



Report on Military Spouse Education and Employment

Prepared by: Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Military Community & Family Policy, January 2008

INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted as requested by House Armed Services Committee Report 109-89 for a report on the general status of military spouse education and employment programs. The Department of Defense thanks the Committee for the recognition that military spouses also serve.

Military spouse employment is a critical component of the Department's Social Compact with military families. The Social Compact, which recognizes the challenges of military life and the sacrifices Service Members and their families make in serving their country, acknowledges the responsibility of the Department of Defense to underwrite support to families. Two major issues face the military family/spouse who must frequently relocate: managing the education of their children and trying to sustain a career while their military sponsor is in the service of his/her country. Military spouses are not unlike their civilian counterparts – they are major contributors to the family's financial well-being. The all-volunteer force is a military with families.

Most military spouses are in the labor market, i.e., they have a job or are looking for employment¹. Military wives on average earn \$3 less per hour than their civilian look-alikes and their unemployment rate is three times as high as civilian spouses². Contributing to this is the drastic difference in residence mobility between military and civilian wives; only about 10 percent of military wives stay in the same home for five years, and most move to a different state with different career licensing and certification requirements.³ The majority of careers in the US have certification and/or licensure requirements. For military spouses frequently relocating, this requirement causes delays in obtaining employment and increased expenses.

The demographics of military spouse education show a motivated workforce. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of active-duty military spouses have their high school diploma. An overwhelming 87% of spouses would like to further their education and develop a portable career, but the cost of education is the reason for not enrolling in school or training⁴. High-demand, high-growth portable career fields suitable for the mobile military lifestyle are:

¹ "Monitoring the Employment Conditions of Military Spouses", Lim, Golinelli, RAND, 2006.

² "Married to the Military, The Employment and Earnings of Military Wives Compared with Those of Civilian Wives", Hosek, Asch, Fair, Martin and Mattock, RAND, 2002.

³ "Working Around the Military" Revisited, Spouse Employment in the 2000 Census Data", Lim, Golinelli, Cho, RAND, 2007.

⁴ "DoD 2006 Survey of Active-Duty Spouses", DMDC, 2006.

- **HEALTH CARE-** Careers in nursing, health technician (radiology, x-ray, and chemo), pharmacology, dental hygiene, and medical record management, etc.
- **FINANCIAL SERVICES** – Careers in banking, mortgages, insurance, investments, real estate and financial counseling, etc.
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY** – Careers in computer networking, systems, administration, web development, software design and help desk administration, etc.
- **EDUCATION** – Careers as teachers and/or teacher aides in elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools, early childhood education, curriculum development and administration, etc.
- **CONSTRUCTION TRADES** –Careers in labor occupations such as electrician, plumber, brick mason, and carpenter, etc.)

Military spouses are not able to qualify for many of the nation’s labor and workforce development opportunities because they are generally not considered resident of the state in which their active duty spouse resides. Military spouses often are ineligible for unemployment compensation and in-state tuition. Military bases are systematically excluded from calculations of the national unemployment rate; therefore military spouses are often excluded from participation in dislocated worker programs administered by the states.

In 2003, the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor signed a Memorandum of Understanding that provided a framework for potential collaborative opportunities to improve the workforce opportunities for military spouses. One of the first initiatives was the development of a joint DoD-DoL web site to serve military spouses: <http://www.milspouse.org>. In July, 2007, DoD and DoL collaborated with a goal of establishing military spouses in portable, high-growth careers.

MILITARY SPOUSE CAREER ADVANCEMENT ACCOUNTS (CAA) DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

In July, 2007, DoD and the U.S. Department of Labor (DoL) began collaboration for a demonstration program to provide Career Advancement Accounts (CAA) to military spouses in eight states at 18 installations. The goal of this initiative is to get military spouses into portable careers to help manage the mobile military lifestyle. This partnership between Federal agencies and the states will provide military spouses with an ability to pursue community college, technical training and/or career credentials and licenses. Trained, educated military spouses will help fill the demand in

high-growth industries. Department of Defense installation staff and the state community One-Stop Career Center staff will work collaboratively to serve the spouses enrolling in this program. As military spouses frequently relocate from state to state, standardized procedures will be followed by the military Services and the states. Participating states and installations are:

- **California** - San Diego Metro Area (Navy) and Camp Pendleton (USMC)
- **Colorado** - Fort Carson (Army) and Peterson Air Force Base
- **Florida** - Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field (Air Force)
- **Georgia** - Fort Benning (Army)
- **Hawaii** - Hickam Air Force Base, Naval Base Pearl Harbor, Schofield Barracks (Army), and Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay
- **Maine** - Naval Air Station Brunswick
- **North Carolina** - Fort Bragg (Army) and Pope Air Force Base
- **Washington** - Fort Lewis (Army), McChord Air Force Base, and Naval Station Kitsap

The Career Advancement Accounts are flexible, self-managed education and training accounts that will enable military spouses to gain the skills needed to successfully enter, navigate, and advance in portable careers. Accounts will be available to military spouses entering the workforce or transitioning between jobs and careers, and to incumbent workers in need of new skills to remain employed or move up the career ladder. Accounts must be used to pay for expenses directly related to post-secondary education and training, including tuition, fees, books, and credentialing/licensing fees. Education and training activities must result in attainment of a degree, license or industry-recognized credential. The maximum amount of the account is \$3,000 for one year. Accounts may be renewed for one additional year, for a total two-year account amount of up to \$6,000 per military spouse.

The demonstration project targets junior personnel military spouses with a high school diploma or GED and/or some level of post secondary education. Military spouses with a career license or certification in one state, who relocate to another state and must be relicensed or certified per the new state's regulations, are eligible. The Departments of Defense and Labor anticipate that at least 4500 military spouses will receive Career Advancement Accounts under the demonstration program.

Military Spouses may apply for accounts on the military installation at Voluntary Education Centers. Local state One-Stop Career Centers will manage account awards and disbursements for participating spouses.

Spouses will be provided career and educational counseling, skill assessments, workforce and economic information, and related resources from both the state workforce system and military installation partners.

Career Advancement Accounts may generally be used with a wide variety of training and education providers, including community colleges and trade and technical schools. Providers must be accredited by a national or regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or on the state's Workforce Investment Act eligible training provider list. All training providers must offer degrees, licenses, or industry-recognized certifications.

SUMMARY

The Career Advancement Accounts are the result of an unprecedented partnership among two federal agencies and the states. The success of this partnership is already being demonstrated by the strong support in the eight key states. Additional states and locations within the demonstration states are expressing interest in expanding the Career Advancement Accounts for military spouses. Both the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor are encouraged by the intense interest in these demonstration projects.

The Career Advancement Accounts could be a morale builder that encourages people to make a life in the military. The accounts will help with the financial stability of military families; this is a retention tool. A military spouse's support for a career in the Armed Forces is a top factor in the re-enlistment decision of a married Service Member.

The Department expects this program to be a huge success. Since the January 1, 2008 implementation, over 2000 military spouses have participated in CAA orientation programs and over 300 have already been granted a CAA account.