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Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 3:51:18 PM
Last Modified: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 5:28:25 PM
Time Spent: 01:37:07
IP Address: 198.238.119.211

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Q1 Contact Information for Nomination

Name of Contact	Mari McGill
Full Name of State Agency	Washington State Employment Security Department
Email Address	mmcgill@esd.wa.gov
Name of Initiative the state (and/or partnership) is being nominated for:	ESD/DVA Military Spouse Listening Sessions and Readout

Q2 1. Provide a brief description of the innovative services, innovative service delivery, or efforts of national impact you have chosen as your primary focus for the nomination. Response Word Limit: 150

Military spouses endure frequent career disruptions due to regularly mandated moves, known as permanent changes of station (PCS). The resulting chronic unemployment and underemployment is an affront to the dignity of military families, creates a national security risk by impacting military recruitment and retention, and generates economic distress on communities who must provide support for low-income military families. In response, the Employment Security Department (ESD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) have worked with the state military installations and other partners to expand and improve military spouse employment services. Washington state efforts have been four-pronged, including: (1) co-locating and coordinating installation and state spouse employment programs; (2) coordinating warm handoffs of PCSing spouses with Military OneSource and other national American Job Centers (AJCs); (3) signing a comprehensive executive order on military family support; and (4) conducting a military spouse listening tour.

2020 NASWA State Innovation Award Nomination -
Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development

Q3 2. Provide a statement of results, accomplishments, impacts and any other appropriate information that demonstrates why the nominee's efforts described in question #1 were an exceptional contribution. Response Word Limit: 200

State / Department of Defense (DOD) services coordination: Joint Base Lewis-McChord's (JBLM) DOD spouse employment program is now housed at the on-base AJC, and ESD has an onsite spouse specialist. Two local workforce boards also have onsite staff trained to provide spouse services, and coordinate fellowship programs with nonprofit partners. Similarly, other base-adjacent AJCs coordinate spouse services with DOD family readiness programs.

Upstream partnerships: ESD Commissioner Suzi LeVine engaged DOD's Military OneSource (MOS), a worldwide military family program, to develop a warm handoff system to connect PCSing spouses with employment resources in other base employment centers prior to arrival. The partnership has been expanded to include warm handoffs with other base-adjacent AJCs across the nation.

Executive Order 19-01 (attached) is a comprehensive directive that expands veteran employment resources to military spouses, including hiring campaigns, credentialing, spouse-owned businesses, data-sharing and affinity groups. The EO launch in May 2019 was accompanied with a Hire a Military Spouse Month proclamation issued by Gov. Jay Inslee.

Military spouse listening sessions were held during summer 2019 at Washington's six major military installations. The ESD commissioner and WDVA director talked with military spouses, advocates and regional leaders about employment challenges and solutions. A report (attached) was generated and forwarded to state and federal leaders and to elected officials for further action.

Q4 3. Provide a brief description of the nominee's significant contributions in any one of the other two areas listed under "criteria" that you did not focus on above. Response Word Limit: 200

Washington state's military spouse initiative has created nationwide attention and impact.

Along with Washington, 10 other NASWA Veteran Committee member states are participating in the Military OneSource partnership to provide warm handoffs for military families inbound to 34 military bases. The long-term goal is for nationwide expansion. Nationwide base-adjacent AJC referrals will make the entire network more robust.

Washington state is collaborating with local and national employers to support the U.S. Chambers of Commerce's Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone (MSEEZ) initiative, a growing partnership currently in 10 states that focuses on military spouse employment best practices. Two local zones have been created. Washington was the first to create a statewide zone.

Military spouse listening sessions were attended by federal elected officials and staff, and the report and legislative recommendations (attached) have been shared. Sen. Murray, Rep. Smith and others have expressed interest in sponsoring military spouse employment legislation based on the recommendations.

Last, the data collected has influenced national strategic agendas. This includes the NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee, which includes military spouse employment in its 2020 strategic focus in collaboration with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs.

Q5 4. Provide samples of work including creative materials, videos, graphics, documents, plans, etc. regarding the efforts and results you outlined in questions #1 and #2. File size limit is 16 MB. Only PDF, DOC, DOCX, PNG, JPG, JPEG, GIF files are supported.

Sample 1 - Website.docx (14.4KB)

Q6 Sample of Work #2 File size limit is 16 MB.

MilSpouse_ListeningSessions_SummaryReport.pdf (1MB)

2020 NASWA State Innovation Award Nomination - **Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development**

Q7 Sample of Work #3File size limit is 16 MB.

MilSpouse_LegislativeRecommendations.pdf (539KB)

Q8 Sample of Work #4File size limit is 16 MB.

Military Spouses Infographic.pdf (552.1KB)

Q9 Sample of Work #5File size limit is 16 MB.

Executive Order 19-01.pdf (2MB)

Q10 Please upload a statement of approval from the Agency Administrator

NASWA Award Nomination Surveys - Pinnacle .pdf (71.8KB)

JAY R. INSLEE
Governor

SUZAN G. LEVINE
Commissioner



STATE OF WASHINGTON
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

PO Box 9046 • Olympia WA 98507-9046

January 7, 2020

National Association of State Workforce Agencies
Attn: 2020 Winter Workforce Innovation Awards Committee
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20001

Re: 2020 Winter Workforce Innovation Awards – Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development

Dear Awards Committee:

I am pleased to submit the Washington State Employment Security Department's (ESD) nomination for the Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development honoring ESD and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) initiative to improve military spouse employment opportunities.

By this letter, I confirm my statement of approval as Commissioner and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Suzan G. LeVine
Commissioner

JAY INSLEE
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 40002 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0002 • (360) 902-4111 • www.governor.wa.gov

EXECUTIVE ORDER 19-01

VETERAN AND MILITARY FAMILY TRANSITION AND READINESS SUPPORT

PREAMBLE

Veterans, military service members, and military families are essential and vibrant members of Washington's culture, economy, and workforce. Hundreds of military families come to our state each month, and many choose to call Washington home long after their service is complete. We honor their service and commitment by ensuring every veteran, transitioning service member, Reserve and National Guard member, and military spouse is able to secure a living wage job. As Governor of our great state, I have asked private and public leaders to help military families navigate these difficult transitions. I expect state agencies to lead this effort and serve as model employers.

