



**U.S. Department of the Treasury**



**U.S. Department of Defense**

## **Supporting our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines**

February 2012

*“We’re redoubling our efforts to help military spouses pursue their educations and careers...We’re going to help spouses get that degree, find that job, or start that new business. We want every company in America to know our military spouses and veterans have the skills and the dedication, and our nation is more competitive when we tap their incredible talents.”*

*- President Barack Obama, January 24, 2011*



February 15, 2012



The President and his administration have taken the initiative to make the care and well-being of our nation's veterans, service members, and military families a priority across all agencies of the government. Last year, the President unveiled *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment* – a document that outlined the commitment of 16 separate agencies to 47 initiatives designed to improve the lives of military families. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden have also made it their personal priority to support our nation's veterans, service members, and military families through their Joining Forces initiative.

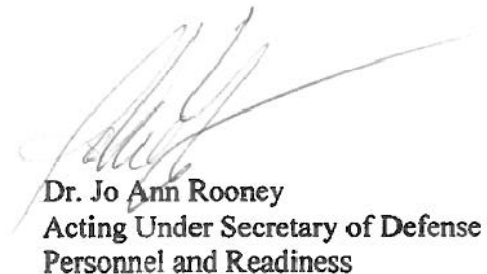
As a result of the President's advocacy, and in response to conversations that the First Lady and Dr. Biden have had with military spouses, the Departments of Treasury and Defense have co-authored this report to highlight the impact of state occupational licensing requirements on the careers of military spouses. The report shows that military spouses are especially affected by state occupational licensing requirements. About 35 percent of military spouses work in professions that require state licenses or certification. They move across state lines far more frequently than the general population. These moves present administrative and financial challenges, as illustrated in a case study of nursing licensing requirements. The report identifies best practices that states and licensing bodies can adopt through legislation, as well as current Department of Defense initiatives that address this issue.

We believe the best practices described in this report provide a baseline for further improvements, and hope it is a call to action to support our military spouses while still maintaining professional standards that ensure public safety. We are asking state governments, licensing boards, and professional associations to join us in finding more efficient ways for military spouses and other mobile professionals to fulfill these state and professional licensing and certification requirements.

Our military spouses support the well-being and safety of our nation, and we can best appreciate their sacrifices and unique challenges by adopting practices that lessen the burdens of their frequent moves. They have a compelling need and we are suggesting tangible solutions. All that is needed is the willingness to take action.



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## Executive Summary

On January 24, 2011, President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Dr. Jill Biden presented *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment* – a document that responded to the Presidential Study Directive calling on all Cabinet Secretaries and other agency heads to find better ways to provide our military families with the support they deserve. The directive was initiated to establish a coordinated and comprehensive federal approach to supporting military families, and it contains nearly 50 commitments by federal agencies in pursuit of this goal.

State licensing and certification requirements are intended to ensure that practitioners meet a minimum level of competency. Because each state sets its own licensing requirements, these requirements often vary across state lines. Consequently, the lack of license portability – the ability to transfer an existing license to a new state with minimal application requirements – can impose significant administrative and financial burdens on licensed professionals when they move across state lines. Because military spouses hold occupational licenses and often move across state lines, the patchwork set of variable and frequently time-consuming licensing requirements across states disproportionately affect these families. The result is that too many military spouses looking for jobs that require licenses are stymied in their efforts.

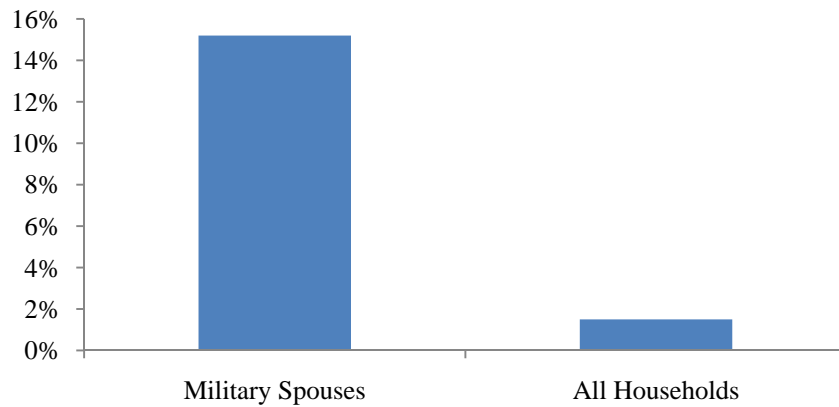
A spouse's employment plays a key role in the financial and personal well-being of military families, and their job satisfaction is an important component of the retention of service members. Without adequate support for military spouses and their career objectives, the military could have trouble retaining service members.

The Department of the Treasury and the Department of Defense (DoD) have conducted an analysis to highlight the importance of state occupational licensing requirements in the lives of licensed military spouses. The report demonstrates that military spouses often work in occupations that require a license or certification and that they have a relatively high rate of interstate mobility compared to the general population. The report also examines a case study of nursing licensing requirements to illustrate the administrative and financial burdens that licensed military spouses face when they move across state lines, and highlights current DoD initiatives that address these licensing issues. Finally, the report identifies best practices that states and licensing bodies can adopt to help reduce barriers for military spouses moving across state lines.

This report finds that:

- **Nearly 35 percent of military spouses in the labor force require licenses or certification for their profession.**
- **Military spouses are ten times more likely to have moved across state lines in the last year compared to their civilian counterparts.**

### Percent of Adult Population that Moved Across State Lines in the Last Year



In a 2008 Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) survey of military spouses, participants were asked what would have helped them with their employment search after their last military move. Nearly 40 percent of those respondents who had moved indicated that “easier state-to-state transfer of certification” would have helped them.

