



## Key Message

Many states do not adequately recognize service members and their families as a separate and unique demographic. By recognizing the military community as a demographic, states can leverage expertise on military family needs, priorities and available resources. States can appoint those connected to the military to serve on state councils and to develop plans and other documents related to military affairs, nutrition and food security, economic workforce development, early childhood education, child care, suicide prevention and mental health.

## Analysis

State boards and councils can be established by executive order of the governor or by state law. These boards and councils represent installations and their military communities. States have enacted changes to the composition of their boards and councils, including military demographic consideration, to ensure that installation mission readiness and family readiness concerns are considered.

Relevant boards and councils should consider military-connected demographics when making appointments. Candidates chosen to serve as military representatives could be professionals in the board or council's area of focus who work for the National Guard; ex-officio who are serving military members; recognized authorities in the military community; or individuals with applicable life experiences, such as military spouses.

Areas where military-connected representation and the consideration of the military as a separate demographic may be beneficial include:

- Military affairs
- Economic and workforce development
- Mental health and suicide prevention
- Child care and early childhood education
- Food security and nutrition

Some examples of how states may meet this policy priority:

- Including dedicated military-connected representation on a statewide defense-focused board that serves as a resource for state policymakers on quality of life issues
- Including a dedicated seat for military-connected representation on applicable issue-specific state boards and councils
- Allocating existing resources and/or staff as a military family liaison or advisor to relevant boards and councils as well as to policymakers (States and state agencies may designate a staff member who has military cultural competence as a liaison or advisor.)



## Best Practices

1. **Include dedicated military-connected representation on a statewide defense-focused board that serves as a resource for state policymakers on quality of life issues.**

**EXAMPLES: Military Affairs (multiple policy areas)**

**Nebraska Revised Statute, Chapter 55, Section 601**

<https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=55-601>

“Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs; created; members; terms; vacancy.

(1) The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs is created. The commission shall consist of the following voting members:

- (a) The Director of Economic Development;
- (b) The Adjutant General or his or her designee;
- (c) The Director of Veterans' Affairs; and
- (d) Three residents of the State of Nebraska, one from each congressional district. At least one of the three residents shall have current or prior military experience and at least one shall have a background in business.

(2) The commission shall have the following nonvoting, ex officio members:

- (a) The veterans' program coordinator of the Department of Labor;
- (b) The chair of the State Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve;
- (c) The commander of the 55th Wing of the Air Combat Command or his or her designee;
- (d) The commander of the United States Strategic Command or his or her designee; and
- (e) The commander of the 557th Weather Wing of the United States Air Force or his or her designee. [...]"

**Nebraska Revised Statute, Chapter 55, Section 602**

<https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=55-602>

**“Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs; powers and duties.**

[...] Additionally, the commission shall:

- (1) Address matters of military significance to Nebraska;
- (2) Maintain a cooperative and constructive relationship between state agencies and the military and veteran entities in Nebraska as necessary to ensure coordination and implementation of unified and comprehensive statewide strategies involved with, or affected by, the military; [...]
- (5) Promote and optimize state and United States Department of Defense initiatives that will improve the military value of the Nebraska National Guard, active and reserve military force structure and installations, and the quality of life for military personnel residing in Nebraska; [...]
- (10) Identify and support ways to provide sound infrastructure, adequate housing, education, and transition support into Nebraska's workforce for military members and their families, retired military personnel, and veterans."

**Nebraska Revised Statute, Chapter 55, Section 605**

<https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=55-605>

**“Military affairs liaison; duties.**

(1) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall hire a military affairs liaison for the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs [...] The liaison shall have military experience [...]"

**Utah Code, Title 36, Chapter 28, Section 102**

<https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title36/Chapter28/36-28-S102.html>

“Veterans and Military Affairs Commission [...]

(1) There is created the Veterans and Military Affairs Commission.

(2) The commission membership is composed of 18 permanent members, but may not exceed 23 members, and is as follows:

(a) five legislative members to be appointed as follows:

(i) three members from the House of Representatives, whom the speaker of the House of Representatives appoints, no more than two of whom may be from the same political party; and

(ii) two members from the Senate, whom the president of the Senate appoints, no more than one of whom may be from the same political party;

(b) the executive director of the Department of Veterans and Military Affairs or the director's designee;

(c) the chair of the Utah Veterans Advisory Council;

(d) the executive director of the Department of Workforce Services or the director's designee;

(e) the executive director of the Department of Health and Human Services or the director's designee;

(f) the adjutant general of the Utah National Guard or the adjutant general's designee;

(g) the Guard and Reserve Transition Assistance Advisor;

(h) a designee of the Utah Board of Higher Education, whom the commissioner of higher education selects, under the direction of the board;

(i) three representatives of veteran service organizations whom the Veterans Advisory Council recommends and the commission confirms;

(j) one member of the Executive Committee of the Utah Defense Alliance;

(k) one military affairs representative from a chamber of commerce member, the Utah State Chamber of Commerce appoints; and

(l) a representative from the Veterans Health Administration.”

