

Caring for Missionary Kids in College

Transitioning back to the U.S. for college is arguably the biggest change an MK experiences. How can you help ease this transition for the MKs in your life/church/organization?

Transitioning from a life overseas to life in a U.S. university brings with it a host of challenges for MKs. While all college students face the joy and fear of spreading their wings and learning to be independent, MKs often do it an ocean away from their family lifeline. In addition to many cross-cultural adjustments, learning how to drive, operate a bank account, get phone service, and shop for what they need, they are also dealing with the grief of goodbyes to family members and lifelong friends from their host country. Transition is not a one and done event, either. What happens on family weekend? Holidays and school breaks? Or just those times when you really miss your mom? And what can we as a church do to best support these MKs?

Read through these ideas and see which ones you and/or your church might be able to implement – or even come up with some of your own!

- Listen. Ask probing questions. Provide a safe place for stories and grief and joy to be shared. Seek to understand and connect.
- Take them out to a restaurant that may serve foods from the country(ies) they called home
- Help take care of their practical needs – fixing a car that breaks down, answering questions about how things “work” in the U.S., being the “adult driver” in the car while they have their learning permit
- Be substitute parents during special events at college
- Offer hospitality by giving students a “home” to go to when they are on a break and can’t go visit mom and dad
- Encourage your church to support MKs with the same scholarship funds that are available to your other church teens
- Allow MKs to use your church as their “home church” in order to get other church-related scholarships for their Christian universities
- Add them to your church’s college care package ministry (if your church doesn’t have one of these, start one for the MKs you know!)
- Send them a card to let them know you are praying for them, and include a \$20 Walmart Gift Card or some gas/laundry money
- Provide a place for them to store things over the summer after they must move out of the dorm
- Give rides to/from the airport, or rides to/from their university to help them move in/out or to make sure they get where they need to be for their school break