This report highlights best practices that states can pursue to help licensed military spouses. These best practices to help make licenses more portable come at little cost to states, but could make a meaningful difference in the lives of many military families. These best practices include:

- *Facilitating endorsement of a current license* from another jurisdiction as long as the requirements for licensure in that jurisdiction are substantially equivalent to those in the licensing state, and the applicant:
  - Has not committed any offenses that would be grounds for suspension or revocation of the license in the other jurisdiction, and is otherwise in good standing in that jurisdiction; and
  - Can demonstrate competency in the occupation through methods as determined by the Board, such as having completed continuing education units, having had sufficient recent experience (in a full or part time, paid or volunteer position), or by working under supervision for a prescribed period.
- *Providing a temporary or provisional license* allowing the military spouse to practice while fulfilling requirements needed to qualify for endorsement in the licensing state, or awaiting verification of documentation supporting an endorsement. Temporary licenses should require minimum documentation, such as proof of holding a current license in good standing and marriage to an active duty Service member who is assigned to the state.

- *Expediting application procedures* so that:
  - The director overseeing licensing within the state has authority to approve license applications for the boards; and/or
  - The individual licensing boards have authority to approve a license based simply on an affidavit from the applicant that the information provided on the application is true and that verifying documentation has been requested.

DoD, through the DoD-State Liaison Office (DSLO), has an on-going program to address key issues with state policymakers. This program, USA4 Military Families, covers 10 key issues, including occupational licensing and eligibility for unemployment compensation benefits. As of February 2012, thirteen states have introduced bills addressing the aforementioned best practices, and DSLO is working with these legislators. Although DoD continues to work on these issues on behalf of military spouses, more work remains to be done.

## Introduction

Military spouses not only play an enormous role in supporting our armed forces, but they also endure recurring absences of their service member spouse, frequent relocations, and extended periods of single-parenting and isolation from friends and family.<sup>i</sup> Research suggests that the effects of these challenging circumstances can be mitigated by employment. Unfortunately, military spouses earn less than their civilian counterparts and are less likely to be employed, on average.<sup>ii,iii</sup> A RAND study found that nearly two-thirds of military spouses felt that being a military spouse negatively affected their opportunity to work because of the “frequent and disruptive moves” associated with a military lifestyle.<sup>iv</sup>

### **CIVILIAN SPOUSES OF ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS<sup>v</sup>**

**Number:** 612,709

- Army: (40%)
- Navy: (24%)
- Marine Corps: (13%)
- Air Force: (24%)

**Gender:**

- Female: 95%
- Male: 5%

**Average age:** 32

Average years married: 7.8 years

**Race/Ethnicity:**

- Non-Hispanic White: 68%
- Non-Hispanic Black: 9%
- Hispanic: 12%

**Education:**

- No College: 16%
- Some College: 49%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 25%
- Advanced Degree: 10%

**Employment:**

- Labor participation rate: 57%
- Unemployment rate: 26%

**Age of Children\*:**

- Have children 5 & under: 54%
- Have children 6-12: 30%
- Have children 13-17: 15%

\*72% have children

Research on military spouses finds that employment positively affects their general well-being – both directly and indirectly. Specifically, satisfaction with career development prospects has a direct and statistically significant effect on military spouses’ well-being.<sup>vi</sup> However, many military spouses are not satisfied with their career prospects. One military spouse said, “as time passes and I am unable to find work, my career dies and I feel like I have to abandon my personal and professional goals because my spouse is [the] military.”<sup>vii</sup> Although many military families depend on two incomes, they often face difficulties in career maintenance: “having to leave an excellent job behind, be unemployed for months, then underemployed...all of this affects our family’s finances.”<sup>viii</sup>

Military spouse employment and the associated financial and personal well-being is also an important component of the retention of service members. More than half of all active duty military personnel are married, and 91 percent of employed military spouses indicated that they wanted to work and/or needed to work.<sup>ix</sup> Research suggests that spouse dissatisfaction with the ability to pursue career objectives may hinder re-enlistment. Not only are military spouses highly influential regarding re-enlistment decisions, but more than two-thirds of married service members reported that their decision to re-enlist was largely or moderately affected by their spouses’ career prospects.<sup>x</sup>

Complicated state occupational licensing requirements contribute to the difficulties that spouses of military personnel face in the workforce. State licensing and

certification requirements are intended to ensure that practitioners meet a minimum level of competency and to help “protect the public from unqualified providers.”<sup>xi,xii</sup> Because each state sets its own licensing requirements, these requirements often vary across state lines.

Consequently, the lack of license portability – the ability to transfer an existing license to a new

state with minimal requirements – can impose significant administrative and financial burdens on licensed professionals when they move across state lines. Because nearly 35 percent of military spouses work in licensed or certified professions and are 10 times as likely to move across state lines than their civilian counterparts, military spouses are more frequently affected by the lengthy background checks, exams, fees, and other burdens associated with the lack of licensing portability.

Military spouses have expressed their frustration with the lack of licensing portability. According to a May 2010 survey of military spouses conducted by Blue Star Families, a military family support group, almost half of respondents felt that being a military spouse negatively affected their ability to pursue a career, while one in five respondents cited difficulties arising from the lack of licensing portability.<sup>xiii</sup> One military spouse said, “moving from one state to another, with different licensing requirements, has been a challenge. My career, while fairly portable, has still been difficult to maintain.”<sup>xiv</sup> Another military spouse, a real estate broker, explained the challenges of transferring licenses when she and her husband moved across state lines:

I was a real estate broker in North Carolina when I met my husband. When we [moved] to Texas, my license was no longer valid...In order to reinstate my license, I would have had to attend Texas real estate school and pay Texas licensure fees. The cost to get my license and restart my business would have been more than I could have earned in the 18 months we lived there before [moving] to Kentucky. In Kentucky, I would have had to do it all over again.<sup>xv</sup>

Given the volunteer nature of our military, the sacrifices military families make for this country, and the importance of retaining these families to maintain the readiness of our military, ensuring that licensing procedures do not needlessly hinder military spouses is critically important.