WHEREAS, transitioning from military service to civilian life poses unique employment, education and training, and other career readiness challenges, including: (1) bridging the gap between military and civilian culture; (2) navigating the impacts of real, potential or perceived physical and mental disabilities; (3) translating military experience into civilian job skills, academic credit, and professional credentials; and (4) working around employers', colleges', and credentialing organizations' lack of awareness regarding the breadth and quality of military experience; and

WHEREAS, transferring between duty stations frequently disrupts military spouse careers, education and training, credentials, and ability to jointly contribute to family income and overall family wellness; and

WHEREAS, military spouses are frequently not credited by prospective employers for paid and volunteer work experience on military installations, and penalized for employment gaps, frequent job changes resulting from military moves, and other biases when an employer learns about their military affiliation; and

WHEREAS, Washington State recognizes that military spouses include any person currently or previously married to a military service member during the service member's time of active, reserve, or national guard duty; and

WHEREAS, veterans, Reserve and National Guard members, and military spouses contribute to diversity in private and public employment; and

WHEREAS, military family wellness is essential to force readiness and resilience, including our armed forces' ability to retain skilled service members and maintain their mental and emotional strength; and

WHEREAS, rising to these challenges requires collaboration across agencies, jurisdictions, and sectors; and

WHEREAS, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 promotes collaboration between the U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies with state, local, private, and non-profit partners; and

WHEREAS, Washington State has demonstrated commitment to employment of veterans, transitioning service members, Reserve and National Guard members, and military spouses through employment campaigns such as YesVets, Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zones, the Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG), and related initiatives.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and statutes of the state of Washington do, effective immediately, hereby order and direct:

1. Washington State Military Transition and Readiness Council (WSMTRC).

The WSMTRC will coordinate and support collaboration on career assistance for veterans, transitioning service members, Reserve and National Guard members, and military families between federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses.

WSMTRC strategic priorities and direction shall be set by an executive committee chaired by The Director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), who will also provide staff support. Other executive committee members will include the Commissioner of the Employment Security Department (ESD), the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Director of the State Department of Commerce (Commerce), the Adjutant General of the Washington Military Department (WMD), the Executive Director of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Executive Director of the Workforce Education and Training Coordination Board (WETCB), and the Executive Director of the Washington State Student Achievement Council (WSAC), or their designees. My Executive Director of Legislative Affairs and Policy, or their designee, will serve as my designated representative to the Council. The DVA Director will invite leaders from military installations, other federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, veteran and military spouse organizations, and businesses to sit on the Executive Committee. The DVA Director may also appoint an Executive Committee Co-Chair, sub-committees, workgroups, and other leaders as appropriate. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) and Department of Enterprise Services (DES) will ensure that agency employment practices support and model the Council's priorities and strategic direction.

2. Data Sharing and Evaluation.

DVA will pursue and maintain data sharing agreements with ESD, the U.S. Department of Defense, and other public/private partners. The purpose of these agreements will be to evaluate the effectiveness of transition support strategies, identify veterans and their families requiring services, and ensure full access to veteran and military family benefits and services. ESD, OFM, and other executive cabinet agencies designated by the DVA Director will fully participate in and support this effort.

3. Veteran and Military Spouse Owned Businesses.

DVA, DES, ESD, and the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) will pursue and maintain partnerships with other state agencies and public/private partners to promote veteran owned businesses and military spouse owned businesses in Washington State. DES will work with DVA, OMWBE, Commerce, and other partners to promote state agency contracting with and procurement from veteran owned businesses. Activities will include reviewing procurement data, veteran owned business availability, and agency budget needs, and establishing narrowly tailored policy for procurement practices and preferences. Each executive cabinet agency shall set a procurement target for certified veteran-owned businesses based on Washington State's disparity study and gubernatorial goals, record procurement awards in WEBS, and report procurement results to DVA. DVA will publicly report results. DES, DVA, and OMWBE will establish and maintain agency reporting standards and protocols. DVA will work with DES, ESD, OMWBE, Commerce, and other partners to identify and address barriers to starting and growing military spouse owned businesses.

4. Hiring Campaigns.

ESD, DVA and Commerce shall partner to promote employment of veterans, transitioning service members, Reserve and National Guard members, and military spouses respectively. The ESD Commissioner or designee shall lead development and implementation of hiring campaigns, and partners will collaborate with other state and local organizations as appropriate.

5. Credentialing.

All executive cabinet agencies that issue professional credentials, including licenses, certifications, registrations, and permits, shall establish procedures to expedite the issuance of credentials for transitioning service members, Reserve and National Guard members, and military spouses who reside in or are relocating to Washington State. As allowed by statute, expedited procedures may include: (1) recognition of comparable military experience and credentials issued by the military and other states; (2) pursuit of interstate compacts that allow for reciprocal recognition of comparable credentials; and (3) issuance of temporary or provisional licenses.

6. Agency Veteran and Military Spouse Employment Plans.

Each executive cabinet agency shall develop annual plans to increase the employment representation of veterans and military spouses respectively. At a minimum, plans will include: (1) utilizing WorkSource job posting, candidate search, applicant matching, and other related veteran and military spouse employer services; (2) creating bridge employment opportunities such as temporary, seasonal, internship, and job shadow assignments; (3) allowing remote and flexible work arrangements; and (4) identifying and actively promoting jobs that are both relevant to veteran and military spouse skills and experience, and conducive to transition and change of duty station. Agencies will report progress and future plans as prescribed by OFM to include: (1) the number of veterans hired during the prior year; (2) the number of bridge employment opportunities created during the prior year that resulted in full-time employment for veterans and military spouses; (3) an effectiveness/impact assessment of veteran and military spouse programs, policies, and activities; and (4) the number of all anticipated hires for the current year. OFM will collaborate with DES, ESD, DVA, and other public and private partners to identify and develop resources to assist agency human resource staff and hiring managers. OFM will also collaborate with DES, ESD, and DVA to identify, develop, and pilot strategies for measuring military spouse employment in state government.

7. Equal Employment Opportunity.

Agencies shall review job postings and applicant screening and selection tools to ensure they do not exclude transferrable military and military spouse employment skills and experience. Agencies shall not eliminate Military spouses from consideration due to employment gaps, varied occupation history that resulted from military moves, or other military affiliation.

