

MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

2019 Summary Report on Military Spouse Listening Sessions Held in Washington State



Six Military Spouse Listening Sessions were co-hosted by installation commands and the leaders of Washington state agencies and the WA State Military Transition & Readiness Council, to acquire feedback and input from spouses on challenges and solutions to military spouse employment. Military spouses are critical to readiness and retention and lack of support for military spouse careers creates national security and economic risks. Spouses face significant career disruptions, endure chronic unemployment and underemployment resulting from permanent changes of station 'PCS' moves.

COMMUNITY ISSUES & RECOMMENDATIONS



Employer Relationships

- Employers are concerned about short-term employment
- Employers are concerned about disrupted work histories, gaps in employment

A JBLM spouse shared that a story from a prior post in which, despite her being highly overqualified, a store manager turned her away, sharing "we just lost two military spouses; we've already contributed."

- Convene Business Roundtables
- Engage Non-Profit Partners to Develop Training, Resource Materials and Certification Programs on benefits and best practices for hiring military spouses
- Work with employers to create flexible work and portable career opportunities
- Expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit 'WOTC' to include Military Spouses
- Add Military Spouses as a Protected Class Under Non-Discrimination Statutes



Job Search Support

- Awareness of WorkSource & Employment Services
- Not Being Included into Military Employment Services

Spouses were surprised to hear about the job search support and services offered on-base and in the community. Service members aren't sharing the information!

- Improve communications to spouses through social media, marketing, and base outreach.
- Increase and enhance military spouse specific career events.
- Require or incentivize service members to bring spouses to orientation.
- Federal funding programs serving veterans could be expanded to include military spouses.

STATISTICS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

24%

UNEMPLOYMENT ¹
RATE AMONG
ACTIVE DUTY
SPOUSES.

43%

REPORT SPOUSES' ²
CAREER IS A
SIGNIFICANT
FACTOR IN
CONTINUING
MILITARY SERVICE

26%

LESS EARNED THAN ³
NON-MILITARY
SPOUSES ON
AVERAGE

56%

MILITARY SPOUSES ⁴
REPORT BEING
UNDEREMPLOYED



Credential Portability

- Duplicative Documentation, testing and review processes required when moving
- More complex credentialing & excessive expenses required in some states vs others

As a consequence of not having a second income, a Naval Air Station Whidbey Island military couple have indefinitely put off having children and the Service Member is considering leaving the service for lack of Spousal employment opportunities.

- Improve marketing of support services for military spouses.
- Provide clearer and more consistent website and call center information for spouses.
- Provide 'concierge' navigator services to military spouses.
- Automatically accept licenses, certificates, and other credentials offered by other states if the other state meets nationally accepted professional credential standards



Childcare

- Awareness of WorkSource & Employment Services
- Not Being Included into Military Employment Services

"Childcare here is desolate...I want my career...and I have a substantial resume," she says. However, lack of accessible childcare when and where she needs it severely limits the opportunities she can pursue."

- Increase the availability of childcare before and after traditional work and school schedules.
- Increase the availability of drop-in childcare.
- Increase Federal funding for military family childcare and tax credits for spouses.
- Provide a separate employer childcare tax credit.
- Develop strategies for increasing the number of available childcare slots

A WAY FORWARD

"Recognizing and honoring the service of military spouses contributes to national security, prosperity, and integrity. We can achieve these ends by ensuring that every military spouse who wants a career has the opportunity to experience the dignity of work."

- Employment Security Department Commissioner, Suzi LeVine

"By first listening and now taking action, we aspire to make Washington State the place where all military spouses feel supported, empowered, and respected and where all employers understand the incredible value those military spouses can bring to their organizations!"

- WA Dept of Veterans Affairs Director, Alfie Alvarado-Ramos