The first section of this report uses the Current Population Survey to demonstrate that military spouses often work in occupations that require a license or certification and that they have a relatively high rate of interstate mobility compared to the general population. The second section illustrates the administrative and financial burdens that military spouses face when they move across state lines by examining a case study of nursing licensing requirements. Finally, the third section highlights current DoD initiatives that address these licensing issues and discusses best practices that states and licensing bodies can adopt to help reduce barriers for military spouses moving across state lines.

## Part 1: Licensing and Mobility

This section uses data from the Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) to demonstrate that military spouses often work in state licensed occupations and that they have a relatively high rate of interstate mobility compared to the general population. The CPS is the basis for official government labor force statistics, including the unemployment rate.<sup>xvi</sup> While the CPS does not survey military barracks, the data do include civilian spouses of service members even if they live on-base in civilian housing.

We constructed a sample of approximately 2,800 spouses of active duty, Guard and Reserve service members, by combining CPS labor force data from 2007 through 2011. Table 1 presents summary statistics for our sample of military spouses. Due to data constraints, we exclude dual-military families (in which both spouses are enlisted) from the analysis. About 95 percent of military spouses in our sample are female, which is consistent with personnel data from DoD.<sup>xvii</sup>

**Table 1: Gender and Population Estimate of Military Spouses**

	Population estimate	Sample size	Percent of Total
Women	670,280	2,609	94.2%
Men	43,511	162	5.8%

Notes: Annual averages based on pooled 2007 through 2011 data from the ASEC supplement of the CPS.

Table 2 presents labor force statistics for military spouses and civilian spouses. Data from the CPS show that the labor force participation rate for military spouses has been about 57 percent over the past five years, with an unemployment rate of 9.3 percent.

**Table 2: Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rate of Military and Civilian Spouses**

	Military Spouses	Civilian Spouses
Labor Force Participation Rate	56.8%	72.8%
Unemployment Rate	9.3%	4.9%

Notes: Annual averages based on pooled 2007 through 2011 data from the ASEC supplement of the CPS. Civilian spouse statistics are weighted to be comparable with the gender distribution of military spouses. Data are restricted to respondents aged 18 to 45.

Table 3 presents educational attainment for military spouses and civilian spouses using CPS data. Almost 44 percent of military spouses have “some college” but not a four-year degree, compared to 28 percent of civilian spouses. “Some college” includes receiving a degree or certificate from a community college or other short-term training program. In our sample, 38 percent of civilian spouses have at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to 31 percent of military spouses.



**Table 3: Educational Attainment of Military and Civilian Spouses**

	Military Spouses	Civilian Spouses
Less than high school	2.9%	9.9%
High school diploma (or equiv.)	22.7%	24.9%
Some college	43.4%	27.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	31.0%	37.3%

*Notes:* Averages based on pooled 2007 through 2011 data from the ASEC supplement of the CPS. Civilian spouse statistics are weighted to be comparable with the gender distribution of military spouses. Data are restricted to respondents aged 18 to 45.

### *Occupations of Military Spouses*

Table 4 presents the top 20 occupations among our sample of military spouses. Teaching is the most common occupation among military spouses, followed by child care services, and nursing. While many of the common occupations among military spouses are not licensed, some of the most popular professions, including teaching and nursing, do require licensure.

In a 2008 Defense Manpower Data Center survey of active duty military spouses, participants were asked what would have helped them with their employment search after their last military move. Nearly 40 percent of those respondents who had moved indicated that “easier state-to-state transfer of certification” would have helped them. This is not surprising given that a third of the respondents had “recently been employed” in an occupation with potential licensure requirements, and nearly half of the respondents suggested that they were interested in pursuing careers in licensed fields.<sup>xviii</sup> These responses are consistent with our findings in the CPS, which suggest that nearly 35 percent of military spouses in the labor force require licenses or certification for their profession.<sup>xix</sup>

**Table 4: Top 20 Occupations for  
Military Spouses in the Labor Force**

Rank	Occupation	Percent of total
1	Teachers (Pre-Kindergarten - 12th Grade)**	5.2
2	Child care workers*	3.9
3	Registered nurses**	3.7
4	Retail salespersons	3.6
5	Secretaries and administrative assistants	3.5
6	Waiters and waitresses	3.0
7	Receptionists and information clerks	2.8
8	Cashiers	2.8
9	First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	2.5
10	Customer service representatives	1.8
11	First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative support workers	1.6
12	Accountants and auditors**	1.6
13	Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides*	1.5
14	Managers, all other	1.3
15	Tellers	1.3
16	Dental assistants*	1.2
17	Financial managers	1.2
18	Postsecondary teachers	1.2
19	Stock clerks and order fillers	1.2
20	Other teachers and instructors	1.2
<u>Memo</u>		
	Other categories	53.9

Notes: Annual averages based on pooled 2007 through 2011 data from the ASEC supplement of the CPS. Data include unemployed workers. Double asterisks (\*\*) denote occupations that require licenses; single asterisk (\*) denotes occupations that have certification.

### *Military Spouse Mobility*

The ASEC supplement also asks respondents if they moved in the past year. Military spouses are approximately ten times more likely to have moved across state lines in the last year compared to the total population.<sup>xx</sup> Table 5 presents mobility rates for military spouses and for the total population. On average, 15 percent of military spouses reported moving across state lines in the twelve months before the CPS survey, compared to only 1.5 percent of all CPS respondents.

**Table 5: Annual Percent of Adult Population  
Who Moved Across State Lines**

	Percent Moved
Military Spouse	15.2
Civilian Spouse	1.1
Single / Unmarried	1.8
<u>Memo</u>	
All households	1.5

Notes: Annual averages based on pooled 2007 through 2011 data from the ASEC supplement of the CPS, but reflect relocation in the year before the survey. Those who moved from overseas locations are excluded from this table.<sup>xxi</sup>

Because military spouses frequently hold occupations that have licensing requirements and because they move across state lines much more than the general population, complicated licensing processes are disproportionately burdensome for them. The next section will examine state licensing requirements for nurses as a case study of the difficulties that military spouses face when transferring their license across state lines.

