1	State of Arkansas	As Engrossed: H3/10/25	
2	95th General Assembly	A Bill	
3	Regular Session, 2025		HOUSE BILL 1545
4			
5	By: Representative K. Brown	n	
6	By: Senator J. English		
7			
8		For An Act To Be Entitled	ı
9	AN ACT TO	AMEND THE ARKANSAS MILITARY CH	ILD SCHOOL
10	TRANSITIO	NS ACT OF 2021; AND FOR OTHER P	URPOSES.
11			
12			
13		Subtitle	
14	TO A	AMEND THE ARKANSAS MILITARY CHIL	JD
15	SCHO	OOL TRANSITIONS ACT OF 2021.	
16			
17	BE IT ENACTED BY THE	GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE O	F ARKANSAS:
18			
19	SECTION 1. DO	NOT CODIFY. <u>Legislative findin</u>	gs and intent.
20	(a) The Genera	1 Assembly finds:	
21	<u>(1) Arka</u>	nsas adopted the Interstate Com	pact on Educational
22	Opportunity for Milit	ary Children in 2013, but found	it ineffective in
23	supporting National G	uard and highly mobile active-d	uty families;
24	<u>(2) To u</u>	ntether support for military fa	milies, Arkansas
25	established the Arkan	sas Military Child School Trans	itions Act of 2021,
26	expanding eligibility	and resources offered to unifo	rmed services families;
27	<u>(3) Arka</u>	nsas is the only state that has	taken an independent,
28	parallel path outside	of the compact to better serve	our highly mobile
29	uniformed services far	milies;	
30	<u>(4) On D</u>	ecember 31, 2024, the United St	ates Department of
31	Defense reported to t	he United States Congress that,	"States could consider
32	the benefits of imple	menting the Arkansas model for	a statute outside the
33	Compact"; and		
34	<u>(5) Arka</u>	<u>nsas is recognized for initiati</u>	ve, innovation, and
35	responsiveness to mee	ting emerging needs of uniforme	d services families.
36	(b) This act f	urther improves the Arkansas Mi	litary Child School

1	Transitions Act of 2021, $\S$ 6-28-101 et seq., by:
2	(1) Eliminating the one-year limitation on eligibility of
3	children of Gold Star families and medically separated or retired families to
4	be covered by this act;
5	(2) Allowing public schools to apply provisions of this act to
6	all students who apply for enrollment in a public school in addition to those
7	students who are dependents of members of the uniformed services;
8	(3) Defining actions for military services families to
9	accomplish when applying for enrollment in advance of their arrival in
10	Arkansas;
11	(4) Expanding authority of receiving districts' special
12	education staff members to proactively collaborate with sending districts to
13	facilitate a smooth transition of incoming students with disabilities;
14	(5) Allowing public schools to approve excused absences and
15	<u>virtual course enrollment for children of Gold Star families to attend mental</u>
16	health programs and family resiliency programs; and
17	(6) Providing for the Purple Star School Program development and
18	administration.
19	
20	SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-28-105 is amended to read as follows:
21	6-28-105. Application.
22	(a) This chapter shall apply to dependent children of:
23	(1) Members of the active duty and activated reserve components
24	of the uniformed services;
25	(2) Members or veterans Veterans of the uniformed services who
26	were <del>severely</del> injured in the line of duty and are medically <del>discharged</del>
27	separated or retired for a period of one (1) year following the medical
28	discharge or retirement;
29	(3) Members of the uniformed services who die while on active
30	duty or as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty <del>for a period</del>
31	of one (1) year following the death;
32	(4) Dual status military technicians; and
33	(5) Traditional members of the National Guard and reserve
34	components of the <del>United States Armed Forces</del> <u>armed forces</u> who are relocating
35	to the state for employment or to serve as a member of an Arkansas-based
36	reserve component unit.