8. State Employee Resource Groups.

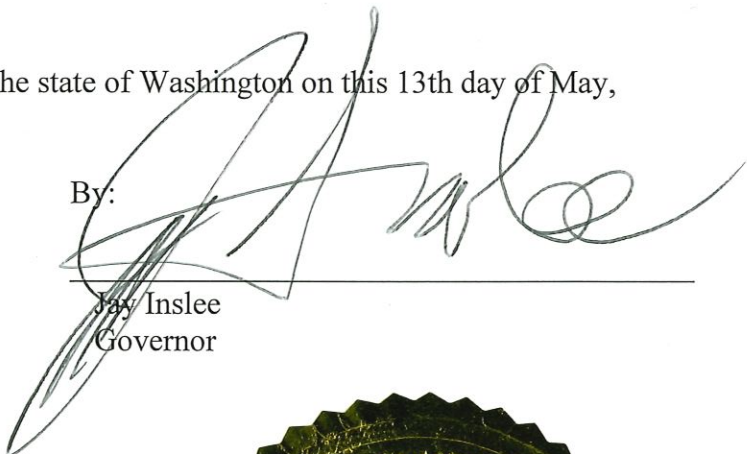
OFM will convene and support a cross-agency employee-led resource group or groups to promote recruitment, retention, and development of veterans and military spouses in state government. DVA will provide executive sponsorship for the group or groups. Executive cabinet agencies will support employee participation in the group or groups and approved initiatives. Agencies are encouraged to sponsor agency-level resource groups, and either include military spouses in their veteran groups or create separate military spouse groups.

All other elected officials, institutions of higher education, agencies, boards and commissions are invited to follow the provisions of this Executive Order.

This Order is effective immediately and shall supersede Executive Order 13-01, which is hereby rescinded.

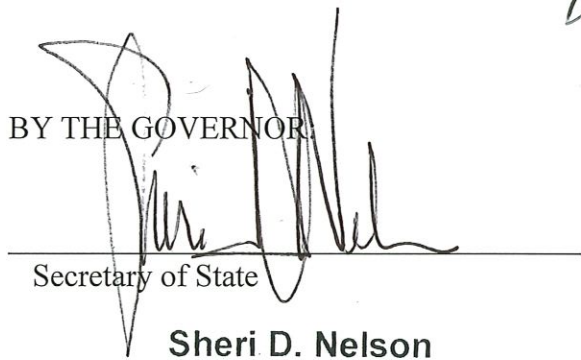
Signed and sealed with the official seal of the state of Washington on this 13th day of May, 2019, at Olympia, Washington.

By:



Jay Inslee
Governor

BY THE GOVERNOR



Secretary of State

Sheri D. Nelson
Deputy Secretary of State



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

Washington State Military Spouse Listening Tour Emerging Legislative Recommendations from Attendees

To inform actions and recommendations in response to Governor Inslee’s Executive Order 19-01, the Director of the Washington State Department of Veteran’s Affairs (WDVA), Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, and the Commissioner of the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD), Suzi LeVine, conducted a statewide listening tour with military spouses at Washington State’s six main military bases during the summer of 2019. Many ideas and recommendations that were raised by spouses and community partners are relevant to legislators.

To make the report easier for both federal and state legislators, the summary below extracts those relevant ideas and recommendations. The full report and other highlights of the tour can be found at <https://www.dva.wa.gov/militaryfamilies>. This summary does not constitute recommendations from WDVA and ESD. Rather, it amplifies ideas that came up during the sessions, and reflects stories and situations shared by spouses and service members. The teams at WDVA and ESD are available for any further questions, and can also connect you with spouses and members of the Washington State Military Transition and Readiness Council.

Key military spouse employment challenges identified during the listening sessions include employer relationships and bias, job search support, credential portability and childcare. Ideas and recommendations include:

- **EMPLOYMENT TAX CREDITS.** Expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit “WOTC” to military spouses¹.
- **EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS.** Release military spouses from employment contracts without penalty when their families receive Permanent Change of Station “PCS” orders.
- **PROTECTED CLASS.** Add military spouses as a protected class under non-discrimination statutes².
- **INSTALLATION ORIENTATIONS.** Incentivize service members to bring spouses to base orientations^{3, 4, 5}. Institutionalize incentives so that they don’t end when a supportive base commander departs.
- **FEDERAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING.** Add military spouses to Federal Jobs for Veterans State Grants “JVSG” funding⁶.
- **WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES ACT (WIOA) CATEGORY.** Call-out and prioritize military spouses as a WIOA category rather than the current classification of “dislocated worker” and “displaced homemaker,” which is both derogatory and inapplicable when a spouse has not worked at their service member’s previous posting.

- **INFORMATION SHARING.** To reduce the time finding a job in a new location, and reach spouses either prior to PCS or upon arrival at a new location, authorize more data-sharing between DOD, installations, and state workforce agencies, including:
 - Sharing private military spouse contact information with receiving installations prior to PCS.
 - Sharing military spouse demographic information with receiving installations and state veterans and workforce development agencies prior to PCS.
- **NAVIGATORS.** Expand credential and job search navigator services for military spouses⁷.
- **CREDENTIAL ACCELERATION.** Make it easier to use and obtain licenses, certifications, and other credentials after a PCS, including:
 - Promoting interstate compacts and reciprocity agreements, particularly where there are nationally accepted professional credential standards^{8, 9, 10};
 - Supporting provisional licenses and temporary practice permits that allow military spouses with a credential from another state to work while completing additional Washington State license or certificate requirements^{11, 12, 13}.
- **CHILDCARE RESOURCES.** Increase the availability of military family childcare, including:
 - Prioritize Federal funding for military family childcare¹⁴.
 - Ensure childcare availability for non-traditional hours and drop-in care.
 - Increase federal childcare tax credits for military families.
 - Offer an employer childcare tax credit.
 - Increase wages of on-base and off-base childcare workers.
 - Combine funding for childcare and housing¹⁵.
- **HOUSING ALLOWANCE.** Increase the military Basic Allowance for Housing “BAH” at installations in areas with high housing costs and/or low housing stock availability.
- **MILITARY SPOUSE DEFINITION.** While not specific to any of the above topics, spouses and support organizations also advocated for creating an expansive statutory definition of military spouse that includes any person who was previously married to a service member during their time of active duty¹⁶.

