



U.S. Department of Defense

Working With State Policymakers to Support Military Families

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Background

The Defense-State Liaison Office works with state policymakers to change laws and policies to improve military family well-being. Each year, the DSLO focuses on key priorities. For each priority, the Military State Policy Source website provides background information, official Defense Department data and status updates on relevant information across states.

Purpose

Many issues impacting the well-being of service members and their families are best addressed by state governments. In 2004, the undersecretary of defense for Personnel and Readiness established a state government relations program through the DSLO to educate policymakers on unintended barriers created by state policies and other issues important to military families.

What We Do

The DSLO has eight regional liaisons who live and work in regions of the United States overseeing state and territorial relations and interstate policy for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The liaisons assist state policymakers by providing educational information, identifying and sharing best practices and delivering testimony in support of sponsored initiatives.

Track Record

The DSLO has assisted state policymakers to enact at least 1,275 bills since 2012 covering occupational licensure, employment protection, consumer protection, family law, child care, child protection, voting, education, health care and state judicial systems.

Explore Military State Policy Source

Visit our website to access information about the 2025 State Policy Priorities, track the status of legislation on these issues across states and connect to official data from the Defense Department.

Learn more at statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil.



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2025 State Policy Priorities

Access to Quality Child Care: In many cases, family child care providers certified by the military must also be licensed or registered by the state, even when only caring for eligible Defense Department-affiliated children. By recognizing military family DOD child care certification, in lieu of requiring state licensing, states can improve access to family child care for military families. States can also participate in the military child care fee assistance program, Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting: Federal law requires the Defense Department to request state reports regarding instances of child abuse and neglect involving military family members. States can assist military Family Advocacy Programs in providing needed support by requiring child protective services to report cases to the military at the onset of their investigations.

Remote Driver's License and Vehicle Registration Renewal: States can support service members and their families by allowing them to remotely renew driver's licenses and vehicle registrations when service members are assigned out of state.

Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction: Military installations subject to exclusive federal jurisdiction often handle juvenile offenses through the federal system. Adopting policies that facilitate establishment of concurrent jurisdiction can open the door to state resources and juvenile courts, offering better solutions, including more rehabilitative approaches, tailored to address juveniles.

Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities: As states implement the provisions of the Military Spouse Licensing Relief Act, they can help spouses maintain professional and financial stability by ensuring that a state license can be obtained in 30 days, with minimal paperwork, and that licensing agencies make their application processes easily accessible online. States can consider additional support by providing employment preference and ensuring that private employers can also offer preference under the law.

Discrimination Protection for Military Families: Military families may face discrimination in the areas of employment and housing. States can adopt policies to protect military families from the adverse impacts of discrimination due to military affiliation.

Occupational Licensure Interstate Compacts: Licensure compacts create seamless licensure portability for all members of a profession, including military spouses and service members. Compacts are state-to-state agreements that establish uniform standards to multistate practice while preserving a state's practice act and initial licensure process. By adopting licensure compacts, states can improve military spouse employment and military family financial readiness.

State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence: Interpersonal violence is when harmful behavior, including various forms of abuse, asserts power or control over another person. States can enhance statutes relating to domestic violence, sexual assault and filing procedures for protection orders to assist victims of military interpersonal violence.

Defining Armed Forces in State Policy: States can minimize disruptions in state benefits and services, for eligible service members and dependents, by clearly defining "armed forces" in state policy and adopting the most current definition of "armed forces," which includes the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard.

Open Enrollment Flexibility: States can improve military families' access to existing district, interdistrict and intradistrict transfer programs by modifying state education open enrollment policies.

State Support of Military Families With Special Educational Needs: Highly mobile children, including military children, are more likely to experience recurring educational disruptions and challenges, particularly those who need access to special education and related services. States can assist military families by ensuring timely establishment of special education services upon relocation and reducing burdens associated with due process proceedings.

Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils: States may better serve the unique demographic of military families by including military community members in state-level boards and councils. States can ensure that military quality of life and operational priorities are considered across pertinent policy areas by establishing a statewide military affairs commission or specifying membership of military community representatives on existing public advisory bodies.