**Utah Code, Title 36, Chapter 28, Section 103**

<https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title36/Chapter28/36-28-S103.html>

“The commission shall:

(1) comply with the rules of legislative interim committees;

(2) study and make recommendations to the Legislature on the following issues as they impact active duty servicemembers, veterans, and their dependents:

(a) reintegration from military to civilian status;

(b) employment;



- (c) finances;
  - (d) education;
  - (e) health and mental health, including suicide prevention;
  - (f) military affairs, including the impact of military bases; and
  - (g) coordination of state and local government resources to assist active duty servicemembers, veterans, and their dependents; and
- (3) consider the unique role of the Utah National Guard and its servicemembers in regard to the issues in Subsection (2)."

## 2. Include members of the military community on issue-specific state boards and councils.

### EXAMPLE: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

#### New Jersey Assembly No. 2743 (2024)

[https://pub.njleg.gov/Bills/2024/A3000/2743\\_11.HTM](https://pub.njleg.gov/Bills/2024/A3000/2743_11.HTM)

"3. The Veterans Suicide Prevention Commission shall consist of the following members:

- a. (1) The Adjutant General, or a designee, who shall serve ex-officio; and
- (2) The Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, or a designee, who shall serve ex-officio.
- b. The Adjutant General shall appoint:
  - (1) a representative from Veterans Haven;
  - (2) a Veterans Service Officer; and
  - (3) a veteran.
- c. The Governor shall appoint four persons as follows:
  - (1) one person upon the recommendation of the President of the Senate who shall have experience in treating veterans and service members with brain injuries;
  - (2) one person upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader of the Senate who shall have experience in providing mental health counseling to veterans and service members;
  - (3) one person upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the General Assembly who shall be a representative of a Veterans Diversion Court; and
  - (4) one person upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader of the General Assembly who shall have experience as a community faith-based spiritual leader who has experience with working with service members, veterans, and their families.
- d. The Governor shall appoint four persons as follows:
  - (1) one person with experience in providing substance abuse services to service members, veterans and their families;
  - (2) one person with experience in employment and support networks for service members and veterans;
  - (3) one female spouse or partner of a service member; and
  - (4) one male spouse or partner of a service member."

### EXAMPLE: Workforce Development

#### Washington House Bill 1009 (2023), Chapter 165, Section 5

<https://legiscan.com/WA/bill/HB1009/2023>



"NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 18.340 RCW to read as follows:

- (1) Each authority must identify a contact or coordinator within the authority to assist military spouse applicants and licensees.
- (2) Each authority must provide training to each board or commission member on the culture of military spouses, the military spouse experience, and issues related to military spouse career paths. Board or commission members appointed on or before October 1, 2023, must complete the training by January 1, 2024. Board or commission members appointed after October 1, 2023, must complete the training within 90 days after appointment. The department of veterans affairs shall create an internet-based training that may be used by 1 each authority to satisfy this requirement.
- (3) Each authority is encouraged to:
  - (a) Appoint a military spouse to serve on its licensing board or commission;
  - (b) Conduct a review of the authority's licensing application process for military spouses and identify barriers to military spouse employment; and
  - (c) Review licensing fees and related expenses and identify possible ways to reduce costs for military spouses."

### 3. Allocate existing resources and/or staff as a military family liaison or advisor to relevant boards and councils, and to policymakers.

**EXAMPLE: Workforce Development; Child Care**

**Code of Virginia, Title 2.2, Subtitle 1, Part C, Chapter 20**

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/2.2-2002.2/>

"§ 2.2-2002.2. Military Spouse Liaison; position created; duties; report.

- A. There is created in the Department of Veterans Services the position of Military Spouse Liaison to conduct outreach and advocate on behalf of military spouses in the Commonwealth.
- B. The Military Spouse Liaison shall:
  1. Provide assistance and information to military spouses seeking professional licenses and credentials or other employment in the Commonwealth;
  2. Coordinate research on issues facing military spouses and create informational materials to assist military spouses and their families;
  3. Examine barriers and provide recommendations to assist military spouses in accessing high-quality child care and developing resources in coordination with military installations and the Department of Education to increase access to high-quality child care for military families;
  4. Develop, in coordination with the Virginia Employment Commission and employers, a common form for military spouses to complete, highlighting specific skills, education, and training to help military spouses quickly find meaningful employment in relevant economic sectors; and
  5. Perform any other duties or responsibilities assigned by the Commissioner."