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- ¹ U.S. Congresswoman McMorris Rogers co-sponsored bi-partisan legislation (HR 2912) in May 2019.
- ² EO 19-01 directs state cabinet agencies to remove military spouse bias in state employment.
- ³ The U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Army have experimented with granting service members an additional day of leave if their spouses attend orientation and gets signed attendance certificates.
- ⁴ Attendees discussed a range of requirements tethered to spouse participation, including: (1) requiring service members to obtain signed verification that they have shared employment program information with their spouses; and (2) making moving services, Basic Allowance for Housing “BAH”, and/or other benefits contingent on sharing military spouse contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses) and participation in orientation.
- ⁵ Attendees also discussed improving overall military family PCS support so spouses can focus on attending orientation and obtaining employment.
- ⁶ Includes expanding the mandate of veteran employment representatives (Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialists) to include military spouses.
- ⁷ Both the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) offer customized credential navigator services for military spouses. The Washington State Employment Security Department has a designated military spouse navigator stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.
- ⁸ DOH participates in interstate compacts for physical therapists. A nursing compact is currently under consideration by the Washington State Legislature.
- ⁹ While OSPI does not have any formal interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements, it generally grants credit for other states’ credentials and national teaching certificates.
- ¹⁰ While the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) does not have any formal interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements, it generally accepts nationally recognized credentials.
- ¹¹ DOH offers temporary practice permits for several health care professions.
- ¹² OSPI offers expedited certificates for emergency substitute teacher and conditional teacher at a District’s request.
- ¹³ DOL offers a provisional certificate for security guards and is considering one for private investigators.
- ¹⁴ U.S. Senator Murray has proposed funding through the National Defense Authorization Act.
- ¹⁵ The Washington State Department of Commerce is exploring policy options that would combine housing and childcare strategies and funding.
- ¹⁶ EO 19-01 established an expansive definition of military spouse: “...any person currently or previously married to a military service member during the service member's time of active, reserve, or national guard duty...”

2019 MILITARY SPOUSE LISTENING SESSIONS REPORT

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Recommended Solutions -8-
Appendix -10-



"Serving Those Who Served"



Washington State Military Transition and Readiness Council
December 2019



LEADERSHIP, STAFF, AND CONTRIBUTORS



Alfie Alvarado-Ramos serves as Director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, which connects veterans and their family members to the benefits and services they earned through their military service. She is a retired Command Sergeant Major with the United States Army, a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator and the spouse of a retired Army veteran. As a civilian, Alfie continues to serve as a national leader and advocate for veterans and military families.



Suzi LeVine is the Commissioner for the Employment Security Department, Washington State's workforce agency. She is a former United States Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, former technology industry executive and, most saliently for this report, the daughter of a military spouse and a Vietnam veteran. These experiences enable Suzi to bring incredible energy, experience and compassion to her position and to the work that the agency does to make Washington state the best place in the nation to work AND to do business.

The following staff and partners contributed to hosting the listening sessions and producing this report:

Shelby Bassett, Work and Family Consultant, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

Paul Cruz, Program Manager, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

Nick Demerice, Director of Public Affairs, Washington State Employment Security Department

Kim Fallen, Employment Readiness Manager, Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Alecia Grady, Personnel and Family Readiness Director, Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Britt Feldman, Fleet and Family Support Center Director, U.S. Navy Region Northwest

Gary Lott, Communications Manager, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

Heather Miles, Transition and Relocation Manager, U.S. Coast Guard Base Seattle

Sam Mitchell, Military Bases WorkSource Administrator, Washington State Employment Security Dept.

Michael Robinson, One Stop Operator, Washington State Employment Security Department

Viviana Trappe, Work and Family Life Supervisor, Naval Station Everett

Jason Willett, Veterans Programs Program Operator, Washington State Employment Security Department

Cindy Velazquez, Executive Services Assistant, Washington State Employment Security Department

Special acknowledgment to Mark Sullivan, Planning and Strategy Advisor to the Washington State Military Transition and Readiness Council, with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs for his substantial contribution to this effort.

INTRODUCTION

"I had considered leaving the military because my wife couldn't pursue her career."

- Petty Officer Myers

There is increasing recognition across the nation that the lack of support for military spouse careers creates national security and economic risks, as well as demonstrates an unpatriotic lack of respect towards military families. Military spouses face significant career disruptions resulting from permanent change of station "PCS" moves every 18-36 months, and related support for their active duty service members. Because military families often experience multiple moves over the course of a service member's military career, spouses frequently endure chronic unemployment and underemployment. In fact, active duty spouses have a 24% unemployment rate¹. Furthermore, 56% of military spouses report being underemployed², and military spouses earn 26.8% less on average than their non-military spouse peers³.

Increased household stress negatively impacts force readiness by distracting service members from their duty and mission. For many spouses, participation in the world of work is critical to their identity, and inability to retain a job and pursue a career can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. This, combined with the need for most families to generate two incomes to survive, results in many service members choosing to leave the military rather than re-enlist. Research indicates that 43% of service members and spouses rate equal career opportunities for spouses as a significant factor in deciding whether to continue military service⁴.

Even when the service member does re-enlist, there are other negative economic impacts. Lack of spousal employment continuity commonly results in stunted career progression with subsequent lost wage potential, reduced retirement savings, and related hardships. Additionally, many military families who rely on a single military paycheck can only make ends meet by utilizing SNAP (food assistance) and other federal and state social service benefits. The net effects of these hardships not only negatively impact military spouses and families, they drain the economic vitality of the communities where military families reside by expending resources that wouldn't be necessary if military spouses could obtain living wage jobs and careers at the same rate as their non-military counterparts.

These circumstances not only impact our current national security, but also our future security as well. Given that 79-86% of new military recruits are the children and relatives of current or past service members⁵, familial satisfaction is critical to achieving recruiting objectives. At the same time, Washington State will have 1.4 million⁶ jobs to fill over the coming years, and is working hard to develop talent sources to fill that talent pipeline.

¹ Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) (2018). The 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses: Tabulation of Responses

² Blue Star Families (2018). 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey

³ Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) (2018). Military Spouses in the Labor Market

⁴ U.S. Chamber Foundation Hiring our Heroes (2017). Military Spouses in the Workplace: Understanding the Impacts of Spouse Unemployment on Military Recruitment, Retention, and Readiness

⁵ U.S. Department of Defense Joint Advertising, Market Research, and Studies (JAMRS) (2018). New Recruit Survey Wave 1 Findings (October 2012–March 2013)

⁶ Beginning with the 2017 projections cycle, ESD created a new Washington state specific alternative occupational method to the BLS separations method. The objective was to also track job openings due to workers transferring within occupations.

Military spouses have been enduring the indignity of employment challenges for decades. However, with the U.S. Department of Defense’s shift in focus from transition to retention, and with a dearth of talent to meet the labor force needs in the state, there is renewed and heightened effort and energy to tackle this longstanding issue.

