



The following established style guidelines reflect the long-standing practices of developers and editors of content for the Defense-State Liaison Office program area. They are consistent with the rules and guidance outlined in The Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

## Content Tips

- Use the term “family member” instead of “dependent” unless the usage is in conjunction with a formal description of military benefits. In those cases of the Best Practices and Discussion Points content, use the term dependent.
- Use a hyphen when referring to the Defense-State Liaison Office.
- Make “service member” and “service members” two words, except when referencing the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.
- Use a hyphen when referring to the Defense-State Liaison Office as opposed to an en dash or em dash. For example, it is incorrect to write “Defense—State Liaison Office.”
- Use bulleted formatting for clarity when appropriate.
- Be sure to left justify all state code quotations for DSLO Best Practice documents.

## Things to Avoid

- Avoid telling people what they should/need to/must/ought to/can’t/won’t do.
- Don’t use the term “lobby/lobbying” or imply lobbying.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
CONUS	continental United States
DODI	Department of Defense Instruction
DSLO	Defense-State Liaison Office
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
FVAP	Federal Voting Assistance Program

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Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
IEP	individualized education plan
IFSP	individualized family service plan
MSPS	Military State Policy Source
SCRA	Servicemembers Civil Relief Act
SECO	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities

## Preferred Terms

### Acceptable

Army Community Service (instead of Army Community Services)

augment (instead of adding to)

can, may or might (instead of will or are)

career (instead of job)

child care (instead of day care)

child, children (instead of kids)

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## Acceptable

drafting bills (instead of shepherding bills)

eligible surviving family members (instead of gold star eligibility)

eliminating barriers (instead of improves quality of life)

knowledge (instead of expertise)

military life (instead of military lifestyle)

military service departments (instead of service branches)

often or generally (instead of always)

partner, spouse (instead of husband, wife)

provided at no cost for service members and their families (instead of free)



## Acceptable

Purple Star Schools Program (instead of Purple Star School Program)

some or many (instead of most or all)

tend to (instead of usually)

works with policymakers (instead of partners with policymakers; helps policymakers)

## Definitions

Term	Definition
absent uniformed services voter	This is a member of a uniformed service on active duty who, by reason of such active duty, is absent from the place of residence where the member is otherwise qualified to vote; or a spouse/dependent of a service member who, by reason of the active duty or service of the member, is absent from the place of residence where the spouse/dependent is otherwise qualified to vote.
best practice/state policy approach	This is a policy used by states that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means and is used as a benchmark.
child care accreditation	This is an evaluation and certification from a nationally recognized organization that the child care facility demonstrates a higher level of quality

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	than is required by licensing based on program standards.
child care fee assistance	This is financial aid for eligible families (typically moderate- or low-income families) through vouchers or contracted slots with service providers to help offset the cost of child care.
comprehensive background checks for child care employees	These screenings consist of fingerprint identification of a prospective child care employee's history to include a review of criminal history, a child abuse registry check and a sex offender registry check, to ensure the safety of the children under the care of the facility.
Defense-State Liaison Office	This Defense Department program office works with state leaders across the country who are concerned about the welfare of active-duty, Guard and reserve service members and their families living in their state. The office seeks to educate and work with state leaders on key quality of life issues. Liaisons are knowledgeable about military issues as well as the policymaking process.
Federal Voting Assistance Program	This federal program provides U.S. citizens worldwide a broad range of nonpartisan information and assistance to facilitate their participation in the democratic process.
licensing law implementation	The vast majority of states have enacted laws to accommodate license portability for military spouses; however, not all boards have implemented these new rules. DSLO is working with policymakers and regulators to ensure the laws are implemented.

