CRB

SHORT SUBJECTS

# Professional Licensing and Military Spouses

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California has approximately 72,500 military spouses (civilians married to servicemembers) residing here in any given year.[3] This population is highly mobile; about 15 percent of military families move across state lines each year.[3] With each move, a spouse has to leave a job, move households, and decide whether or not to pursue a new job in a new location.

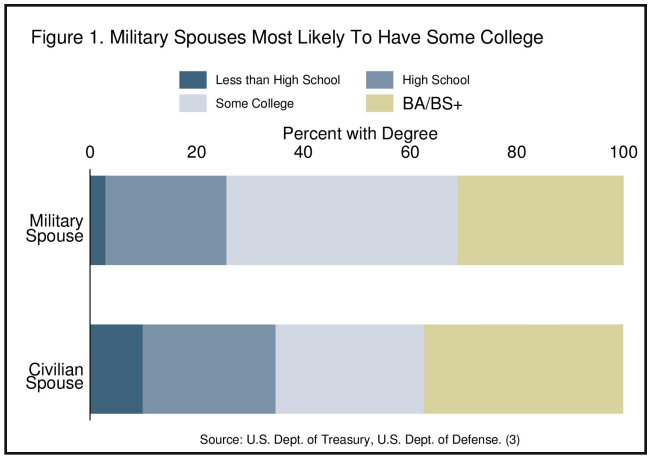
Over a third of all military spouses are employed in professions that require some sort of professional license or certificate. Most states have unique licensing requirements and an interstate move frequently requires a new application for a license or certificate. Applying for a new license or certificate in a new state requires time, money, and paperwork, and does not guarantee employment in the field.

Licensing and certification requirements affect both financial and personal well-being of military personnel. Many military personnel, especially lower-enlisted personnel, rely on a spouse's salary to help pay the bills. Additionally, a recent survey showed that more than two-thirds of all service members stated their decision to re-enlist was largely or moderately affected by their spouse's career prospects.[3]

## Military Spouses

Military spouses are different from civilian spouses in significant ways. First, 95 percent of all military spouses are women. Second, military spouses are more likely to have completed at least some college than their civilian counterparts, but less likely to complete a four-year degree. See Figure 1, which uses weighted data in the "civilian spouse" category to reflect the gender balance of the military spouse population.

Military spouses have a lower labor market participation rate (57 percent) and higher unemployment rate (26 percent) than their civilian counterparts (for married U.S. women, participation rate is 61.0 percent, unemployment rate is 5.9 percent).[1] The heavy reliance on two-year degrees and certificate programs for military spouse education raises the importance of professional certificate and licensure transferability for this population.




Military spouses are heavily concentrated in teaching, healthcare and service industries. According to the Department of the Treasury, 5.2 percent of all military spouses teach in pre-K to 12th grade. An additional 1.2 percent are post-secondary teachers. Five percent work as either registered nurses (3.7 percent) or as nursing, psychiatric or home health aides (1.5 percent). See Table 1 for the Top 10 Careers of Military Spouses.[3]

**Table 1. Top 10 Careers for Military Spouses**

| Occupation | Percentage of Spouses |
|---|---|
| Teachers (pre-K through 12th Grade) | 5.2** |
| Child care workers | 3.9* |
| Registered nurses | 3.7** |
| Retail salesperson | 3.6 |
| Secretary/Administrative assistant | 3.5 |
| Waiter/Waitress | 3.0 |
| Receptionist/Information Clerk | 2.8 |
| Cashier | 2.8 |
| First-line supervisor/retail sales manager | 2.5 |
| Customer service representative | 1.8 |

* Requires Certificate ** Requires License

## Professional Licensing and Certificates

For a military spouse residing outside of California and practicing a profession that requires a certificate or license in California, a move to the state will require investigating the requirements for a new certificate, application, background checks, payment of fees, waiting periods, and possible test-taking, all before they can apply for a new job. These barriers may be enough to prevent some spouses from seeking work in their desired and trained profession, especially if the move is only going to be for two or three years before their servicemember spouse is transferred again.

States can ease the transition for military families. Some states have created alternative forms of licensing to assist military spouses. By creating pathways for out-of-state licenses to be temporarily recognized, utilizing multistate licensing procedures, or expediting the licensing process for military spouses, states reduce the burden of moves on military families. Table 2 shows states that have temporary/provisional licensing or expedited licensing for military spouses or have "licensing by endorsement."[2] California offers expedited and "emergency" licensing in some instances.[2]

**Table 2. States with Alternative Forms of Licensing**

| States with Licensing by Endorsement and Temporary and Emergency Licensing | | States with at Least One Form of Emergency or Temporary Licensing | States with No Execptions to Licensing Codes | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AL | MT | AZ | AK | MN | OH |
| CO | NV | KS | DC | MS | OR |
| CT | NC | TX | GA | NE | PA |
| HI | OK | AR | ID | NH | RI |
| IN | TN | CA | IA | NJ | SD |
| KY | UT | DE | ME | NM | VT |
| LA | VA | FL | MD | NY | WV |
| MA | WA | IL | MI | ND | WI |
| | | MO | | | |
| | | SC | | | |
| | | WY | | | |

## Alternative Forms of Licensing

### Licensing by Endorsement

"Licensing by endorsement" is a process through which a state licensing body issues a license to a professional because s/he already possesses a professional license from a state with similar requirements for the profession. Obtaining a license by endorsement usually requires that the applicant has a license from a state with similar professional standards and who has no disciplinary record. In some cases, licensing bodies may require that the applicant has practiced in the profession within a specific time period (e.g., within the past two or four years) to ensure that the practitioner has up-to-date skills and training. In 2010, Colorado worked closely with the Department of Defense to extend licensing by endorsement to 77 professions in the state.[3]

### Temporary or Provisional Licensing

Temporary or provisional licensing allows individuals licensed in other states to obtain a temporary license to practice a profession while they meet the additional licensing requirements for California (e.g., passing additional exams, paying additional fees). These licenses generally are good for 3 to 12 months and require that the individual have a valid license from another state, obtain a background check and submit an application fee.

### Expedited Application Processes

Some states offer expedited licensing processes for military spouses. Applications for professional licenses may receive high priority and a shortened review period if (1) the current license is issued from a state with substantially similar licensing requirements, (2) the applicant has no disciplinary record and (3) the applicant can demonstrate competency through a variety of methods.

## Citations


1. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Employment Status By Marital Status and Sex, 2010 annual averages." Downloaded Nov. 14, 2012. http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-table4-2011.pdf
2. National Military Family Association. "50 State Licensing Chart." Downloaded Nov. 14, 2012. http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/spouse-employment/50-state-licensing-chart.html.
3. U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense. (2012). *Supporting Our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines*. http://www.defense.gov/home/pdf/Occupational_Licensing_and_Military_Spouses_Report_vFINAL.PDF.