## **Part 2: Nurse Licensing Case Study**

### **Registered Nursing License Portability**

Nursing is among the most popular professions for military spouses, and registered nurses must meet licensure requirements in each of the states where they practice. Even though the nursing profession has standardized several aspects of its licensing procedures, transferring a license when moving remains a complicated process because of variability in state licensing requirements. These problems are not unique to the nursing profession, and many licensed professionals face similar challenges when attempting to transfer their license across state lines.

To illustrate the administrative and financial burdens that licensed military spouses face when they move across state lines, this section examines a case study of nursing licensing requirements. This section documents the process for obtaining a new nursing license in any state, lists the standardized aspects of moving a nursing license to another state, and demonstrates the variability in licensure requirements across state lines.

#### *Initial Licensing Hurdles*

To obtain an initial license as a registered nurse (RN) in any state, applicants must satisfy a large set of requirements. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a nursing student must complete either a bachelor's degree, an associate's degree, or receive a diploma from an approved nursing program.<sup>xxii</sup> After completing a degree from an accredited program, an applicant for a registered nursing license must take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). This nationally recognized test is administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and "measures the competencies needed to perform safely and effectively as a newly licensed, entry-level nurse."<sup>xxiii, xxiv</sup> Passing a background check is also a requirement for nursing licensure in all states.

#### *Standardized Aspects of the Nursing "Licensure by Endorsement" Process*

In general, a nurse changing his or her state of permanent residence must apply to the new state's licensing board for "licensure by endorsement," which is the process of transferring an existing nursing license to a new state. This process includes the application for and receipt of a temporary license while the application for a permanent license is processed. While a nurse waits for a temporary license, he or she may be unable to practice. The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) and the NURSYS online database help to address this inflexibility and facilitate the license transferring process by providing elements of standardization.

The NCSBN created the NLC in 1997.<sup>xxv</sup> Twenty-four states are members of the NLC. If a nurse changes his or her permanent residence from one compact state to another, the compact allows the nurse to practice using the previous state's license for up to 30 days. A change in residence requires that the nurse obtain a temporary or permanent license in the new state of residence in order to practice there for longer than 30 days. The NLC website states that nurses transferring their licenses when moving across state lines must "apply for licensure by endorsement, pay any applicable fees, and complete a declaration of primary state of residency in

the new home state, whereby a new multistate license is issued and the former license is inactivated.”<sup>xxvi</sup> In other words, the 30-day privilege granted by this compact is separate from the temporary and permanent licenses granted through licensure by endorsement with the state nursing board. The compact agreement fills the gap between the time when the nurse moves and when a temporary license can be issued by the receiving state’s nursing board.

The “licensure by endorsement” process has many components. A major part of this process is the verification of licensure in the previous state of residence. To this end, the NCSBN created an online data clearinghouse called NURSUS. Forty-six state nursing boards participate in NURSUS for verification of previous RN licensure.<sup>xxvii</sup> If a nurse needs license verification from a state that does not participate in NURSUS, he or she must contact the latter state’s nursing board for a state-specific verification. There is a \$30 fee for the use of the NURSUS system.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Although the NLC and NURSUS provide some standardization to the licensure by endorsement process, they do not ensure straightforward license portability for nurses moving across state lines and do not eliminate many of the non-uniform aspects of the application process, which are discussed below.

#### *Variability Among States in the “Licensure by Endorsement” Process*

While states frequently employ “licensure by endorsement” in nursing licensure, many states have additional requirements. Some states require “current experience”; this requirement mandates that prospective state license holders hold a current license and have worked as a nurse for some period specified by the state licensure board. The “current license” requirement often presents a significant complication when the license holder moves back to the United States after living overseas, as many military spouses do.

To allow nurses to continue practicing while their application for permanent licensure by endorsement is being processed, many state nursing boards offer temporary licenses after a preliminary background and qualifications checks. A clean record is usually required for a temporary license to be issued.<sup>xxix</sup>

Table 6 lists the 10 states with the largest active duty military populations and illustrates the variability in state nursing board requirements regarding license portability. For example, the wait time for a temporary license varies from as little as ten days in Virginia and Texas to up to six weeks in California. The time period for which a temporary license is valid also varies, from 30 days in Virginia to six months in California, Kentucky and North Carolina.<sup>xxx</sup> The waiting time for a permanent license is often not published by the state nursing board, but in most states an application expires if not completed within one year of the start date. Application fees also vary: among the 10 states examined, the fee ranged from \$43 in Colorado to \$200 in Texas.<sup>xxxi</sup>

#### *Other Factors*

There are other factors that both facilitate and slow the licensure by endorsement process. Some states offer automated procedures for submission of fingerprints, transcripts and fees, but others do not.<sup>xxxii</sup> Variability exists in the state board requirements for nursing licenses as well. Some

states automatically accept nursing degrees issued by a nationally approved program operated in another state, while others require that a nurse fulfill specific course requirements prior to licensure by endorsement.<sup>xxxiii</sup> There is also variation in state licensure requirements on training about time-varying issues such as infection control, abuse, privacy, and medical records.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Although license portability for nurses is generally more straightforward than for other professions, nurses moving across state lines still have to go through a rigorous application process to practice nursing in another state. The variability of these processes and the associated need to continually relicense through examination poses difficulties for military spouses in licensed occupations. Other professions popular among military spouses, such as teaching, have even more complicated license portability requirements. One aspect of teacher licensing is discussed in Box 1, below.

