

PCS Season Survival Guide: Keeping Your Healthcare on Track During a Military Move



PCS SEASON SURVIVAL GUIDE

Keeping Your Healthcare on Track During a Military Move



Plan Ahead



Stay Prepared



We're Here for You

PCS season has arrived, and military families across the country are preparing for another round of moving trucks, checklists, paperwork, and goodbyes.

A Permanent Change of Station can be exciting. It often means new opportunities, new communities, and a fresh start. At the same time, anyone who has gone through a PCS knows how quickly the details can pile up. Between finding housing, enrolling children in school, transferring medical records, and establishing new routines, it's easy for healthcare planning to slip down the priority list.

Understanding your healthcare options before a move can help reduce stress and ensure your family continues receiving the care and support available through TRICARE.

The Defense Health Agency recently expanded PCS support through its new [Personal Property Activity](#), encouraging service members and families to start planning early and take advantage of available resources. The same approach can help when it comes to healthcare.

A little preparation before moving day can help your family avoid disruptions in care and make the transition much smoother.

Why Healthcare Planning Matters During a PCS

Military families move more often than most civilian families. While each move brings new opportunities, it can also create challenges when it comes to maintaining consistent healthcare.

You or a family member may be managing:

- Prescription medications
- Ongoing treatment for a chronic condition
- Specialty care appointments
- Behavioral health services
- Physical therapy
- Pediatric care and vaccinations
- Prenatal or postpartum care

Without a plan, important records, prescriptions, and provider relationships can become difficult to manage during the transition.

Fortunately, a few simple steps before your move can help ensure that your family's healthcare remains on track.

Start Planning as Soon as Orders Arrive

One of the most common pieces of PCS advice is also one of the most valuable: start early.

As soon as you receive orders, take a few minutes to think through any upcoming healthcare needs for yourself and your family. If you're enrolled in TRICARE, this is also a good time to review your current coverage, identify any ongoing medical needs, and begin planning for provider transitions that may be necessary after your move.

Schedule Important Appointments

Before you move, consider scheduling:

- Annual wellness exams
- Routine checkups
- Dental visits
- Vision exams
- Follow-up appointments
- Medication reviews

Completing these visits before relocating can help you address concerns, update records, and avoid scrambling to find care immediately after arrival.

Talk With Your Providers

If you or a family member is receiving ongoing care, let your healthcare team know about your upcoming move.

Your provider may be able to:

- Recommend specialists near your new duty station
- Prepare treatment summaries
- Transfer medical records
- Help coordinate continued care

Having those conversations before moving day can save time and reduce stress later.

Gather Important Medical Records

Most military families already keep a PCS binder or digital folder filled with important documents. Healthcare records should be part of that collection.

Consider gathering copies of:

- Immunization records
- Prescription lists
- Allergy information
- Recent lab results
- Referral paperwork
- Specialist contact information
- Medical equipment documentation

Even though many records are available electronically, having quick access to essential information can be incredibly helpful when enrolling children in school, establishing care with a new provider, or handling an unexpected medical issue.

Keep these documents with you during the move rather than packing them with household goods.

Refill Prescriptions Before Moving Day

One of the most common healthcare challenges during a PCS is running low on medication before getting settled in a new location.

Before your move:

- Review all current prescriptions
- Check refill dates
- Request refills in advance when needed
- Ask your provider whether an extended supply is appropriate

Having enough medication to cover the transition period can eliminate one more item from an already long to-do list.

If you use a mail-order pharmacy, remember to update your mailing address as soon as possible to avoid delivery delays.

Help Children Prepare for the Transition

Military children are remarkably adaptable, but moving can still be difficult. Healthcare preparation is especially important for school-aged children because many schools require updated records before enrollment.

Organize Immunization Records

Having vaccination records readily available can make school registration much easier once you arrive at your new duty station.

Schedule Sports Physicals

If your child participates in athletics, check whether updated physicals are required before joining sports programs at their new school.

Pay Attention to Emotional Well-Being

Moving often means leaving behind friends, teachers, teammates, and familiar routines.

Children may show signs of stress in different ways, including:

- Changes in sleep habits
- Increased irritability
- Withdrawal from activities
- Difficulty adjusting to new surroundings

Regular conversations, familiar routines, and patience can go a long way in helping children navigate the transition.

Don't Overlook Mental Health

PCS moves can be emotionally demanding for every member of the family.

Military spouses are often balancing logistics, household responsibilities, and family needs all at once. Service members may be preparing for a new assignment while helping loved ones through the transition.

Mental health deserves the same attention as physical health during a move.

If you currently receive counseling or behavioral health services, talk with your provider about maintaining continuity of care after relocation.

Simple habits can also help reduce stress during PCS season:

- Prioritize sleep
- Stay physically active
- Spend time outdoors
- Maintain healthy eating habits
- Stay connected with friends and family

Small routines often provide a sense of stability when everything else feels uncertain.

Create a Healthcare Moving Checklist

Many military families rely on checklists to stay organized during a PCS. Adding healthcare tasks to that list can help ensure nothing gets overlooked.

Before moving, consider checking off the following:

- ✓ Schedule final appointments
- ✓ Refill prescriptions
- ✓ Gather medical records
- ✓ Transfer prescriptions if needed
- ✓ Update insurance information
- ✓ Research local healthcare resources
- ✓ Obtain referral documentation
- ✓ Create emergency contact lists
- ✓ Pack medical equipment separately

A few minutes of planning today can prevent headaches later.

Research Healthcare Resources Before You Arrive

If possible, spend some time learning about healthcare resources near your new duty station before the move.

Look into:

- [Primary care providers](#)
- [Hospitals](#)
- [Urgent care clinics](#)
- [Pharmacies](#)
- [Pediatric providers](#)
- [Specialty care services](#)

Having a basic understanding of local healthcare options can make those first few weeks in a new community feel much less overwhelming.

Expect a Few Bumps Along the Way

Even the best-planned PCS rarely goes exactly according to schedule.

Appointments may need to be rescheduled. Records may take time to transfer. Moving timelines can change unexpectedly.

Building extra time into your healthcare planning can help you stay flexible when those situations arise.

The earlier you begin preparing, the easier it becomes to navigate unexpected challenges.

Remember That Help Is Available

One of the most important reminders during PCS season is that military families do not have to figure everything out alone.

Questions about providers, prescriptions, referrals, or healthcare coverage are common during a move. Reaching out early can help you find answers before problems arise.

Military life comes with unique challenges, and healthcare transitions are often part of the journey. Having a plan in place can make those transitions feel far more manageable.

A Healthier Move Starts With Preparation

A successful PCS involves more than getting boxes from one location to another. It means helping your family arrive at the next chapter feeling prepared, supported, and ready to settle into a new community. By scheduling appointments, organizing records, managing prescriptions, and planning ahead for future care, military families can reduce stress and maintain continuity throughout the move.

For eligible military families, retirees, and their dependents, US Family Health Plan is a TRICARE Prime option that provides access to local providers and personalized support throughout life's transitions, including PCS moves.

If you're looking for a healthcare plan designed specifically for military families and retirees, learn more about US Family Health Plan. Visit usfhpnw.org/enroll to explore your eligibility, review plan benefits, and discover why so many military families choose US Family Health Plan for their TRICARE coverage.

As you prepare for your next duty station, remember that your healthcare deserves a place on the checklist, too. A little preparation today can help your family focus less on logistics and more on making the most of the opportunities that lie ahead.

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