

The Calm PCS Moving Guide

Practical Housing and Moving
Guidance for Military Families

Prepared by:

Anthea Daugherty, Real Estate Professional

Keller Williams | 20-year military spouse

Serving Gulfport, Biloxi, Coastal Mississippi

& surrounding areas



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A PCS move is never just about boxes.

It is school records, housing decisions, timelines, pets, paperwork, utilities, repairs, inspections, emotions, and the strange feeling of trying to build a new life before the old one is even packed.

You can handle school records in one room, sorting through garage clutter in another, trying to understand housing paperwork at the kitchen table, and still wondering what everyone is going to eat for dinner.

Some moves are exciting. Some are exhausting. Most are both.

After 20 years as a military spouse, I know that a move is rarely neat. It is usually a pile of decisions made under pressure.

This guide is not meant to give you one more overwhelming checklist. It is meant to help you slow the move down, sort the pieces, and figure out what needs attention first.

**You do not have to have every answer today.
You just need a place to begin.**

BEFORE YOU START PACKING

Before you get lost in boxes, pause and ask:

What kind of move are we really making?

Are you moving across the country?

Moving back near family?

Buying for the first time?

Selling under pressure?

Trying to keep kids settled?

Moving with pets?

Living apart temporarily?

Trying to decide whether to rent first?

Every PCS has its own pressure points.

The sooner you know yours, the easier it is to build a plan that actually fits your family.



Anthea's note:

The move that looks simple on paper may not feel simple in real life.

That does not mean you are behind. It means you are dealing with more than a moving date.

THREE TIMELINES

Every PCS Has Three Timelines

A PCS move usually has more than one clock running at the same time.

1. The military timeline

Orders, report dates, transportation appointments, leave, command requirements.

The military timeline may be fixed.

2. The housing timeline

Buying, selling, renting, inspections, repairs, appraisals, closing dates, temporary lodging.

The housing timeline may be negotiable.

3. The family timeline

School, childcare, jobs, pets, medical appointments, family visits, emotional adjustment.

The family timeline may need more care than anyone expected.



Anthea's note: When everything feels urgent, separate the timelines. It helps you see what actually has to happen now and what can wait.

What Has to Be Solved First?

Not every PCS problem is equally urgent.

For some families, the first issue is selling the current home. For others, it is finding temporary housing. For others, it is getting preapproved, researching schools, understanding commute times, or deciding whether buying even makes sense.

Ask yourself:

What decision affects every other decision?

What cannot wait?

What can be handled after arrival?

What would make this move feel less chaotic?

What is the one thing we keep avoiding?

That last question matters.

The thing you are avoiding is often the thing that needs a plan first.

Anthea's note: Avoiding a housing question does not make it disappear. It usually makes it louder. Start with the one question that keeps circling in your mind.

WORKSHEET

Our PCS Pressure Points

Use this page to get the move out of your head and onto paper.

The decision we are most worried about:

The deadline that feels closest:

The thing we keep putting off:

The housing question we need answered first:

The one thing that would make this move feel calmer:

The people most affected by this move:

What we already know:

What we still need to find out:

You do not need perfect answers. This page is only meant to help you see where the pressure is coming from.

Your Housing Path

PCS families often feel pressure to make a fast housing decision.

But fast is not always the same as right.

Most families fall into one of four paths.

Buy now

This may make sense if the area, budget, timeline, and financing are clear.

Rent first

This may be wise if you do not know the area, expect a short stay, or need time to understand schools, traffic, flood zones, neighborhoods, or job options.



HOUSING PATH (CONTINUED)

Sell before moving

This may reduce stress if you want a clean break, do not plan to return, or need the equity for your next purchase.

Keep and rent out

This may work if you can cover the mortgage, manage a tenant from a distance, and accept the risk of vacancies, repairs, and property management costs.

There is no wrong path. There is only the path that fits your family, your finances, and your timeline.

Anthea's note: If you are unsure which path fits, that is normal. Most families do not know until they talk it through. That conversation is free and pressure-free.



BUYING

Before You Fall in Love With a House

A house can look perfect online and still be the wrong fit.

Before you get attached, think through:

- Monthly payment comfort
- Commute time
- Insurance costs
- Flood zone concerns
- School needs
- Distance to base
- Resale potential
- Repairs and maintenance
- HOA rules
- Pet restrictions
- Neighborhood feel at different times of day

A good PCS home is not just pretty.

It has to work under pressure.

Anthea's note: A home that looks affordable online can feel very different after insurance, commute, repairs, flood-zone concerns, and daily life are added in.

Selling During a PCS

Selling during a PCS can feel like trying to clean the house while someone is actively packing it.