**Box 1: Teacher Testing Requirements**

License portability in teaching is very complicated. There are several tiers of licensing in teaching, and course requirements vary widely based on the state and the subject being taught. Even the relatively standardized portions of teaching license requirements, such as the required Praxis II subject tests, have very different state standards. The table below demonstrates how the Praxis II cutoff scores vary among states.<sup>xxxv</sup>

**Praxis II Passing Scores in States with Large Military Populations**

	Mathematics	English Language, Literature, and Composition	Social Studies	Biology	Chemistry
Colorado	156	162	150	..	..
Hawaii	136	164	154	151	154
Kentucky	125	160	151	146	147
Virginia	147	172	161	155	153
Difference between the highest and lowest passing scores	31	12	11	9	7

In addition to the variability in Praxis II cutoff scores, many states with large military populations have their own individual examinations. Re-taking exams due to inconsistent cutoff scores or additional state tests pose time-consuming and expensive barriers to license portability.

**Table 6: Requirements for Transferring Nursing Licenses to a New State**

State	Does the state participate in NLC and NURSYS?	Application fee?	NCLEX Standardized Test	Temporary license valid for:	Wait time for temporary license:	Degree from accredited nursing education program needed?	Need Current Experience for Endorsement?
California	No (accepts verification from NURSYS, but does not provide information through NURSYS)	\$100 or \$151, depending on which fingerprinting method chosen	Yes, or SBTPE	6 months	4-6 weeks	Yes	No
Colorado	Yes	\$43	Yes, or SBTPE	4 months	--	Yes	No
Florida	NURSYS only	\$223	Yes, or SBTPE	--	--	Yes	Requires that the applicant worked as a nurse for 2 of the past 3 years
Georgia	No (accepts verification from NURSYS, but does not provide information through NURSYS)	\$60	Yes, or SBTPE	Does not typically provide temporary licenses	--	Yes	Requires that the applicant worked as a nurse for 3 months or 500 hours in the past 4 years
Hawaii	No (accepts verification from NURSYS, but does not provide information through NURSYS)	\$135-\$180	Yes (minimum score: 1600), or SBTPE (minimum score: 350)	3 months	--	Yes	No
Kentucky	Yes	\$169.25	Yes, or SBTPE	6 months	2 weeks	Yes	No
North Carolina	Yes	\$188	Yes (minimum score: 1600), or SBTPE (minimum score: 350)	6 months	2 weeks	Yes	No
Texas	Yes	\$200	Yes, or SBTPE (minimum score: 350)	120 days	10 days	Yes	Requires that the applicant worked as a nurse or passed the appropriate RN exam in the past 4 years
Virginia	Yes	\$190	Yes, or SBTPE	30 days (may be extended at discretion of the board)	10 days	Yes	No
Washington	NURSYS only	\$92	Yes, or SBTPE	--	--	Yes	No

Note: '--' indicates unavailable information. Source: Web sites of the listed state's Board of Nursing. Contact information for each State Board is posted on the web site of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, under a link for Boards of Nursing. See [www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org).

## **Part 3: Best Practices and Department of Defense Initiatives**

### **Best Practices to Facilitate Licensure Portability**

DoD has identified best practices that states could adopt to facilitate license portability. Although DoD initially focused on promoting specific national compacts and national certifications for two career areas (teachers and nurses), the Department has recently shifted to initiatives easing the overall licensing process in a state to affect a broader population of licensed military spouses. The Nurse Licensure Compact, described earlier in this report, which gives nurses a more streamlined approach to transferring a current license to a member state, provided DoD the key concepts (temporary licenses and endorsements) to use with states for expediting licensure in other occupations, particularly if the state boards adopt methods that can expedite the application and approval process.

#### *Licensure by Endorsement*

DoD and independent studies have consistently found that “licensure by endorsement” significantly eases the process of transferring a license from one state to another. Standard “licensure through examination” requires the applicant to go through numerous state reviews in addition to passing national or state examinations and may include a supervised practicum or apprenticeship. Licensure by endorsement streamlines the application and state verification process for applicants with active out-of-state licenses, helping licensed military spouse professionals return to work more quickly. Obtaining a license by endorsement usually only requires that the license from the previous state is based on requirements similar to those in the receiving state, and without a disciplinary record. However, in some cases, applicants must also show they have recently worked in the occupation (such as two out of the past four years) as a way of demonstrating current experience or proficiency. This latter requirement can pose a problem for military spouses who have been unable to practice due to assignment overseas or in other locations. If a spouse does not meet these requirements, they will, at a minimum, have to undergo further scrutiny than the endorsement process generally requires, and in some cases, go through the full “licensure through examination” process.

In its efforts to promote a broad-based model for licensure by endorsement, DoD worked closely with the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) and interested state legislators, who subsequently passed Colorado House Bill (HB) 1175 in 2010. The legislation requires the licensure through endorsement process be considered for all 77 occupations regulated by DORA and allows the Director of DORA, rather than the individual licensing boards, to determine what is required to demonstrate competency for endorsement. This eliminates delays in waiting for boards to convene. Moreover, the legislation allows for alternative demonstrations of current experience, where required, such as accepting continuing education as a substitute when there are gaps in employment. This last provision especially helps military spouses who have been at an overseas duty station for an extended period of time and unable to practice.

Two other states enacted legislation in 2011 facilitating licensure by endorsement, each with a somewhat different approach to accommodating the needs of military spouses:



- Arizona enacted Senate Bill (SB) 1458 in 2011, which allows a military spouse applicant to qualify for endorsement with one year of experience in most occupations. For those few that require more than one year, it allows the applicant to be licensed if supervised by a licensed professional.
- Texas SB 1733, enacted in 2011, is similar to Colorado HB 1175 in that it allows the board to establish alternatives to current experience for proof of occupational competency. The bill also allows military spouses who had been licensed in Texas to reinstate their license if it expired less than five years ago and they spent at least six months of that time out of the state.

### *Temporary or Provisional Licensing*

Temporary or provisional licensure is another way to ease state-to-state transitions for military spouses. Typically, these licenses are valid for anywhere between 3 and 12 months. To apply, the applicant usually has to provide proof of a current license, obtain a background check, and submit an application and fee. These licenses allow applicants to be employed while they fulfill all of the requirements for a permanent license, including examinations or endorsement, applications, and additional fees. Typically, temporary or provisional licenses are managed separately by each occupational area within a state, as is true for the Nurse Licensure Compact, discussed earlier in this report.

