

July 11, 2016

DRAFT

Addressed to School District Superintendents
Address
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We are writing this letter to express our support for efforts to better identify and support students from military families, and urge you to implement a military-connected student self-identifier into your registration application materials.

The Multnomah County Veterans Task Force works to identify barriers and opportunities for change to improve services for veterans and their families throughout the County. The Veterans Task Force is composed of representatives from different county departments, community organizations, and other state and federal partners. We have identified support for children in military families as a key priority in our community work plan. In 2015, we assisted in development of a partnership between Gresham-Barlow School District and the Oregon National Guard Child and Youth program. We ask that your School District continue this work and provide a component on your student registration that allows military-connected student families to self identify.

This information opens opportunities for educators and counselors working with this demographic to receive support, training and resources. Many of Oregon's National Guard soldiers have experienced deployments abroad and in response to domestic emergencies, yet when they return home they rejoin the civilian population and friends and colleagues may be unaware of their service. This is especially true for family members who have a loved one deployed, yet the stressors of a military student's lifestyle place them in a high risk category. Identifying these students to school counselors, teachers, and administrators will provide them an awareness which will enable them to be a first line of defense should warning signs begin to emerge.

Resources available may include counselors who specialize in military child and family therapy, free classroom resources, free trainings that can be brought to your community or school, and more. An added benefit of free classroom training and resources is that "civilian" students can learn about their military-connected peers and how to better understand and support them. Additionally, school districts that have a certain number and/or percentage of military dependent students attending their schools can be eligible for additional funding through the Impact Aid Program, Basic Support Payments (Section 8003 (b)) from the U.S. department of Education. Finally, the Multnomah County Veterans Task Force is committed to providing any partnering school district with its expertise in order to utilize or further develop resources that best meet your district's needs.

The Gresham-Barlow School District plans to implement the student identifier in their registration system by this fall. The Oregon Department of Education is not tracking this data. It will be for the local school and district use only. We know that there are over one thousand military-connected youth who

reside in Multnomah County. We urge you to add this self-identifier, including a simple definition with a yes or no box, on all of your district's student registration applications.

Example: Military-dependent student: A student who is a direct dependent of a parent or step-parent currently serving in the active or reserve components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or National Guard.

Yes No

For more information about specific language to include or available resources, please contact:

Oregon National Guard Child & Youth Program

Hank Bauer (503-584-2346) or Sarah Johnson (503-584-2390)

cyp@oregonbtyr.org

www.oregonbtyr.org/cyp.html

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Diane McKeel
Chair, Multnomah County Veterans Task Force

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