1 (b) This chapter shall not apply to the dependent children of: 2 (1) Inactive members of the National Guard and reserve components of the United States Armed Forces; 3 4 (2) Retired members of the uniformed services, except as 5 provided under subdivision (a)(3) of this section; and 6 (3) Other United States Department of Defense personnel and 7 other federal or state agency civilian and contract employees who are not considered members of the uniformed services. 8 9 (e)(1)(b)(1) This chapter includes provisions and extends application 10 eligibility beyond the scope of the Interstate Compact on Educational 11 Opportunity for Military Children, § 6-4-301 et seq. 12 (2) In complying with this chapter, sending districts and 13 receiving districts may request the assistance of sending districts and 14 receiving districts outside of the state to provide services to uniformed 15 services families transferring to or from the state who are covered under 16 this chapter but may not be covered under the interstate compact. 17 (c) A public school may extend the provisions of this chapter to all students relocating to the public school district or enrolling in the public 18 19 school under the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, § 6-18-227, or the Public School Choice Act of 2015, § 6-18-1901 et seq. 20 21 22 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-28-108 is amended to read as follows: 23 6-28-108. Advance enrollment. 24 (a)(1) Members of the uniformed services shall under § 6-28-105 who 25 wish to enroll their children in public school should, as soon as possible, 26 provide advance notice to public schools regarding the enrollment of a 27 student under this chapter to ensure the best opportunity for a smooth 28 transition for their children. 29 (b) Upon receipt of official assignment notice or assignment orders, 30 the parent, foster parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of a child, or person standing in loco parentis to a child of a member of the 31 32 uniformed services may enroll, register, and coordinate education services 33 for his or her child, including without limitation a child with special 34 education needs or a child with a disability, in the public school of his or 35 her choice by: 36 (1) Determining, in consultation with military and public school

1	district officials, the public school in which he or she prefers to enroll
2	his or her child according to requirements under § 6-18-1909;
3	(2) Contacting the public school's designated military family
4	education coordinator with any questions or issues raised or information
5	needed by the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of a
6	child, or person standing in loco parentis to a child; and
7	(3) Remotely submitting electronically an enrollment application
8	for his or her child that shall include required documentation, including
9	without limitation:
10	(A) A copy of the official military assignment notice or
11	official assignment orders and military identification credentials of the
12	member of the uniformed services;
13	(B) The child's unofficial education record and
14	<pre>immunization records;</pre>
15	(C) Current coursework for the school in which the student
16	is enrolled if the coursework is not included in the student's unofficial
17	education record;
18	(D) A copy of the student's individualized education
19	program, family service plan under the Individuals with Disabilities
20	Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., or plan under section 504 of the
21	Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, as applicable; and
22	(E) A list of any extracurricular activities in which the
23	student participates.
24	(2)(c) When a public school receives notice and an enrollment
25	application from a military family under subdivision (a)(1) of this section,
26	the public school shall <del>treat the notice as a provisional enrollment and</del>
27	provide the student with materials regarding:
28	(1) Provisionally enroll, provide placement for, and enter
29	academic course requests on behalf of the incoming student based on the
30	student's education record provided by his or her family or the sending
31	district;
32	(2) Provide the uniformed services family with information
33	either directly or on a Military Family link on the public school's or public
34	school district's website regarding:
35	(A) Academic courses Career-ready pathways and other
36	academic or education programs offered:

1	(B) Electives Required academic courses for each
2	curriculum and elective course options;
3	(C) Sports School and community-sponsored extracurricular
4	activities, including without limitation individual and team sports, clubs,
5	junior reserve officer training corps opportunities, and Purple Star School
6	program ambassadors; and
7	(D) Contact information for the designated military family
8	education coordinator and the Purple Star School program military family
9	education facilitator, if applicable; and
10	$\frac{(D)}{(E)}$ Other relevant information regarding the public
11	school.
12	(3)(d) A public school:
13	$\frac{A}{(1)}$ Shall, in determining the acceptance of a student's
14	enrollment in the public school, consider the:
15	(A) The student's enrollment application date and the
16	anticipated date of enrollment of $\frac{1}{4}$ student under subdivision (a)(1)
17	subsection (a) of this section in light of:;
18	(i)(B) Class sizes;
19	(ii)(C) Course prerequisites or conflicts; and
20	(iii)(D) The availability of elective courses;
21	(B)(2)(A) May preregister a student in anticipation of the
22	student's enrollment under subdivision (a)(1) of this section; and Shall not
23	deny a student enrollment in the public school or the public school district
24	under this section unless there is a lack of capacity.
25	(B) A lack of capacity may be claimed by a public school
26	district only if:
27	(i) The public school district has reached the
28	maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the
29	Standards for Accreditation for Public Schools and School Districts, state
30	rules, or other applicable federal regulations; and
31	(ii) The claim of lack of capacity is timely and
32	consistent with state and federal law;
33	(C)(3) May seek waivers from the State Board of Education to
34	accommodate a student under this section, including without limitation
35	required class ratios Shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, national
36	origin, race, ethnicity, religion, military family status, or disability;