Colorado also provided DoD's first opportunity to gain support for temporary/provisional licensing for military spouses. In 2008, Colorado enacted HB 1162 which provides interim authorization to a military spouse with a current teaching license from another state to work within a school district for one year and allows the school district to provide an induction program which will help the military spouse obtain a professional educator license.

In 2010, DoD worked with state legislators in Florida to develop legislation supporting temporary licensure that encompasses multiple occupations. Florida HB 713 impacts commercial occupations, such as Veterinarians and Certified Public Accountants, providing the military spouse a six month temporary license as long as the spouse is married to an active member of the military assigned in Florida, has a current license, submits fingerprints for a background investigation, and pays a fee for the temporary license. Moreover, the bill allows military spouses to retain their Florida licenses if they move out of state for military reasons, and to practice without renewing the license upon return as part of a military move. Florida extended these provisions to healthcare occupations in 2011 with the enactment of HB 1319.

Four other states (Alaska, Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee) enacted legislation in 2011 to provide temporary/provisional licenses to military spouses, primarily using the Florida model. Notably, Kentucky HB 301 and Tennessee HB 968 provide licensure by endorsement if the spouse is qualified and temporary licensure if the spouse must fulfill additional state requirements to obtain a license (by endorsement or examination).

### *Expedited Application Processes*

Approximately half of the states use a regulatory agency, such as the Department of Regulatory Agencies, while the others regulate through individual occupational boards and do not have an umbrella agency to expedite the application process. Different approaches were required to streamline the process in these states.

Through internal agreements with individual licensing boards, the Colorado Director of DORA has the authority to expedite the endorsement process by interceding to approve applications that fulfill the boards' criteria. Two states which do not have structures analogous to that in Colorado found other ways to expedite the application process:

- Montana provided an innovative approach in HB 94 that allows boards to approve an application (for an endorsement or temporary license) based on an affidavit stating that the information provided is true and accurate and that the necessary documentation is forthcoming. Boards review the documentation upon receipt and can take disciplinary action if there are discrepancies.
- Utah HB 384 allows their occupational boards to approve the use of out-of-state licenses for “the spouse of an individual serving in the armed forces of the United States while the individual is stationed within this state, provided:
  - (i) the spouse holds a valid license to practice a regulated occupation or profession issued by any other state or jurisdiction recognized by the division; and
  - (ii) the license is current and the spouse is in good standing in the state of licensure.”

While the Utah provision is the most inclusive and least intrusive for a military spouse, DoD will monitor its implementation to see if out-of-state licenses are accepted by employers as equal in quality to in-state licenses. In developing expedited approaches that save military spouses time and money, DoD does not want to make licensure easier for military spouses to achieve at the expense of degrading their perceived value in their profession.

The 2011 legislative activity is now the baseline for further developments in 2012. Legislators, regulators, and boards have been innovative and have shown an overall willingness to address the core concern that military spouses have only a short time in a location to establish their households, obtain new licenses, find employment within their professions, and progress in their skills and abilities. 2012 may provide additional innovation and opportunities to improve licensure portability for military spouses around the following integrated set of concepts:

- *Facilitating endorsement of a current license* from another jurisdiction as long as the requirements for licensure in that jurisdiction are substantially equivalent to those in the licensing state, and the applicant:
  - Has not committed any offenses that would be grounds for suspension or revocation of the license in the other jurisdiction, and is otherwise in good standing in that jurisdiction; and

- Can demonstrate competency in the occupation through various methods as determined by the Board, such as having completed continuing education units, having had sufficient recent experience (in a full or part time, paid or volunteer position), or by working under supervision for a prescribed period.
- *Providing a temporary or provisional license* allowing the military spouse to practice while fulfilling requirements needed to qualify for endorsement in the licensing state, or awaiting verification of documentation supporting an endorsement. Temporary licenses should require minimum documentation, such as proof of holding a current license in good standing and marriage to an active duty Service member who is assigned to the state.
- *Expediting application procedures* so that:
  - The director overseeing licensing within the state has authority to approve license applications for the boards; and/or
  - The individual licensing boards have authority to approve a license based simply on an affidavit from the applicant that the information provided on the application is true and that verifying documentation has been requested.

## **Other Department of Defense Initiatives**

### *DoD Military Spouse Discussion Board*

Although these current licensure initiatives appear very promising, DoD is reaching out to military spouses for their input on how best to alleviate the hindrances created by licensure requirements. Spouses have been encouraged to share their stories and concerns about the licensure process and provide examples of real world solutions. DoD posted a discussion board on Facebook.com to facilitate the aggregation of these stories and issues.

DoD also recognizes that best practices developed thus far with states may not cover all occupations and all impediments. With the exception of legislation passed in Colorado in 2008 for teachers entering the state, DoD is not aware of changes improving licensure for military spouses in this particular profession. Similarly, the legislation recently passed has specifically excluded attorneys. DoD launched specific discussion board sessions to learn more about the processes for obtaining teaching or law licenses and the barriers faced in maintaining these licenses while moving with the military. To further this discussion, DoD has invited interested military spouses who are teachers and attorneys to join groups to continue this dialogue.

Spouses who are attorneys have responded through the Military Spouse JD Network (MSJDN), an organization established by military spouses to advocate for provisional bar membership, to educate the legal community about military spouses, and to build a network to support improved career opportunities. DoD is working with the JD Spouse Network to achieve accommodations for attorneys.

