

Senior Spouse Update Summary

Current as of June 28, 2024



On June 25, 2024, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy Patricia Montes Barron provided a quarterly update to 125 senior military spouses. In the meeting, Mrs. Barron and members of her leadership team provided updates on the activities of the Defense Commissary Agency, or DeCA and the Dependent Care Flex Spending Account, or DCFSA.

Mrs. Barron opened with thanks to attendees for making the time to attend the meeting, especially during PCS season. She emphasized the important pre-tax savings service members and families are eligible for through the DCFSA and urged attendees and families to take advantage of this opportunity.

Mrs. Barron reminded attendees of a [dedicated web page](#) for all senior spouse updates, with links to all resources discussed, executive summaries and other spouse resources to share with key spouse groups and installation spouses. This site will be updated with new information after each quarterly roundtable.

The next Senior Spouse Quarterly Update meeting will occur in fall 2024.

Defense Commissary Agency

John Hall from the Defense Commissary Agency Headquarters provided an overview of DeCA and its priorities for increasing patronage and driving down costs:

- Continue Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's goal to save patrons at least 25% compared to commercial grocery stores. Savings are tracking at 25% this fiscal year so far.
- Increase sales to drive patron savings higher. In 2022-23, sales increased from \$4.2 to \$4.6 billion. DeCA is on track to meet \$4.9 billion in sales in FY2024. Increased sales mean increased savings.
- Develop leaders and fill positions with applicants with relevant commercial experience.

Important statistic: 3.5 million military households live within 20 miles of a commissary (in 235 U.S. communities). Roughly half (1.7 million) routinely shop at the commissary. DeCA is working to increase patronage by making stores more similar to commercial grocery stores, reducing costs of staples like milk, bread, meat and produce, expanding access to prepared foods, and increasing Click2Go and delivery capabilities in CONUS locations.

Mr. Hall also reported on the DeCA workforce, made up of 11,235 U.S. civilians with 30% of those being military spouses. He presented benefits of working for DeCA, including leave without pay for PCS for six months and a favorable work-life balance. DeCA also offers a summer hire program for part-time work.

Please reach out to Militaryspouse.employment@deca.mil for more information.

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Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts

Following the DeCA brief, attendees received an update on Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts for Service members from Megumi Murakami, executive director for flexible spending accounts at the Department of Defense Office of Personnel and Readiness.

Ms. Murakami provided an overview of the DCFSA, which is available to active-duty service members and Active Guard Reserve members on Title 10 orders, who can contribute as much as \$5,000 a year from their paychecks, on a pre-tax basis, to pay for child and dependent care expenses.

She presented several components of a newly-released DCFSA PCS Toolkit, as PCS is a qualifying life event (QLE) to enroll or change the amount of the contribution (*See senior spouse landing page for PCS toolkit PDFs*):

DCFSA Claims 101

- DCFSA Fact Sheet for MilSpouses
- 10 Ways to Use Your DCFSA

Ms. Murakami underscored that any unused funds will not roll over to the next year. The DCFSA plan year mirrors the tax year, Jan. 1 through Dec. 31. After the plan year ends on Dec. 31, enrollees in a DCFSA have until March 15 of the following year to incur eligible expenses. Service members can lower their taxable income by the amount they contributed to their account upon enrollment/QLE, regardless of whether they have unused funds.

How you can help

As trusted leaders in the military community, you — senior spouses — are uniquely positioned to share these and other important military spouse-related resources with your networks. Do you know someone who can benefit from MC&FP resources? Please guide them to MilitaryOneSource.mil for resources such as our [Office of Financial Readiness](#) and [DCFSA resources on Military OneSource](#).

Help us reach and educate spouses and military leadership by sharing the resources discussed in the webinar on social media platforms. **Download** the [My Military OneSource app](#) and **subscribe** to our SECO and Military OneSource [eNewsletters](#).

Again, here is the landing page on Military OneSource just for [the Senior Spouse Roundtable updates](#). You'll find links to all of the resources discussed in the webinar, summaries from each session and other spouse resources you can share with your key spouse groups and installation spouses.

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Links discussed by Mrs. Barron

- **Senior Spouse Landing Page:**
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/senior-spouse-quarterly-meeting/>

Links discussed by Mr. Hall:

- **Taking Care of Our People fact sheets:** <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/personal-finance/taking-care-of-people/>
- **Commissary shopping website:** <https://shop.commissaries.com/>
- **Commissary Corporate website:** <https://corp.commissaries.com/stronger-together>

Links discussed by Ms. Murakami

- **DoD Office of Financial Readiness landing page:** <https://finred.usalearning.gov/DCFSA>
- **Military OneSource Benefits page:**
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/dependent-fsa/>
- **FSAFEDS Uniformed Services landing page:**
<https://www.fsafeds.com/explore/usmdcfsa>