



Understanding the **Job Search Process**

The employment market is complex and no cheat sheet or magic formula exists to help you find a job or gauge the length of your search. Research the job market, expand your network, be creative and persistent, and you will be successful in your job search.

Each time you search for employment, your challenges, your processes and your goals may be different. Evaluate your current situation before starting your search and consider the following factors.

Location

Some military installations are located in thriving metropolitan areas where jobs are plentiful. Other installations are close to small towns with fewer employers and limited job opportunities. Visit the [CareerOneStop Labor Market Information Center](#) to learn more about your local job outlook. In some locations, finding a job in your chosen career field may be difficult, so expand your employment options and consider these suggestions.

- Translate your skills to a different type of career or industry using the [Occupation Information](#) resource. If you are a technical writer, you could apply for a grant-writing job. Articulate your value and help your potential employer make the connection.
- Investigate independent contracting, freelance or virtual positions.
- Explore internships and volunteer positions to get your foot in the door and showcase your talent.

Length of job search

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), as of December 2013 the median job search took 17.1 weeks. More than one-third, or 37 percent, of applicants searched for 27 weeks or longer. To stay motivated and on track, consider these options.

- Use your available support systems and resources including [MySECO](#), specialty consultations with a certified SECO Career Counselor, guidance from an employment readiness specialists at an installation military and family support center, which can be located through [MilitaryINSTALLATIONS](#), and the [Military Spouse Employment Partnership](#), also known as MSEP.
- Expand your networks by attending hiring fairs, training classes, social events and community organizations in your local area. Try [MSEP Facebook](#) and other social networking sites to increase your reach.
- Consider volunteering to stay busy, gain valuable experience, expand your skills, make new contacts and potentially gain employment. Volunteer positions may lead to job offers if paid positions become available. Good sources for locating volunteer positions include [United We Serve](#) and [Idealist.org](#), which also list job openings with nonprofit organizations.

Earnings

Review your family finances before you start your job search. Determine if you can afford a lengthier job search for your first choice job or if you need to seek alternatives to bring in a paycheck quickly. If you need a paycheck soon, consider these options.

- Investigate temporary jobs and placement agencies. Such employment can lead to permanent positions. Locate [MSEP partner employers](#) to help you get started.
- Accept a position and continue your search for your “A” job after working hours.
- Know your bottom line. Do not accept a job if you have to “pay to work.” Calculate the costs of child care, automotive expenses, wardrobe, gas, deductions and other work expenses to make sure the salary you earn justifies working.
- Research pay and benefits using the [Pay and Benefits Calculator](#).

Competition

In today’s job market, hundreds or even thousands of applicants apply for each position. Be proficient at networking and learn to market yourself and your capabilities. Your job search may be more difficult in your location if there is little or no demand for workers with your education, experience and skill set. To increase your job search success rate, try some of these suggestions.

- Be efficient in your job search. Only a small percentage of hires come through big job boards, so limit your time using those sites. Use targeted or specialty job boards like MSEP and start networking — personal networking, online networking and attending networking events — for a more effective job search.
- Differentiate yourself. Build a portfolio, have business cards, create a positive online presence or find a sponsor at the company where you want to work.

- Seek a mentor through MSEP to receive career advice and help you gain notice. Good starting points are the [MilitarySpouse eMentor Program](#) offered by AcademyWomen and [Blue Star Networks](#), a Blue Star Families program with four military spouse professional career-networking groups. Another option is the [Joining Forces Mentoring Plus](#) program sponsored by the Business and Professional Women’s Foundation.
- Link up by joining the [MSEP LinkedIn Military Spouse Group](#) today. Employers committed to hiring military spouses post job announcements on the site regularly, including virtual employment opportunities.

Network

Employers fill a number of job openings through the unadvertised or hidden job market. Referrals account for a percentage of these hires, so getting access to these jobs through referrals increases your odds of landing a position. To get referrals, you need to expand your network. Take advantage of these networking opportunities.

- **Military Spouse Employment Partnership** provides a searchable database that allows you to find positions with partners who have pledged to hire qualified military spouses to fill open positions. If you apply to positions with MSEP partners, make sure to identify yourself as a military spouse.
- **Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Fairs**, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, allow you to network and meet face-to-face with employers interested in hiring spouses and veterans. Employment workshops take place in conjunction with the hiring fair and provide additional opportunities to learn and network. Some HOH hiring fairs are designed specifically for military spouses.

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>.

- **Military spouse mentors** provide career advice and access into networks of employers who offer public and private sector employment. They also connect job-seeking protégés to professional associations and members who know that job market. [MilitarySpouse eMentor Program](#), [Joining Forces Mentoring Plus](#) and [Blue Star Networks](#) are three of the leading military spouse mentoring programs.
- **American Job Centers** offer hiring events, training sessions and workshops to connect you to employers and jobs in your local community.
- **Installation job fairs** connect local employers to military spouse job seekers and installation Family Readiness System service providers.
- **Family and friends** are some of your best network resources. They may be able to provide a connection with the appropriate contact at their work location or with contacts at other organizations where you might want to work.
- **Former employers and coworkers** may have connections you can use in your job search. If you left on good terms, do not hesitate to contact them and ask if they know and could introduce you to contacts who work for organizations in your field of interest and location.
- **Information interviews** help you learn more about a field and company without the pressure of a job interview. It is an opportunity to network with someone who can provide you with information and suggestions on building your career.
- **Professional societies and trade groups** hold meetings and training events to increase your knowledge and provide networking opportunities with others in your field.

Career path

The steps you take to find a job often depend on the stage of your career. If you are seeking your first job out of high school, you will use different job search tactics than a spouse with multiple degrees seeking an executive management position.

[Certified Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Career Counselors](#) can help you define your career path, assist with your job search plan and provide you with tools and approaches to be successful. Counselors can also provide information on the following employment readiness skills:

- Education, career and transition planning
- Setting goals
- Creating and reviewing your resume
- Creating a positive Internet image
- Cover letters
- Interview skills
- Dressing for success
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Child care and transportation planning
- And much more

You can request no-cost specialty consultations with a certified SECO Career Counselor by calling 800-342-9647. Visit [MySECO](#) for helpful resources such as self-assessments and career decision-making tools.

Your background, the type of employment you seek, your location and your job search skills are all factors that affect your job search. Consider jobs you might have ruled out in the past and take a chance on new opportunities. Using available resources, building your networks and promoting your skills and abilities may shorten your job search and allow you to continue on your successful career path.

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