In response to these challenges and opportunities, Governor Jay Inslee signed Executive Order 19-01 on May 13, 2019, which extended Washington State’s support for veterans and transitioning service members to include military families. The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs “WDVA” and Employment Security Department “ESD” subsequently collaborated with military partners to host listening sessions with military spouses at each of Washington’s six major military installations:

- Joint Base Lewis McChord – July 11, 2019
- Fairchild Air Force Base – August 29, 2019
- Coast Guard Base Seattle – September 6, 2019
- Naval Air Station Whidbey Island – September 16, 2019
- Naval Base Kitsap – September 18, 2019
- Naval Station Everett – October 7, 2019

The purpose of the listening sessions was to get feedback, input, insights, and local context from spouses on barriers and solutions to military spouse employment. All sessions were facilitated by Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, WDVA Director, and Suzi LeVine, ESD Commissioner. The session at Fairchild Air Force Base was also facilitated by Lisa Brown, Director of the Washington State Department of Commerce.

The primary participants for each session were spouses of current and former active duty service members. Attendees also included several current and former active duty service members, staff and leadership from state and military workforce development organizations, military installation leadership, leaders from local workforce and economic development organizations, and legislative and congressional staff. Additionally, elected officials attended two sessions. Attendees identified and discussed several key challenges and best practices impacting military spouse employment:

- Employer relationships and bias
- Job search support
- Credential portability
- Childcare

The following readout enumerates these key challenges and best practices, amplifies stories from specific participants, shares ideas that emerged, and identifies potential next steps for consideration.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

The following are the issues and recommended solutions raised by attendees:

KEY CHALLENGES

Employer Relationships and Bias

Julianne, a spouse at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and registered nurse, shared that she is unable to sign a nursing contract with an employer because, if she withdraws before the term of the contract is fulfilled because her family PCS's to another location, she will be subject to a hefty fine of \$2,000-\$5,000.

Ali, a spouse at Joint Base Lewis McChord, shared that, while previously stationed in Mississippi, she got to a point after being unemployed for five months where her family "couldn't afford to exist." So she asked about a job at a local food establishment whose national chain advertises as a military family friendly employer. Despite having ample experience, the store manager turned her away, saying "we just lost two military spouses, we've already contributed."

Several representatives from both Walmart and Microsoft attended the NAVSTA Everett listening session. Representatives shared that both companies actively work with military spouses to support job transfers when their families receive PCS orders.

These examples demonstrate the challenges obtaining employment when spouses arrive at new installations. Common themes raised by attendees include:

1. Employer refusal to consider spouses because of anticipated short-term employment.
2. Employer rejection of applications based on with disrupted work histories filled with short-term employment.
3. Employment contracts with financial penalties if a spouse leaves early due to a PCS.
4. Lack of employer awareness concerning military spouse skills and experience, as well as military life and culture.
5. Losing professional networks whenever a spouse leaves a community.
6. Forgoing health, retirement, or other benefits to obtain employment.
7. Consistent underemployment in part-time low-wage positions below the spouse's education and experience level.

Attendees noted that these challenges are particularly acute at installations in small rural communities where employers tend to favor local lifetime residents.

Job Search Support

Rebekah worked in the workforce development field in South Carolina. When she learned that her active duty air force spouse would PCS to Washington State, she proactively reached out to find a comparable job in the Washington workforce system. Rebekah noted that Washington State “was extremely flexible during the interview process. I was able to interview on the phone for my job while still living in South Carolina. Most jobs I applied for ahead of the move wanted me in person to do the interview which was not possible.” As a result, Rebekah was able to start her new job just a few days after.” Washington State is now one of 10 states participating in a pilot where Military OneSource will refer individuals from across the globe to WorkSource staff.

In multiple sessions, spouses were surprised to hear about the job search support and services offered on-base and in the community. Several base commanders shared that service members are not consistently passing along relevant information to their own spouses – especially when deployed. One military spouse engagement expert shared a Marine Corps initiative that dramatically increased information flow to spouses: when families did orientation events (“Links”), commanding officers gave the service members an extra day off if they brought their spouse and got a signed certificate for attending.

These examples demonstrate the issues and challenges surrounding access to effective job search support services. Common themes raised by attendees include:

1. Lack of awareness of WorkSource and installation employment services.
2. Lack of comparable funding to services for transitioning service member and veteran.
3. Being forgotten under the umbrella of veteran employment programs⁶.
4. Not wanting to be associated with the ‘unemployment office’ stigma⁷.
5. Being classified under the Workforce Opportunities and Innovations Act “WIOA” as ‘displaced home makers’⁸.
6. Failure to receive installation employment program information⁹.
7. Lack of access to spouse contact information¹⁰.

Attendees noted that these challenges are particularly acute for younger spouses who require more support. The challenges are also more difficult for families who live off base or are assigned to installations in rural communities, for whom the challenges of obtaining timely information and support are amplified.

⁶ Several attendees shared that they had attended career events marketed for both veterans and military spouses. However, when they arrived, employers and support services were focused exclusively on veterans.

⁷ Several attendees noted that they thought WorkSource services were only for low-skilled job seekers and positions.

⁸ Workforce development professionals noted that military spouses are frequently determined to be unqualified for services because they have not recently left a paid job.

⁹ Several attendees shared that spouse career information is typically provided through a service member’s chain of command. However, service members often fail to convey the information to spouses.

¹⁰ Installation spouse employment programs don’t receive spouse’s direct contact information when a military family receives PCS orders. Consequently, programs must rely on spouses to contact them when the family arrives.

Credential Portability

Blancha, a spouse at Fairchild Air Force Base, was ready to start her teaching career when her husband transitioned. Their plan was for her to provide a second income and be the family breadwinner during his transition using the GI Bill funded education she had obtained during his many deployments. However, she has not been able to find a teaching position because her out-of-state certification and endorsements were not recognized. "It's extremely heartbreaking," she says. Her husband is also affected, telling her "I'm so sorry I did this to you." Blancha emphasizes, "We're survivors. We get it done." Despite the fact that we're desperate for teachers, she has officially left the field of education. "Honestly, it's not worth it."

Tina, a spouse at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, obtained her PhD in psychology in Louisiana. However, she has not been able to practice as a psychologist since they transferred to Washington State because Washington does not recognize the specific degree and supervised work experience under which she was licensed in Ohio. As a consequence, they have decided to put off having children until both can be secure in their careers. Her husband had also considered leaving the service.