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Term	Definition
licensure	Licensure is a mandatory credentialing process established by a government entity, usually at the state level, which makes it illegal for an individual to practice the profession without a license.
Medicaid waivers-based services	These services can assist military families with special needs to obtain Medicaid home and community-based services waivers at the time the sponsor retires/separates from military service.
memorandum of understanding	A memorandum of understanding is a formal document between multiple parties describing agreed-upon terms that typically set forth the basic principles and guidelines under which the parties will work together to accomplish their goals.
Military Student Identifier	Required by the Every Student Succeeds Act, this additional data field in student information systems allows educational institutions to recognize where military-connected students attend school; their academic performance in reading, math and science; graduation rates; and how they perform over time.
military spouse teacher certification	Military spouse teacher certification is a solution to an issue that includes the adoption of flexible credentialing procedures for spouses so that kindergarten through 12th grade teachers can become certified efficiently.
Military State Policy Source, <a href="http://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil">statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil</a>	The MSPS website is part of the Defense Department's initiative to identify and address the most pressing needs of service members and military families affected by state policies. The site is aimed at state policymakers and their staffs.

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overseas voter	This is an absent uniformed services voter who, by reason of active duty or service, is absent from the United States on the date of the election involved; a person who resides outside of the U.S. and is qualified to vote in the last place in which the person was domiciled before leaving the U.S.; or a person who resides outside of the U.S. and (but for such residence) would be qualified to vote in the last place in which the person was domiciled before leaving the U.S.
predatory lending	This is the practice of loaning money to consumers using unfair, deceptive or fraudulent practices by some lenders during the loan origination process. Predatory lending generally includes loans with excessive cost (high interest rates, unreasonable fees, etc.), equity stripping, failure to report borrower credit information, steering to higher- cost mortgages and credit insurance products that are financed upfront.
pro bono legal representation	This is the establishment of programs to connect service members and families with pro bono legal representation.
regional liaisons	These liaisons provide background information to state leaders and policymakers on key issues that remove barriers, smooth transitions and enhance quality of life for military families. They help write draft legislation and find constituents to testify at hearings. Liaisons do not enact bills.
state employment protections	Protecting employment for Guard members who mobilize in a state other than the one where they work.

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State Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and consumer protection	State-level legal and consumer protections covering state mobilizations and establishing protections for service members while on active duty.
transcript	This is an official report supplied by an educational institution on the permanent academic record of an individual student. A transcript typically includes a listing of subjects studied/courses taken, grades received, all honors received and degrees conferred to a student.
unemployment compensation	Insurance benefits from a program funded by employers to workers who involuntarily become unemployed through no fault of their own as determined by state law. Payments continue for a limited period or until the unemployed worker finds new employment.
Veterans Treatment Court	This is a hybrid drug and mental health court for military veterans that combines rigorous treatment and accountability for veterans facing incarceration.

## Current State Policy Priorities of Definitions

Term	Definition
Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting	<p>2025 State Policy Priority:</p> <p>Federal law requires the Defense Department to request state reports regarding instances of child abuse and neglect involving military family members. States can assist military family advocacy programs in providing needed support by requiring child protective services to report cases to the military at the onset of their investigations.</p>



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Term	Definition
Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction	2025 State Policy Priority: Military installations subject to exclusive federal jurisdiction often handle juvenile offenses through the federal court system. Adopting policies that allow for concurrent jurisdiction can open the door to state resources and juvenile courts, offering better solutions, including more rehabilitative approaches, tailored to address crimes and misdemeanors of juvenile offenders.
Defining Armed Forces in State Policy	2025 State Policy Priority: States can minimize disruptions in state benefits and services, for eligible service members and dependents, by clearly defining “armed forces” in state policy and adopting the most current definition of “armed forces,” which includes the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard.
Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities	2025 State Policy Priority: Military spouses continue to report occupational licensure as a barrier to employment as they move across state lines. Approving occupational licensure compacts, improving application processes and implementing the Military Spouse Licensing Relief Act are steps states can take to help military spouses maintain professional and financial stability.
Access to Quality Child Care	2025 State Policy Priority: In many cases, family child care providers certified by the military must also be licensed or registered by the state, even when only caring for eligible Defense Department-affiliated children. By recognizing military family DOD child care certification, in lieu of