- 1 (4) Notify a prospective student's family in writing regarding
  2 whether the student's enrollment has been accepted or rejected within fifteen
  3 (15) calendar days of receiving the student's enrollment application and
  4 supporting documentation; and
  - (5) As soon as practicable, request that a sending district provide a student's official education record as specified by § 6-28-107 to confirm the student's provisional enrollment, placement, and course preregistration conditions.
- $\frac{(b)(1)}{(e)(1)}$  A student under this section shall receive equitable 10 access to academic courses.
  - (2)(A) A receiving district may enter academic course requests on behalf of an incoming student under this section based on the student's transcript of information sent by the student's family or the student's sending district.
- 15 (B) Special power of attorney relative to the guardianship 16 of a student is sufficient for purposes of enrollment and all other actions 17 requiring parental participation and consent.
  - $\frac{(e)(1)(f)(1)}{(f)(1)}$  A receiving district shall not charge local tuition to a student who transitions to the receiving district under this section and who has been placed in the care of a noncustodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent.
  - (2) A student who has been placed in the care of a noncustodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent may continue to attend the school in which he or she was enrolled while residing with the custodial parent.
  - $\frac{(d)}{(g)}$  A receiving district shall ensure a student who transitions under this section has the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, regardless of application deadlines, and to the extent that the student is otherwise qualified.
- 32 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-28-109 is amended to read as follows: 33 6-28-109. Virtual course enrollment.
- 34 <u>(a)</u> At the request of a military family, a receiving district may
  35 enroll an inbound transitioning child of a military family in virtual
  36 distance-learning or digital coursework, if available, to facilitate a smooth

transition between the student's previous coursework and the curriculum best suited to ensure educational success in his or her new school.

- (b) To prevent a student from losing course credit due to absences, a
  public school may approve a student who has been granted one (1) or more
  excused absences to attend a mental health or family resilience program under
- 6 § 6-28-114 to:
  - (1) Access school coursework virtually; or
- 8 (2) Transfer to a virtual coursework program.

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- SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-28-113(b), concerning requirements a receiving district must adhere to with regard to a student's special education services under the Arkansas Military Child School Transitions Act of 2021, is amended to read as follows:
  - (b) A receiving district:
- 15 (1) Shall make reasonable accommodations and modifications to
  16 address the needs of incoming students with disabilities under this section;
  17 and
- 18 (2) May perform subsequent evaluations to ensure a student who
  19 transitions under this chapter has been appropriately placed in the receiving
  20 district as soon as possible upon the student's arrival at the receiving
  21 district;
- 22 (3) May request a meeting with a student's parents or legal
  23 guardians and the individualized education program team at the sending
  24 district from which the student transferred before the student's arrival at
  25 the receiving district;
  - (4) May, upon review of a student's existing individualized education program and with parental consent, request an evaluation by the sending district, if the student is still enrolled in the sending district;
- 29 (5) May request an in-person meeting with the student's parents
  30 or legal guardians and the student to confirm planned services upon the
  31 adoption by the public school of the student's existing or amended
  32 individualized education program; and
- 33 (6) May take any other action to ensure a student's smooth transition under this chapter.