Representatives from the Washington State Dept. of Health and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction shared that both have designated staff who provide credential navigator services to veterans and military spouses. However, many military families are not aware of these services, and aren't provided additional services if they don't self-identify.

These examples demonstrate the challenges with renewing professional licenses, certifications, and other credentials when moving to a new state. Challenges in Washington State are particularly acute with health care licenses and teaching certifications. Common themes raised by attendees include enduring:

1. Duplicative documentation, testing, and review processes before being able to continue work in a profession.
2. Excessive expenses involved in re-credentialing¹¹.
3. More complex credentialing standards in Washington than in other states.
4. Failure of Washington to accept out of state education credits and supervised work experience.
5. Unclear and/or inconsistent agency credentialing requirements and information¹².

¹¹ Attendees noted significant expenses related to required additional education and supervised work experience.

¹² While attendees shared a range of challenges in Washington State, national stakeholders have noted that Washington is a leader in developing best practices. Many spouses have indicated that they were unaware of support services provided by credentialing agencies. This is particularly true of spouses who are new to the state.

Childcare

Both Evangeline at Everett Naval Station and Camelia at Joint Base Lewis McChord brought their infants to the sessions, epitomizing the challenges that spouses with children face. Both want to focus on job opportunities, but can't obtain quality child care that allows them to do so.

Julianna, at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, shared that "Child care here is desolate." Not only can she not get into on-base childcare, but there is limited availability of off-base childcare that will support different nursing shifts. "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.

Many spouses expressed concern about childcare provider wages. Attendees at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island shared that the pay for district para-educators is higher and the requirements are lower than for the on-base childcare providers. This makes it is very difficult to find qualified staff, further contributing to the dearth of support.

These examples demonstrate the impact of childcare availability on military spouse employment. Attendees noted that military spouses frequently serve as primary care providers (and often as single parents) while service members are deployed or performing other military duties. Common themes included:

1. Lack of local family childcare support when families PCS to a new installation.
2. Low childcare availability (both on-base and off-base).
3. Long childcare waitlists (many spouses shared that the waitlist timing was longer than the timeline to when they expected to PCS again).
4. High childcare costs, particularly for families with multiple children.
5. Lack of available childcare outside of traditional civilian work hours.
6. Lack of drop-in childcare to support participation in career workshops, career events, interviews, and related activities.
7. Low wages and high childcare worker qualification requirements, reducing availability.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Attendees discussed several possible programmatic, policy, and legislative options. This list is a synthesis of what was discussed. The appendices enumerate even more detailed recommendations that emerged. This summary does not represent a final determination by the State of Washington or partners regarding priorities or direction.

1. **Improve public-private partnerships**, including:

- Convene an employer roundtable to discuss military spouse employment issues and share best practices¹³.
- Enlist community partners to develop training, resource materials, and certification programs for employers on military spouse employment issues, best practices, the benefits of hiring military spouses, and military family culture¹⁴.
- Engage local childcare providers, military family services, and other community-based organizations to develop strategies for increasing the number of available childcare slots.

2. **Remove employment barriers**, including:

- Promote flexible work¹⁵ and portable career opportunities¹⁶ among employers.
- Expand employment tax credits to military spouses¹⁷.
- Release military spouses from employment contracts without penalty when their family receives PCS orders.
- Add military spouses as a protected class under non-discrimination statutes¹⁸.

3. **Improve military spouse outreach and participation**, including:

- Improve awareness of employment services before and after a PCS
- Improve credential services / navigator marketing and outreach.
- Increase and enhance military spouse career events¹⁹.
- Ensure spouse participation in orientations.

¹³ Leadership of the Washington State Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone “MSEEZ”, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber Foundation, has expressed support for sponsoring a military spouse employer roundtable.

¹⁴ The Society for Human Resource Management “SHRM” has partnered with the PsychArmor Institute and NBC Universal to provide a ‘Veterans at Work’ training and certification program, and has expressed interest in developing a similar program around military spouse employment.

¹⁵ I.e., fast ramp-up periods, remote work, flexible schedules, dual-work arrangements, etc.

¹⁶ Attendees discussed working with national employers with telephone customer service operations to develop portable career training programs. Several national employers, including Hilton, have developed model programs.

¹⁷ Congresswoman McMorris Rogers co-sponsored bi-partisan legislation (HR 2912) in May 2019.

¹⁸ Executive Order 19-01 directs state cabinet agencies to remove military spouse bias in state employment.

¹⁹ Events should include spouse coaching, navigator services, and childcare.

- 4. Enhance military spouse career support services**, including:
 - Add military spouses to federal grant funding (i.e., Jobs for Veterans State Grants “JVSG”)²⁰.
 - Call-out and prioritize military spouses as a WIOA category.
 - Expand state navigator services to military spouses²¹.
- 5. Support license and credential portability**, including:
 - Promote interstate compacts and reciprocity agreements^{22,23,24}.
 - Support provisional licenses and temporary practice permits that allow military spouses with a credential from another state to work while completing additional Washington State license or certificate requirements^{25,26,27}.
 - Appoint military spouses to licensing boards.
- 6. Increase childcare support**, including:
 - Prioritize Federal funding for military family childcare²⁸.
 - Ensure childcare availability for non-traditional hours and drop-in care.
 - Increase childcare tax credits & create employer tax credit.

Again, a detailed list of attendee recommendations is included in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

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. By first listening and now taking action, we aspire to make Washington State the place where all military spouses feel supported, empowered, and respected!

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²⁰ This would include expanding the mandate veteran employment representatives (Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialists) to include military spouses.

²¹ Both the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) offer customized navigator services for military spouses.

²² DOH participates in interstate compacts for physical therapists. A nursing compact is currently under consideration by the Washington State Legislature.

²³ While OSPI does not have any formal interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements, it generally grants credit for other states’ credentials and national teaching certificates.

²⁴ While the WA ST Department of Licensing (DOL) does not have any formal interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements, it generally accepts nationally recognized credentials.

²⁵ DOH offers temporary practice permits for several health care professions

²⁶ OSPI offers expedited certificates for emergency substitute teacher and conditional teacher at a District’s request.

²⁷ DOL offers a provisional certificate for security guards, and is considering one for private investigators.

²⁸ U.S. Senator Murray has proposed federal legislation.

