staffing Specialist is the best point of contact to answer questions and provide support throughout the process.

For more information on Exceptional Student Education in Okaloosa County Schools, visit <https://www2.okaloosaschools.com/o/ocsd/page/exceptional-student-education-ese>

11. *What is the process for my student to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities if they miss the school's tryout period?*

- a. Students who enroll after a tryout period for a sport or extracurricular activity has concluded will be given an opportunity to try out when they arrive at the school.
- b. Families arriving to Florida schools are advised that SB 1028 "Fairness in Women's Sports Act" was signed into law in 2021. The act specifies that an athletic team or sport that is designated for females, women, or girls may not be open to students of the male sex, based on the student's biological sex listed on the student's official birth certificate at the time of birth.