



Finding and Understanding **Employee Benefits**

By learning more about employee benefits and identifying the important benefits for your family, you can choose positions where company-provided benefits add additional value to your compensation package.

Receiving a job offer is cause for celebration. Salary may be your key driver for employment, but ask the human resource representative or the person offering you the job about the benefits package to make sure you fully understand the benefits as you weigh your employment decision. Your job offer covers hidden costs and benefits that add to your compensation.

One hidden benefit is your employer's Social Security and Medicare match, which saves you more than 7.5 percent of your income versus

independent contracting where you pay those costs. If you receive a \$50,000 salary, that equates to a savings of more than \$3,800 each year. Your benefits might also include health and life insurance, retirement (pension, 401k matches), paid time off, free parking, child care or child care supplements, gym memberships and more. Hidden costs and benefits add to your bottom-line salary.

Employers offer a variety of benefits to employees as part of the employee compensation package.

When considering your plan,

1

Determine if your package provides the benefits that you need.

2

Make sure you know the contribution amounts for each benefits you will select. How much will be deducted each pay period? Annually?

3

See if the plan matches your lifestyle. Are they family-friendly or eco-minded? Do you get a discount for being active and health conscious?

Find the benefits you need

Military Spouse Employment Partnership

companies are a great option to start your benefit search because they are committed to hiring military spouses. Visit the [MSEP Career Portal](#) to learn more about the partnership and to also check out the more than 220 MSEP partners offering thousands of jobs. In the [MSEP partners](#) section, click on the partner logos and review their websites for messaging and benefits information. Examples of special benefits from MSEP partners include:

- [U.S. Bank](#) covers maternity leave under their short-term disability benefits. They offer paid leave for new and adoptive parents and reimburse up to \$2,500 of adoption expenses.
- [Convergys](#) and [Sykes](#) provide both work-from-home or on-site employment.
- [ADP](#) offers great retirement options including a pension plan and stock purchase options. Some locations offer on-site child care.

Network with military spouse mentors at the [Military Spouse eMentor Program](#) for advice and assistance in learning more about companies and careers that offer great benefits. Connect with spouses on social media sites like [MSEP Facebook](#) and [MSEP LinkedIn](#) for additional input.

Research company websites you might want to work for and review their benefits and messaging. If a family-friendly workplace and benefits are important to you, look for benefits that may include the following:

- On-site child care
- Flexible work options
- Child care subsidies
- Tutoring and scholarships for dependents
- Paid paternity leave
- Adoption assistance
- Lactation rooms
- Flexible spending accounts



Search job boards like [indeed.com](#) or <http://us.jobs>. Put 'family-friendly culture' or 'work-life balance' and your location in the search fields. Find companies in your area using those terms in their messaging and review their benefits list.

Use social media to learn more about the company culture and benefits. Does the company highlight family? Consider connecting via social networks and asking an employee or employees about the company or even "a typical day" on the job.



Understand your benefits

Some of the more common benefits offered by companies include the following:

- **Paid time off** — Paid leave or PTO includes holiday pay, vacation pay and sick pay.
 - If your employer has a sick leave policy and you have children, find out if your leave covers your children's doctor appointments and illnesses.
- **Health insurance** — If you have TRICARE health coverage and don't enroll in your employer's plan, you may be able to negotiate alternative benefits for not participating.
- **Short-term and long-term disability and life insurance** — Short-term and long-term disability and basic life insurance protection are often offered at no cost or low cost to employees.
- **Retirement plans** — Prepare for your future and invest in a retirement plan (401k, IRA), particularly if your contribution is supplemented or matched by your employer.
- **Tuition assistance and tuition reimbursement programs** — Employers may pay for all or part of your cost to attend training, college or university classes.
- **Telecommuting** — Telecommuting provides flexibility and saves fuel, time and wardrobe expense. Organizations offering telecommuting options may be more likely to consider allowing you to keep your job when faced with a military relocation.

- **Nonmonetary benefits** — Don't forget the importance of nonmonetary benefits like the following:
 - Positive work culture
 - Flexible schedules
 - Mentoring programs
 - Compensation time
 - Relaxed dress codes
 - Comfortable facilities with top-of-the-line tools
 - Family-friendly activities sponsored by the organization
 - Challenging positions with opportunities for advancement
 - Respect and appreciation of work contributions

As you search for jobs, do your research upfront. Apply for positions with companies that offer the benefits and work-life balance you seek. When you receive a job offer, make sure you understand the costs and provisions of the benefits package. Base your acceptance on the entire compensation plan — salary, fringe benefits, nonmonetary benefits and additional perks — and how the package benefits your family. Consider company culture and environment as part of the package. **Accept the position and start your celebration!**

The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program provides expert education and career guidance to military spouses worldwide. For more information, visit MySECO <https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil>.