Appendix: Detailed Attendee Recommended Solutions

1. Employer Relationships and Bias

PROGRAMATIC

- **BUILD AND EXPAND EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborate with employers to support military spouse employment, including: (1) convene an employer roundtable to discuss military spouse employment issues and share best practices²⁹; (2) develop additional opportunities to bring employers onto military installations for exposure to spouse employment programs³⁰; and (3) engage nation-wide employers that have existing military spouse employment programs, or have the capacity to build programs³¹.
- **BUILD AND EXPAND PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborate with professional and community organizations to support military spouse employment, including: (1) enlist community partners to develop employer training, resource materials, and certification programs^{32,33}; (2) leverage the connection between installation commanders and local chambers and elected officials to promote military spouse employment; and (3) engage business, union, apprenticeship, and military spouse groups to address military spouse employment issues³⁴.
- **EXPAND FLEXIBLE WORK OPPORTUNITIES:** Promote flexible work and portable career opportunities for military spouses, including: (1) collaborate with employers to identify jobs that support flexible and portable work³⁵; (2) collaborate with employers and other partners to sponsor military spouse training programs linked to portable jobs;

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- **ADOPT EMPLOYMENT TAX INCENTIVES:** Expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit “WOTC” to military spouses³⁶.
- **ADOPT PROTECTED CLASS STATUS:** Add military spouses as a protected class under non-discrimination statutes³⁷.
- **RELEASE FROM EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS:** Release military spouses from employment contracts without penalty when their family receives PCS orders.

²⁹ Leadership of the Washington State Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone “MSEEZ”, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber Foundation, has expressed support for sponsoring a military spouse employer roundtable.

³⁰ Including streamlining installation access protocols.

³¹Walmart representatives shared that local facilities are encouraged and have authorization to make direct appointments of military spouses who relocate from other states.

³² Topics should include military spouse employment issues, best practices, benefits of hiring military spouses, and military family culture.

³³ The Society for Human Resource Management “SHRM” has partnered with the PsychArmor Institute and NBC Universal to provide a Veterans-at-Work training and certification program, and has expressed interest in developing a similar program around military spouse employment.

³⁴ E.g., turnover costs and mandatory-length employment contracts.

³⁵ I.e., fast ramp-up periods, remote work, flexible schedules, transfers, dual-work arrangements, etc.

³⁶ Congresswoman McMorris Rogers co-sponsored bi-partisan legislation (HR 2912) in May 2019.

³⁷ Executive Order 19-01 directs state cabinet agencies to remove military spouse bias in state employment.

- **ADOPT EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES:** Implement military spouse preference programs, including: (1) create a preference for state government jobs³⁸; (2) eliminate limitations on use of preferences for federal government jobs³⁹; (3) create a preference for apprenticeship program participation⁴⁰; and (4) adopt an allowance for private sector ‘permissive preference’⁴¹.
- **ADOPT UNIFORM DEFINITION:** Create statutory definition of military spouse that other legislation can reference⁴².
- **IMPLEMENT EMPLOYER RECOGNITION:** Create an employer recognition campaign for hiring military spouses⁴³.

³⁸ Executive Order 19-01 directs executive cabinet agencies to remove military spouse employment barriers.

³⁹ Executive Order 13473 allows Federal agencies to directly appoint certain military spouses without using traditional competitive examining procedures. A spouse must use this benefit within two years of relocation, and forgoes the benefit if she or he declines a job offer after relocating to the installation.

⁴⁰ Washington State provides preferences to veterans in apprenticeship programs, but not military spouses. Other programs directed at women and women veterans may have positive impacts on military spouses.

⁴¹ RCW 73.16.110 offers liability protection to private employers who implement a hiring preference program for veterans and spouses of honorably discharged veterans who have a service connected permanent and total disability.

⁴² Executive Order 19-01 established a model definition for military spouse.

⁴³ Both Washington State’s YesVets program and the U.S Department of Labor’s Medallion program offer similar employer recognition for hiring veterans. Executive Order 19-01 provides for a similar military spouse program.

2. Job Search Support

PROGRAMATIC

- **ENHANCE MARKETING:** Improve direct outreach and communications to military spouses, including: (1) develop additional communication channels to connect spouses with local installation career programs, WorkSource offices, and non-profit partners; (2) enhance use of social media to connect and communicate with spouses; (3) enhance use of local print, radio, and TV media to communicate with spouses; (4) enhance use of private military spouse and family social groups and networks; (5) target advertisements at common gathering places⁴⁴; (6) market the full range of WorkSource services available to military spouses, including services for entry-level, professional, and executive job seekers; (7) enhance use of military spouse peer mentors to connect and communicate with military spouses⁴⁵; and (8) target outreach to younger spouses and spouses of junior enlisted service members.
- **DEVELOP UPSTREAM CONNECTIONS:** Enhance connections with out-of-state partners, including: (1) continue to develop partnership with Military OneSource’s Spouse Education and Career Opportunities “SECO” program, to connect spouses with local services prior to a PCS; (2) focus outreach to and partnership efforts with bases and base-adjacent American Job Centers “AJCs” around the country in order to connect spouses to local services and find employment before they PCS; and (3) support direct connection with local employers (e.g., virtual interviews) prior to a PCS.
- **IMPROVE SUPPORT PROGRAMS:** Enhance employment support services for military spouses, including: (1) increase and enhance military spouse career events⁴⁶; (2) improve coordination between installations and local WorkSource offices; (3) educate WorkSource staff about military spouse employment barriers, needs, and opportunities; (4) produce additional virtual employment training programs for military spouses⁴⁷; (5) increase opportunities for service members and military spouses to attend employment programs together; (6) expand and promote work experience and internship programs for military spouses, with an emphasis on transferrable and portable careers⁴⁸; and (7) expand spouse employment mentorship and sponsorship programs.
- **EXPAND FLEXIBLE WORK SERVICES:** Work with partners to promote services that support flexible work, including: (1) host and support virtual-job career events; and (2) promote the National Virtual Job Labor Exchange to make virtual jobs accessible to military spouses⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ I.e., base exchanges, housing services offices, libraries, etc.

⁴⁵ E.g., JBLM’s Spouse Ambassadors, and the Air Force’s Key Spouse program.

⁴⁶ Events should include spouse coaching, navigator services, and childcare.

⁴⁷ I.e., webcasts, on-line recorded videos, etc.

⁴⁸ Similar to what is provided to spouses of junior enlisted service members and junior officers through MyCAA, and to transitioning service members through DOD’s SkillBridge and the Hiring our Heroes Fellowship program.

⁴⁹ The National Association of State Workforce Agencies “NASWA” is launching an exchange in the near future.