Before listing, it helps to gather:

Mortgage payoff estimate

Utility averages

HOA information

List of repairs or updates

Known issues with the home

Warranties or service records

Timeline for moving

Plan for pets, kids, and showings

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SELLING (CONTINUED)

Then ask one honest question:

If the house does not sell before we leave, what is our plan?

If you do not have a clear answer, that is okay. But it means you need a plan before you list, not after.

A good agent will help you think through pricing, timing, and backup options before you commit.

Anthea's note: I have helped families sell on tight timelines. It is possible. But it works best when we start the conversation early, not after orders drop.

Ready to talk through your selling plan? Let's connect.



SHOW-READY

Keeping a House Show-Ready

You do not need a perfect house.

You need a workable system.

Try creating:

One laundry zone

One paperwork basket

One "showing box" for clutter

One pet plan

One quick-clean routine

One backup plan for last-minute showings

PCS families are living real life while selling.

Buyers understand that people live in houses. The goal is not perfection. The goal is helping buyers see the home clearly.

Anthea's note: Nobody lives inside a listing photo. Do the best you can, build a simple system, and give yourself some grace.

THE EMOTIONAL SIDE

Nobody Tells You How Emotional the Move Can Be

PCS moves are logistical, but they are also emotional.

Children may be excited one day and grieving the next. Pets may act strangely. Spouses may feel overwhelmed. The service member may be focused on the mission while everyone else is focused on the household disruption.

That does not mean anyone is doing it wrong.

A few things can help:

Keep one familiar routine

Let kids help pack a personal box

Take photos of the old house

Make a simple arrival plan

Keep pet supplies accessible

Build in rest days when possible

Expect some emotional messiness

A PCS is not just a move.

It is a transition.

Anthea's note: A move can be the right thing and still be hard. Both can be true.

AFTER ARRIVAL

The Move Is Not Over When the Truck Leaves

The move does not end when the truck arrives. The first two weeks are usually about rebuilding daily life.

Focus on:

Sleeping arrangements

Groceries

School or childcare

Medical needs

Pet care

Utilities

Internet

Commute practice

Emergency contacts

Finding one familiar place

That familiar place might be a coffee shop, park, gym, library, church, walking trail, or favorite grocery store.

You do not have to love the new place immediately. Sometimes you just need to make it functional first.

Anthea's note: Settling in does not happen all at once. Start with food, sleep, basic routines, and one place outside the house that feels easy to return to.

COASTAL MISSISSIPPI

A Few Things I Would Want You to Know Early

Coastal Mississippi has a lot to offer: beaches, military connections, small communities, and access to both Mississippi and Louisiana.

But it is not a place where you want to shop by photos alone. Two homes at the same price can have very different long-term costs.

A real example: A home in Ocean Springs might add 20 minutes to your Keesler commute, but some families choose it for the walkable downtown and school reputation. Others have bought a "beach home" only to discover it sat in a high-risk flood zone with \$4,000+ annual insurance premiums.

Before choosing a home, understand:



COASTAL MISSISSIPPI (CONTINUED)

Before choosing a home, understand:

Flood zones

Homeowners insurance

Wind and storm considerations

Commute patterns

Base access

School districts

Property condition

Older homes versus newer construction

Distance between communities

The right choice depends on how your family actually lives.



Anthea's note: Do not fall in love with a house before you understand the insurance, the flood zone, the commute, and the neighborhood rhythm.

You Can Ask Questions Before You Are Ready

A good first conversation does not have to mean you are ready to buy or sell.

It can simply help you understand:

What your current home may be worth

Whether buying or renting makes more sense

What neighborhoods may fit your family

What costs to consider

What timeline is realistic

What questions to ask a lender

What you should do first

The earlier you ask questions, the fewer decisions you have to make in panic mode.

Anthea's note: You do not have to wait until you are overwhelmed to ask for help. Early questions are often the easiest ones to answer.

A Calmer Move Starts With the Next Right Question

You do not have to solve the whole move today.

Whether you are buying, selling, renting, relocating, or still figuring it out, you deserve guidance from someone who understands that military families are not just moving belongings.

They are moving lives.

Free PCS Housing Conversation

In 30 minutes, we will figure out whether you should buy, rent, or wait — and what to do first.

No pressure. No pitch. Just a clear next step.

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Keller Williams | 20-year military spouse

1-815-668-2903 | anthead@kw.com

Serving Gulfport, Biloxi, Coastal Mississippi & surrounding areas



Anthea Daugherty
REALTOR®

Cell: 1 815 668 2903
Office: 1 228 275 7500
anthead@kw.com

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