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	requiring state licensing, states can improve access to family child care for military families. States can also participate in the military child care fee assistance program, Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS.
Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils	2025 State Policy Priority: States may better serve the unique demographic of military families by including military community members in state-level boards and councils. States can ensure that military quality of life and operational priorities are considered across pertinent policy areas by establishing a statewide military affairs commission or specifying membership of military community representatives on existing public advisory bodies.
Open Enrollment Flexibility	2025 State Policy Priority: States can improve military families' access to existing district, interdistrict and intradistrict transfer programs by modifying state education open enrollment policies.
State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence	2025 State Policy Priority: Interpersonal violence is when harmful behavior, including various forms of abuse, asserts power or control over another person. States can enhance statutes relating to domestic violence, sexual assault and filing procedures for protection orders to assist victims of military interpersonal violence.
State Support of Military Families With Special Education Needs	2025 State Policy Priority: Highly mobile children, including military children, are more likely to experience recurring educational



Term	Definition
	disruptions and challenges, particularly those who need access to special education and related services. States can assist military families by ensuring timely establishment of special education services upon relocation and reducing burdens associated with due process proceedings.
Occupational Licensure Interstate Compacts	2025 State Policy Priority:  Licensure compacts create seamless licensure portability for all members of a profession, including military spouses and service members. Compacts are state-to-state agreements that establish uniform standards to multistate practice while preserving a state's practice act and initial licensure process. By adopting licensure compacts, states can improve military spouse employment and military family financial readiness.
Remote Driver's License and Vehicle Registration Renewal	2025 State Policy Priority:  States can support service members and their families by allowing them to remotely renew driver's licenses and vehicle registrations when service members are assigned out of state.

## Official Resources

### Defense Department policy

- [DD Form 2652, "Application for Department of Defense Child Care Fees," December 2023](#)
- [DODI 1000.04 "Federal Voting Assistance Program \(FVAP\)," Nov. 12, 2019](#)
- [DODI 1400.25, Volume 850, "DOD Civilian Personnel Management System: Unemployment Compensation \(UC\)," July 7, 2017](#)
- [DODI 6060.02, "Child Development Programs \(CDPs\)," Aug. 5, 2014, Incorporating Change 2, Sept. 1, 2020](#)

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- [DOD Manual 1402.05, "Background Checks on Individuals in Department of Defense Child Development and Youth Programs," Jan. 24, 2017](#)
- ["Reduction in DOD Reporting Requirements"](#)

## Legislation or regulations

- [Military State Policy Source, "Access to Quality Child Care"](#)
- [MSPS, "Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting"](#)
- [MSPS, "Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction"](#)
- [MSPS, "Defining Armed Forces in State Policy"](#)
- [MSPS, "Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils"](#)
- [MSPS, "Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities"](#)
- [MSPS, "Open Enrollment Flexibility"](#)
- [MSPS, "Remote Driver's License and Vehicle Registration Renewal"](#)
- [MSPS, "State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence"](#)
- [MSPS, "State Support for Military Families With Special Education Needs"](#)

## Military OneSource websites

- [Article on "504 Plan Versus IEP Overview"](#)
- [MillLife Guide on "Changing Schools"](#)
- [Article on "An Overview of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act"](#)
- [MillLife Guide on "Employment"](#)
- [Article on "Medicaid Waivers for Military Families"](#)
- [Benefit page on "Legal Assistance for Service Members and Families"](#)
- [Article on "About the Financial Management Awareness Program"](#)
- [Article on "School Options Available to Military Children"](#)
- [Article on "Servicemembers Civil Relief Act"](#)
- [Article on "Special Education: Impact Aid and School Liaisons"](#)
- [Article on "Your Vote Always Counts, So Be a Responsible Voter"](#)
- [MillLife Guide on "Military Basics for Family and Friends"](#)
- [Benefit page on "Transferring Your Professional License"](#)
- [Podcast episode on "DSLO Occupational Licensure Compacts"](#)