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## Military and Divorce: Travel Discounts Offered for Kids of Military Personnel

By STEPHANIE BAKER

The holiday season is the perfect opportunity for family to get together, enjoy good food and quality time. However, for many it is also the most hectic time of the year. While the holidays can be stressful for anyone, they can be especially complicated for divorced military personnel and their former spouses when it comes to visitation rights with their children.

In the case of children of military divorce (where at least one party is active duty military, reserve or guard, or retired military), the parents most likely live in different states and frequently on different continents. This makes holiday visitation especially difficult.

According to the [American Bar Association](#), the non-custodial parent is responsible for the child's travel arrangements. In most cases this is good news since the non-custodial parent is usually also the service member and is eligible for military travel discounts. The non-custodial parent also has the right to deduct up to 42.75 percent of the cost of travel from spousal or child support, so any discount actually benefits both parents.

If flying is a part of the travel itinerary, transporting a child or children can be especially complex. Fortunately, the policies and procedures from one airline to another are very similar. For example, no child under the age of can travel without a guardian, and no unaccompanied minor can take the last connecting flight of the evening to avoid the possibility of an overnight stay at the airport if there are cancellations.

"I experienced first hand what happens when you don't book a nonstop flight and the connection is missed or canceled. A friend of my daughter was stranded in Atlanta overnight when her connecting flight was canceled due to weather - she came up to visit with my daughter, but I didn't make her arrangements - otherwise she would have made it home - incidentally, my daughter made it home fine," said Sonny McKinney, director of [Global Finance for Planet Payment](#), Inc.

The rules are also consistent for children five years or older who will be flying alone. A parent or responsible adult is expected to bring the children to a ticketing agent at the airport two hours before a domestic flight or three hours for an international flight. Parents should be prepared to show proof of a child's age, as there are different rules for each age range. The adult will fill out an unaccompanied minor form, which includes contact information for an adult in the city of departure and the destination.

The parent will also get a pass to go through security checkpoints with the children in order to accompany them to the gate where the parent is expected to wait for the child or children to board the plane and the plane to depart from the gate. Gary Clarke, a divorced, single father said, "My son first flew by himself at 6. I gave him a cell phone, \$20 and a laminated [card](#) with contact information. He hugged me, headed down that jet way and never looked back. And sure enough, the flight was diverted because of weather. He called, told me that there was a flight attendant with him all the time and he'd call back when they left. No big deal."

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