### *MyCareer Advancement Account (MyCAA) Program*

DoD currently operates the MyCAA program, which provides flexible, self-managed education and training accounts that enable military spouses of junior service members to gain the skills needed to successfully enter, navigate, and advance in portable careers. The accounts offer up to \$4,000 to eligible spouses for pursuit of an Associate's degree, or license or credential leading to a portable career. Accounts are available to military spouses married to service members serving on active duty in the junior Enlisted, Warrant Officer and Officer grades.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Funds may be used by eligible 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 the attainment of an Associate's degree, license, or industry-recognized credential. The accounts have helped build the financial stability of military families. In FY11, approximately 38,000 spouses applied for and were provided MyCAA financial assistance.

### *Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP)*

The Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) is a targeted recruitment and employment partnership solution that connects corporate partners with military spouses who are seeking fulfilling portable careers. MSEP supports spouses of members on active duty, in the National Guard, and Reserves from all Services. MSEP partners offer flexible job opportunities that can withstand relocations, deployments, and other aspects of military life that have made career advancement so difficult for spouses in the past. MSEP now has almost 100 vetted "Fortune 500 Plus" employers participating, with over 150,000 jobs posted to its web portal ([www.MSEPJobs.com](http://www.MSEPJobs.com)) and 10,000 spouses who have been hired. As an MSEP Partner, a company agrees to:

- Identify and promote career opportunities for military spouses;
- Post job openings and a corporate human resources employment page on the MSEP Web portal;
- Offer transferable, portable career opportunities to relocating military spouse employees;
- Mentor incoming MSEP corporate partners;
- Participate in an annual MSEP meeting; and
- Document and provide employment data on military spouses hired.

MSEP's goal is to level the playing field and help military spouses connect with companies that are searching for skilled employees. Moreover, the impact of MSEP goes beyond just reducing the unemployment rate for military spouses by connecting employers to a large and diverse body of exceptionally capable, dedicated, and motivated workers. MSEP provides meaningful career opportunities that are compatible with the spouse's military service, which supports families remaining in the military.

### *Unemployment Compensation Eligibility*

Military spouses face many challenges associated with frequent mobility, including the loss of income associated with the relocation process. In 2004, DoD began working with states to

enable military spouses who become unemployed because of their service member's reassignment to be eligible for unemployment compensation. Prior to DoD's involvement in this issue, most state statutes and policies viewed a spouse leaving a job due to a military move as a "voluntary" separation despite the fact that their departures are involuntary. Thirty-nine states now provide military spouses eligibility for unemployment compensation when they leave employment because of a military move, nearly triple the number of states in 2004. Eighty-five percent of military spouses live in these 39 states (plus the District of Columbia). The states granting unemployment compensation eligibility to working spouses in transition provide a much-needed financial bridge for military families during mandatory moves and allow licensed spouses the cushion to obtain new credentials and seek employment in their new state.

## **Part 4: Conclusion**

Occupational licensing requirements place a significant and undue burden on military spouses, a population that makes great sacrifices for this country. Because many military spouses hold occupational licenses and often move across state lines, the patchwork set of variable and frequently time-consuming licensing requirements across states disproportionately affect these families.

A spouse's employment plays a key role in the financial and personal well-being of military families, and their job satisfaction is an important component of the retention of service members. Without adequate support for military spouses and their career objectives, the military could have trouble retaining service members.

Although further research will be conducted to pinpoint the most effective ways to help licensed military spouses when they transition across state lines, DoD has already identified several best practices that states can implement to ease job transitions for this population. These best practices — licensure by endorsement, temporary licensing, and expedited application processes — come at little cost to states, but would make an enormous difference in the lives of licensed military spouses.

DoD, through the DoD-State Liaison Office (DSLO), has an ongoing program to address key issues with state policymakers. This program, USA4 Military Families, covers 10 key issues, which include occupational licensing and eligibility for unemployment compensation benefits. As of February 2012, thirteen states have introduced bills addressing the aforementioned best practices, and DSLO is working with these legislators. This is encouraging and shows that states are willing to consider this valuable change. The Administration encourages all states to examine these best practice initiatives and work with DoD on their implementation. DoD will track the enactment of legislation to measure the change in processes and continue to request feedback from military spouses to ensure these processes meet their needs.

For additional information on these initiatives or to contact the DSLO, please visit [www.usa4militaryfamilies.org](http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.org) and click on the licensure issue. Although DoD continues to work on these issues on behalf of military spouses, more work remains to be done.

## **Appendix 1: Licensing and Certification**

There are two major types of occupational skill verification: certification and licensing. Certification is less stringent than licensing, and is meant to ensure that practitioners meet a minimum standard of knowledge about their field. Professions as varied as car mechanics and travel agents are certified. Licensing gives the practitioner a “right to practice,” which differs from certification in that it is illegal to practice without a license.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Possessing a license indicates that the practitioner has satisfied government requirements by passing exams, completing education requirements, satisfying background checks, completing administrative paperwork, and paying fees.<sup>xxxviii</sup> A wide range of professions are licensed, including secondary school teachers, healthcare professionals (including nurses, doctors and medical technicians), lawyers, and social workers.

For most licensed professions, state boards administer the licensure process. Because of the variability in the licensing requirements from state to state, groups that are highly mobile and work largely in licensed fields frequently face administrative difficulties due to the lack of licensing portability.

**Appendix 2: Top 20 States With the Most Active Duty Military Spouses**

State	Number of Military Spouses (total)	Military Spouses per 1000 Civilian Spouses
Hawaii	25,875	119.7
Alaska	12,025	103.4
Virginia	65,889	46.2
North Carolina	55,563	33.8
Kentucky	25,896	30.2
Washington	32,553	27.6
Colorado	23,292	27.1
Kansas	15,183	26.7
Georgia	38,563	24.9
North Dakota	3,030	22.1
New Mexico	6,309	18.5
South Carolina	13,730	17.5
Texas	66,936	16.8
Oklahoma	11,301	15.7
Wyoming	1,610	15.2
Nevada	5,387	14.4
Maryland	13,883	14.0
California	72,422	12.3
Delaware	1,819	11.9
Louisiana	9,423	11.6

Note: Location of spouses is based on the assignment of the service member. Service members stationed in the District of Columbia are omitted. Numbers are as of September 30, 2011.



