



USA4MilitaryFamilies

Department of Defense – State Liaison Office (DSLO)

Purpose

Since many issues surrounding quality of life and family well-being can only be addressed by states, the Department of Defense (DoD) started the USA4 Military Families initiative, worked through the DoD-State Liaison Office (DSLO), to engage state policymakers, not-for-profit associations, concerned business interests, and other state leaders about the needs of military members and their families. By developing state/military partnerships, the DoD seeks to work with states to remove unnecessary barriers and significantly improve the quality of life for military families.

What we do

The DSLO has 8 Liaisons across the country working with the many state leaders who are concerned for the welfare of the Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Service members and their families living within their borders. We broadly educate state leaders on key issues, and as this education process proceeds, build relationships with interested state leaders. If one of these leaders (normally members of the legislature) wants to tackle an issue, we can provide assistance in the form of identifying 'best practice' legislation from other states and providing testimony as it is requested.

Track record

The USA4 Military Families initiative has been very successful and much progress has been made. Over the past few years, states have addressed several key quality of life issues, to include the impact of frequent school transitions experienced by military children, the lost income by military spouses as a result of military moves, and the enforcement of the congressionally mandated DoD predatory lending regulation. In this regard, 50 states have joined the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, 46 states now provide eligibility for unemployment compensation to military spouses, and 37 states can enforce the DoD predatory lending regulation.

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www.USA4MilitaryFamilies.dod.mil

www.USA4MilitaryFamilies.org



Key Personnel and Readiness Issues Supporting Service Members and Families

(For 2015)



ACTIVE ISSUES:

Facilitate military spouse transition through licensure portability: Mandatory military moves require spouses to leave employment and start again in a state with new licensing requirements. States can help by expediting licensing through endorsement, temporary licensure and streamlined processes.

Allow Service members to retain their earned priority for receiving Medicaid home and community care waivers: Because states frequently have long waiting lists, members face large gaps in service every time they transfer across state lines. Allowing Service members to enroll their exceptional family member in the State they designate as their legal residence (i.e. where they pay taxes, vote, etc.) can stabilize their request for support.

Facilitate Service members receiving licensure and academic credit for military education, training and experience: Separating Service members may be held back from finding employment or finishing a degree. States can assist separating Service members not having to repeat requirements completed while in the military to obtain academic credit or an occupational license.

Provide authority for establishing Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs): One in five veterans suffer from behavioral health problems. These problems can result in homelessness, family stress and/or disintegration, and instances of criminal behavior. States can help by authorizing VTCs to facilitate rehabilitation (instead of incarceration) for veterans and Service members experiencing problems.

Assign an identifier for military children in education data systems: Military children may experience unique life challenges, but there is no method of tracking their attendance and academic progress in public schools. States can assist DoD in developing policies and military child education initiatives by identifying military children and providing data on their educational outcomes.

Promote consumer protections and enforcement of the predatory lending regulation: Some lending practices create a cycle of debt, thus detracting from financial wellbeing and military readiness. States can help by working with the military community on consumer concerns and by fully enforcing the DoD regulation on payday, vehicle title, and refund anticipation loans.

Increase access to quality childcare for military families: Demand for child care continues to out-pace capacity. States can assist in enhancing available capacity by integrating DoD standards on inspections and background checks into their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) for child care programs.

Comport state laws with DoD rules on disposition: Many states require disposition of remains be determined through state-specific documentation or by a priority sequence of next of kin. States can alleviate potential family disharmony during a time of bereavement by recognizing the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD) selected by the Service member on DD Form 93 (Record of Emergency Data), in accordance with Federal law.

Ensure separations due to military duty do not determine child custody decisions: Extended separations due to military service necessarily alter short-term custody/visitation arrangements and can have long-term consequences. States can appropriately balance the interests of Service members while preserving the best interests of the child, address delegation of visitation rights, expedite court dockets, and use electronic communications to accommodate military demands.

ISSUES UNDER DEVELOPMENT:

Employment protections during state-sponsored activation: State statutes that cover Guard members during state-sponsored mobilizations impact employers within the state. States can modify their statutes to protect the employment rights of members of the National Guard living outside of their affiliated state during state-sponsored mobilizations.

Support for Caregivers of Disabled Veterans: States have policies and services to support caregivers of the elderly and children with special needs. States can adjust these policies to make needed support more available to caregivers of disabled veterans.

Standardize relationships among local courts, agencies and military communities for child advocacy: DoD installations develop Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with counties which can leave gaps in coverage and inconsistencies in managing care for children in protective custody and foster care. States can provide consistent underlying policies to support the development of more consistent MoUs.

State licensing exemption for distance education under the DoD MoU: Service members may lose substantial academic credit if they are transferred to states where there is no agreement allowing them to continue taking distance education courses from their out-of-state institution. States can exempt licensing requirements for postsecondary distance education programs operating under a MoU with DoD.

Allow private sector employers to offer hiring preference to veterans: Private sector employers attempting to offer hiring preferences to veterans may be risking claims of discrimination from applicants lacking military experience. States can establish policies that protect private sector employers from discrimination claims when offering hiring preference to veterans.