



Key Message

States can ensure that family leave laws include provisions for military-specific needs such as activations, training and transitions. This enables readiness by reducing family stress during critical mission periods.

Discussion Points

1. Military families face unique circumstances that civilian leave laws do not address, such as deployment preparations, unexpected homecomings, predeployment briefings and wounded warrior care. When military spouses cannot take time off for these critical events, service members must choose between family stability and mission focus, directly undermining operational effectiveness.
2. Family leave programs cover basic family needs, but lack military-specific provisions – creating gaps when families need support during deployments, training cycles or emergency returns. Military exigency clauses in state family leave laws fill these operational gaps that only affect military families.
3. States with comprehensive family leave programs can include military exigency provisions beyond the federal Family and Medical Leave Act that cover deployment preparation, child care arrangements, legal document completion and reintegration support. This approach recognizes that military service creates distinct family challenges requiring targeted solutions.
4. When military spouses can address deployment logistics without losing income or job security, service members deploy with confidence that their families are prepared and supported. This eliminates distractions that can compromise mission safety and unit effectiveness in high-stakes environments.
5. Both mandatory state programs and voluntary private insurance systems can incorporate military exigency language, ensuring coverage regardless of a state's approach to family leave. This flexibility allows states to support military families within their existing policy frameworks.



As of 2025, twenty-three states have enacted state family leave laws that supplement the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, but only five include military-specific provisions. This creates inconsistent support for military families based solely on duty location, forcing service members to factor family leave availability into career decisions rather than focusing on operational requirements and military effectiveness.