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SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-28-114 is amended to read as follows:

1	6-28-114. Student excused absence.
2	(a) If a student's parent or legal guardian has been called to duty
3	for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment, the
4	student may be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the
5	public school in which he or she is enrolled.
6	(b)(1) A public school may grant an excused absence to a student under
7	this chapter for the student to attend a mental health or family resilience
8	program that:
9	(A) Honors families of servicemembers and veterans who
10	have died while serving or from service-connected injury or illness, known as
11	Gold Star Families;
12	(B) Provides family support to promote healing;
13	(C) Establishes connections with other Gold Star Families;
14	<u>or</u>
15	(D) Provides empowerment workshops for Gold Star children.
16	(2) For a student to receive an excused absence under
17	subdivision (b)(l) of this section, the student's parent, legal guardian,
18	person having lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco
19	parentis to the student shall provide written documentation that the
20	student's absence:
21	(A) Is recommended by the student's family physician or
22	other mental health professional and is signed by the student's family
23	physician or mental health professional; or
24	(B)(i)(a) Is to attend an event from a sponsoring
25	organization that is recognized by the student's school district board of
26	<u>directors.</u>
27	(b) The student or his or her parent, legal guardian,
28	person having lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco
29	parentis to the student shall provide a letter or other documentation from
30	the sponsoring organization of the student's attendance.
31	(ii) The public school district board of directors under
32	subdivision $(b)(2)(B)(i)(a)$ of this section shall review the list of
33	recognized sponsoring organizations at least one (1) time each year.
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35	SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 6-28-116 is amended to read as follows:
36	6-28-116. New student reception programs — Military family education

1	coordinators.
2	(a) A Each public school with twenty (20) or more children of military
3	families enrolled as students under this chapter or a public school district
4	with at least three thousand (3,000) enrolled public school students district
5	and open-enrollment public charter school shall:
6	(1) Incorporate into the policies of the public school district
7	specific procedures that outline actions to take in support of students who
8	are the children of military families who transition to and from the public
9	school district; and
10	$\frac{(2)(A)}{(1)}$ Designate in each public school district a military
11	family education coordinator to serve as the primary point of contact for
12	each child of a military family and his or her parent or legal guardian:
13	(2) Annually by September 1 provide to the Division of
14	Elementary and Secondary Education the name and contact information of the
15	military family education coordinator; and
16	(3) Post in a section designated for Military Families on the
17	website of the public school the contact information for the military family
18	education coordinator.
19	(B)(b) The Each public school military family education coordinator
20	shall:
21	(i)(1) Have Possess specialized knowledge regarding the
22	educational needs of children of military families and the obstacles that
23	children of military families face in obtaining an education and unique
24	challenges faced by children of uniformed services families; and
25	$\frac{(ii)(2)}{2}$ Be included in the establishment and adoption of a
26	public school district's and public school's parent and family engagement
27	plan as required under § 6-15-1702; and
28	(3) Serve as a navigator for uniformed services families by:
29	(A) Connecting the uniformed services families to
30	appropriate public school resources; and
31	(B) Connecting families with other uniformed services
32	families in the public school upon request.
33	(C) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
34	shall supply relevant resources for the orientation and training of public

school military family education coordinators under this section.

1 SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 6-28-117 is amended to read as follows: 2 6-28-117. Reporting enrollment of children of members of the uniformed 3 services armed forces - Definition. 4 (a) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall require a 5 public school to report the enrollment of a student who is a child of a 6 uniformed services family with a parent who is an active duty or reserve 7 component member of the armed forces as required by the Every Student 8 Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6311, as it existed on January 1, 2025: 9 (1) In the Arkansas Public School Computer Network; or 10 (2) As established by rule if the public school or public school 11 district does not report information through the Arkansas Public School 12 Computer Network. (b) As used in this section, "armed forces" means a member of the 13 active duty or reserve components of the United States Army, United States 14 15 Navy, United States Air Force, United States Marine Corps, United States Space Force, United States Coast Guard, and National Guard. 16 17 18 SECTION 9. Arkansas Code § 6-28-204(b), concerning the duties of the 19 Arkansas Council for Military Children is amended to read as follows: 20 (b) The duties of the council are to: 21 (1) Assist state and local education agencies in the promotion 22 and, communication, delivery, and assessment of the provisions of this 23 chapter to inform state education authorities, public school district officials, military commanders, and uniformed services families by: 24 25 (A) Assisting in the development, publication, and 26 distribution through schools and military commands of a digital family 27 guidebook that provides information on the provisions of this chapter; 28 (B) At least biennially publicly surveying uniformed 29 services families to assess awareness of this chapter, provisions of the 30 Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, § 6-18-227, provisions of the Public School Choice Act of 2015, § 6-18-1901 et seq., available military 31 32 family resources, and unmet uniformed services family needs; and 33 (C) Developing and promulgating student arrival and 34 departure surveys of uniformed services families to provide an assessment of 35 the effectiveness of this chapter and other related programs; 36 (2) Assist state and local education agencies with the