- **MARKET ORIENTATION SERVICES:** Develop installation orientation and information programs for PCS'ing military spouses, including: (1) create or enhance installation webpages, Facebook pages, and other social media; (2) leverage search engine optimization "SEO" strategies to guide military spouses to specific web-based employment resources; (3) promote pre-PCS participation in Military OneSource SECO's online MySTEP military spouse transition program; and (4) promote local employer participation in SECO's Military Spouse Employment Partnership "MSEP"⁵⁰.
- **INCENTIVIZE ORIENTATION:** incentivize military spouse participation in installation orientation programs, including: (1) incentivize service members to bring spouses to orientation⁵¹; (2) require service members to obtain signed verification that they have shared employment program information with their spouses; (3) make moving services, Basic Allowance for Housing "BAH", and/or other benefits contingent on sharing military spouse contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses) and participating in spouse newcomer orientation; and (4) improve overall military family PCS support, so military spouses can focus attention on employment.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- **EXPAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Enhance workforce development services for military spouses, including: (1) add military spouses to Federal Jobs for Veterans State Grants "JVSG" funding⁵²; (2) call-out and prioritize military spouses as a WIOA category, rather than as dislocated workers or displaced homemakers; and (3) develop employment support programs for military spouses based on the model used for National Guard and Reserve employment support programs.

⁵⁰ MSEP supports recruitment of PCS'ing spouses, and helps spouses connect with employers in new states.

⁵¹ The Marine Corps and Army have experimented with granting service members an additional day of leave if their spouse attends orientation and gets a signed attendance certificate.

⁵² Includes expanding the mandate of veteran employment representatives (Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists) to include military spouses.

3. Credential Portability

PROGRAMATIC

- **CLARIFY INFORMATION FOR SPOUSES:** Work with credentialing agencies to improve sharing of information with spouses, including: (1) improve marketing of support services for military spouses; and (2) provide clearer and more consistent website and call center information for spouses.
- **EXPEDITE CREDENTIAL PROCESSING:** Streamline military spouse credential application processing, including: (1) provide front-of-the-line service to military spouses⁵³; and (2) develop and enhance navigator services for military spouses⁵⁴.
- **DEVELOP PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborate with non-governmental partners to support spouse licensure, including: (1) partner with business groups, unions, and military spouse groups on credential portability strategies⁵⁵; and (2) promote employer-sponsored financial support and other assistance to military spouses seeking new state licenses, certificates, or other credentials⁵⁶.
- **UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS:** Promote uniform credential requirements across the country based on national standards.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- **INTERSTATE AGREEMENTS:** Support interstate compacts and reciprocity agreements, particularly where there are nationally accepted professional credential standards^{57,58,59};
- **PROVISIONAL CREDENTIALS:** Support provisional licenses and temporary practice permits that allow military spouses with a credential from another state to work while completing additional Washington State license or certificate requirements^{60,61,62}.
- **BOARD APPOINTMENT:** Appoint military spouses to licensing boards.

⁵³ Both DOH and OSPI offer front-of-the-line service to military spouses who self-identify.

⁵⁴ Both the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) offer customized navigator services for military spouses.

⁵⁵ The U.S. Chamber Foundation's Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone "MSEEZ" Initiative provides a framework for public-private partnerships. Washington established the first statewide MSEEZ in 2018, and two regional zones have been established in Olympia and Spokane.

⁵⁶ Attendees noted that employer-sponsored credential support is a common practice in the financial services industry.

⁵⁷ DOH participates in interstate compacts for physical therapists. A nursing compact is currently under consideration by the Washington State Legislature.

⁵⁸ While OSPI does not have any formal interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements, it generally grants credit for other states' credentials and national teaching certificates.

⁵⁹ While the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) does not have any formal interstate compacts or reciprocity agreements, it generally accepts nationally recognized credentials.

⁶⁰ DOH offers temporary practice permits for several health care professions

⁶¹ OSPI offers expedited certificates for emergency substitute teacher and conditional teacher at a District's request.

⁶² DOL offers a provisional certificate for security guards, and is considering one for private investigators.

4. Childcare

PROGRAMATIC

- **COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL CHILDCARE STAKEHOLDERS:** Engage local childcare providers, military family services, and other community-based organizations on strategies to: (1) increase the number of available childcare slots; (2) increase the availability of childcare before and after traditional working and school schedules; (3) increase the availability of drop-in childcare; and (4) decrease the cost of childcare for military families.
- **DEVELOP CHILDCARE INCENTIVES:** Offer incentives to increase childcare options, including: (1) military spouse operated in-home daycares; (2) large childcare business operated centers near installations; and (3) alternative to traditional daycare (e.g. au pairs).

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- **INCREASE CHILDCARE FUNDING:** Increase Federal funding support for military family childcare⁶³.
- **ENHANCE CHILDCARE TAX CREDITS:** Promote additional childcare tax credits, including: (1) increase federal childcare tax credits for spouses; and (2) provide an employer childcare tax credit.
- **INCREASING WAGES:** Increase wages of on-base and off-base childcare workers.

⁶³ U.S. Senator Murray has proposed federal legislation.

5. Housing

Attendees also discussed the intersectionality of housing and childcare on spouse employment opportunities. Common themes included: (1) insufficient on-base housing; (2) insufficient affordable housing near military installations; and (3) failure of the Military Basic Allowance for Housing “BAH” to cover the cost of housing near military installations. Consequently, many military families locate far away from installations, employment opportunities, and other resources (e.g., childcare), resulting in spouses forgoing employment.

SOLUTIONS

Attendees discussed several programmatic, policy, and legislative options, including:

PROGRAMMATIC

- **COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL HOUSING STAKEHOLDERS:** Partner with local housing providers, installation housing offices, local housing agencies, and housing advocacy organizations to discuss strategies to: (1) increase the availability on-base and near-base housing for military families; and (2) decrease or subsidize the cost of military family housing.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- **INCREASE HOUSING FUNDING:** Increase funding support for military family housing, including: (1) increase BAH at installations in areas with high housing costs and/or low housing stock availability; and (2) develop funding options that combine housing and childcare⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ The Washington State Department of Commerce is exploring policy options.

Sample 1 – Pinnacle Award for Workforce Development

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) created a co-located website to house all the materials for the Military Spouse Listening Sessions and Readout that was conducted. Those materials can be found here:

<https://www.dva.wa.gov/militaryfamilies>