## References and Notes

- <sup>i</sup>In this report, "military spouses" refer to the civilian spouses of military personnel.
- <sup>ii</sup>Lim, Nelson, Daniela Golinelli, and Michelle Cho. "Working Around the Military" Revisited: Spouse Employment in the 2000 Census Data. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007.
- <sup>iii</sup>Where the civilian population is adjusted for the gender composition of the military spouse population
- <sup>iv</sup>Lim, Nelson, Daniela Golinelli, and Michelle Cho. "Working Around the Military" Revisited: Spouse Employment in the 2000 Census Data. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007.
- <sup>v</sup>DMDC (2011). 2010 Military Family Life Project: Administration, datasets, and codebook (Report No. 2010-031). Arlington, VA: DMDC. All data are from 2010.
- <sup>vi</sup>Rosen, Leora N., Jeannette R. Ickovics, and Linda Z. Moghamdam. "Employment and Role Satisfaction." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 14 (1990): 371-85
- <sup>vii</sup>Blue Star Families. "2010 Military Family Lifestyle Survey." *Blue Star Families*. 07 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>viii</sup>Blue Star Families. "2010 Military Family Lifestyle Survey." *Blue Star Families*. 07 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>ix</sup>Defense Manpower Data Center, *2008 DMDC Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. Available: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/index.jsp>
- <sup>x</sup>Defense Manpower Data Center, *2008 DMDC Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. Available: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/index.jsp>
- <sup>xi</sup>See Appendix 1 for the difference between 'certification' and 'licensing.'
- <sup>xii</sup>Krueger, Alan B. "Do You Need a License to Earn a Living? You Might Be Surprised at the Answer." *The New York Times*. 02 Mar. 2006. Web. 07 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>xiii</sup>Blue Star Families. "2010 Military Family Lifestyle Survey." *Blue Star Families*. 07 Jan. 2011. The Blue Star Families survey was an informal survey of military spouses.
- <sup>xiv</sup>Blue Star Families. "2010 Military Family Lifestyle Survey." *Blue Star Families*. 07 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>xv</sup>Blue Star Families. "2010 Military Family Lifestyle Survey." *Blue Star Families*. 07 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>xvi</sup>The CPS consists of a representative sample of about 60,000 households a month, and labor force questions are asked concerning all working-age adult members in the household. The ASEC CPS supplement includes detailed questions on the occupation of all working-age adults.
- <sup>xvii</sup>Department of Defense Personnel Files; this does not include spouses who are themselves a part of the military.
- <sup>xviii</sup>Defense Manpower Data Center, *2008 DMDC Survey of Active Duty Spouses*. Available: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/index.jsp>
- <sup>xix</sup>Using CPS and a list of licensed occupations from Kleiner, Morris M., and Alan B. Krueger. "The Prevalence and Effects of Occupational Licensing." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 48.4 (2010): 676-87.
- <sup>xx</sup>Excludes moves from overseas.
- <sup>xxi</sup>These data are from 2006-2010 because questions regarding mobility are asked of the previous year. These data were compiled using pooled data from 2007 to the 2011 ASEC CPS supplement.
- <sup>xxii</sup>"Registered Nurses." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 17 Dec. 2009. Web. 22 Jan. 2012.
- <sup>xxiii</sup>Before 1982, this test was called the State Board Test Pool Examination (SBTPE), and results from this older version of the test are still accepted by state nursing boards.
- <sup>xxiv</sup>National Council of State Boards of Nursing. "What Is NCLEX?" Web. 22 Jan. 2012.
- <sup>xxv</sup>Broun, Caroline N. "About NCLA." Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators. 2010. Web. 07 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>xxvi</sup>National Council of State Boards of Nursing. "Nurse Licensure Compact: Fact Sheet for Licensees and Nursing Students." NCLA.
- <sup>xxvii</sup>National Council of State Boards of Nursing. "NURSYS." Nursys.com. 2011. Web. 22 Jan. 2012
- <sup>xxviii</sup>National Council of State Boards of Nursing. "Frequently Asked Questions." NURSYS, 2011. Web. 7 Jan. 2011.
- <sup>xxix</sup>Prior convictions and disciplinary actions are often reviewed by state boards on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the severity of prior offenses and any remedial activities that may have been required. Telephone conversation with Danny Cope, California Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Registered Nursing call center operator, October 20, 2010.
- <sup>xxx</sup>Web sites of the listed state's Board of Nursing. Contact information for each State Board is posted on the web site of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, under a link for Boards of Nursing. See [www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org).
- <sup>xxxi</sup>Web sites of the listed state's Board of Nursing. See [www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org).
- <sup>xxxii</sup>Telephone conversation with Danny Cope, California Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Registered Nursing call center operator, October 20, 2010.

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<sup>xxxiii</sup>Telephone conversation with Diane Tompkins, Assistant Director of Certifications, American Nurses' Credentials Center, October 21, 2010.

<sup>xxxiv</sup>Email correspondence with Anne Tumbarello, Director of the BSN Program at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, California.

<sup>xxxv</sup>Educational Testing Service. "The Praxis Series Passing Scores by Test and State." Ets.org. 2010. Web. 12 Feb. 2012. The table lists four of the ten states with the largest active duty military populations for which Praxis cut off scores are available.

<sup>xxxvi</sup>Eligible military spouses include those who are married to Service members on active duty and those who are married to members of the Guard and Reserve who are on Federal orders. The junior grades covered are Enlisted grades E1 – E5, Warrant Officer grades W1 and W2, and Officer grades O1 and O2.

<sup>xxxvii</sup>Kleiner, Morris M., and Alan B. Krueger. "The Prevalence and Effects of Occupational Licensing." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 48.4 (2010): 676-87.

<sup>xxxviii</sup>Kleiner, Morris M., and Alan B. Krueger. "The Prevalence and Effects of Occupational Licensing." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 48.4 (2010): 676-87.