1	orientation and training of district military <u>family</u> education coordinators
2	and school military education facilitators on provisions of this chapter;
3	(3) Develop and promote the Purple Star School program as
4	required by § 6-28-302;
5	(3) (4) Assist in the development and delivery of programs that
6	inform <u>current and former</u> uniformed services families, including Gold Star
7	families, of the need for self-identification in order to assure accurate
8	accounting of children of uniformed services families enrolled in public
9	school districts to self-identify to assure:
10	(A) They are recognized for their service; and
11	(B) That the student is accounted for in all applicable
12	programs for which the student qualifies; and
13	(4) (5) Assist in the development and administration of programs
14	recognizing education agencies, public schools, and leaders who have
15	established or contributed to programs facilitating successful school
16	transitions of children of uniformed services families.
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18	SECTION 10. Arkansas Code § 6-28-204(i), concerning administrative
19	staff to support the Chair of the Arkansas Council for Military Children, is
20	amended to read as follows:
21	(i) The council shall post on its website or post by utilizing another
22	form of public notice, including without limitation social media, information
23	for uniformed services families, including without limitation information
24	regarding:
25	(1) The purpose, duties, membership composition, meeting
26	agendas, and meeting minutes of the council;
27	(2) Resources to assist uniformed services families with making
28	decisions concerning school choice and educational freedom accounts;
29	(3) Guidance for advance enrollment;
30	(4) Contact information for military family education
31	coordinators; and
32	(5) Purple Star School Program highlights and contact
33	information for military family education facilitators.
34	(j) The division shall provide administrative staff support to the Chair
35	of the Arkansas Council for Military Children to assist with the achievement
36	of the purpose and the administration of duties of the council.

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2	SECTION 11. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 28, is amended to add
3	additional sections to read as follows:
4	<u>Subchapter 3 - Purple Star School Program</u>
5	
6	6-28-301. Purple Star School Program.
7	(a) Each public school with twenty (20) or more children of military
8	families enrolled annually by October 1 shall:
9	(1) Adopt the Purple Star School Program developed by the
10	Arkansas Council for Military Children and approved by the Division of
11	Elementary and Secondary Education; and
12	(2) Survey arriving and departing uniform services families to
13	assess the effectiveness of programs and services under this chapter as
14	specified by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.
15	(b) The purpose of the Purple Star School Program shall be to:
16	(1) Assist children of uniformed services families by addressing
17	the educational, social, and emotional challenges the children of uniformed
18	services families face during their transition to a new school; and
19	(2) Keep children of uniformed services families on track to
20	enroll and excel in college, enter the workforce, and become life-ready.
21	(c) The council-developed Purple Star School Program required under
22	subsection (a) of this section shall:
23	(1) Require each public school to designate a military family
24	education facilitator to:
25	(A) Identify military-connected students who are enrolled
26	in the public school and inform public school teachers of those students;
27	(B) Serve as the Purple Star School Program point of
28	contact for the public school, each child of a military family, and the
29	parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of, or person standing
30	in loco parentis to a child of a military family; and
31	(C) Assist in determining and coordinating public school
32	services and programs for military-connected students;
33	(2) Require a designated public school district military family
34	education facilitator, public school military family education coordinator,
35	and public school staff to complete council-recommended and division-approved
36	initial and continuing education on identifying the needs and unique

1	challenges faced by children of members of the uniformed services;
2	(3) Require each public school district to include on its
3	website a "Military Families" section that informs uniformed services
4	families of:
5	(A) The student enrollment application process;
6	(B) Available education pathways;
7	(C) Notable public school or public school district Purple
8	Star School Programs;
9	(D) Public school district military family education
10	coordinator contact information; and
11	(E) Public school military family education facilitator
12	contact information;
13	(4)(A) Require each public school or public school district to
14	establish a volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador program that shall
15	be open to all enrolled students who want to contribute.
16	(B) The volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador
17	program required under subdivision (c)(4)(A) of this section shall:
18	(i) Connect and welcome inbound students ahead of
19	their transition to a public school;
20	(ii) Assist with the provision of new student
21	orientation; and
22	(iii) Assist new students with establishing social
23	connections at their new school;
24	(5) Establish school and community events to honor and recognize
25	members of the uniformed services and military-connected students;
26	(6) Ensure that a public school or public school district
27	appoints a volunteer uniformed services member, military spouse, or
28	representative from a military installation or unit to serve on the school
29	community and family engagement committee;
30	(7) Ensure that a public school district's or public school's
31	parent and family engagement plan required under § 6-15-1702 addresses
32	relevant military family issues and resources; and
33	(8) Require public schools and public school districts to
34	collaborate with military commands to encourage uniformed services families
35	to self-identify their military status.
36	(d) The Purple Star School Program required under subsection (a) of

1	this section may authorize public schools and public school districts to
2	expand their Purple Star School Program to include community-level
3	initiatives, including without limitation:
4	(1) Engaging community organizations, local businesses, and
5	military installations to enhance resources and support for military-
6	connected students and their families;
7	(2) Organizing community events that raise awareness of
8	military-connected students and their contributions; and
9	(3) Establishing partnerships with regional stakeholders to
10	enhance Purple Star School Program efforts while fulfilling all requirements
11	for the Purple Star School Program established by the division.
12	(e) As used in this section, a "military-connected student" is:
13	(1) An incoming or a currently enrolled student who is a child
14	or dependent of a current or former active or reserve component uniformed
15	services member;
16	(2) A child of a uniformed services member who died while on
17	active duty or as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty;
18	(3) A student who is a sibling of a uniformed services member;
19	(4) A student who has enlisted in the uniformed services; or
20	(5) A Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadet.
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22	6-28-302. Arkansas Council for Military Children — Purple Star School
23	<u>Program - Duties.</u>
24	The Arkansas Council for Military Children shall:
25	(1) Develop and review biennially and amend as necessary the
26	Purple Star School Program model;
27	(2) When developing, reviewing, and amending the Purple Star
28	School Program as required under subdivision (1) of this section, incorporate
29	provisions prescribed by the council, the Military Child Education Coalition,
30	and other relevant, recognized authorities;
31	(3) Use the Purple Star School Program's application and renewal
32	process along with interdistrict collaboration events to drive continuous
33	improvement of the program;
34	(4) Define required and optional Purple Star School Program
35	provisions established by § 6-28-301 and performance standards;
36	(5) Establish phase-in timing and training, if required, when

1	adopting or amending Purple Star School Program provisions; and
2	(6) Establish a recognition program for public schools, public
3	school districts, and private schools that meet Purple Star School Program
4	standards as defined and evaluated by the council.
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6	6-28-303. Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Purple Star
7	School Program - Duties.
8	The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall:
9	(1) Provide relevant resources for the orientation and training
10	of public school district military family education coordinators and public
11	school military family education facilitators under this chapter;
12	(2) Administer the Purple Star School Program;
13	(3) Provide administrative and logistical support to the
14	Arkansas Council for Military Children to develop the program; and
15	(4) Promulgate and incorporate Purple Star School program rules
16	into the rules the division promulgates under this chapter.
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18	/s/K. Brown
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