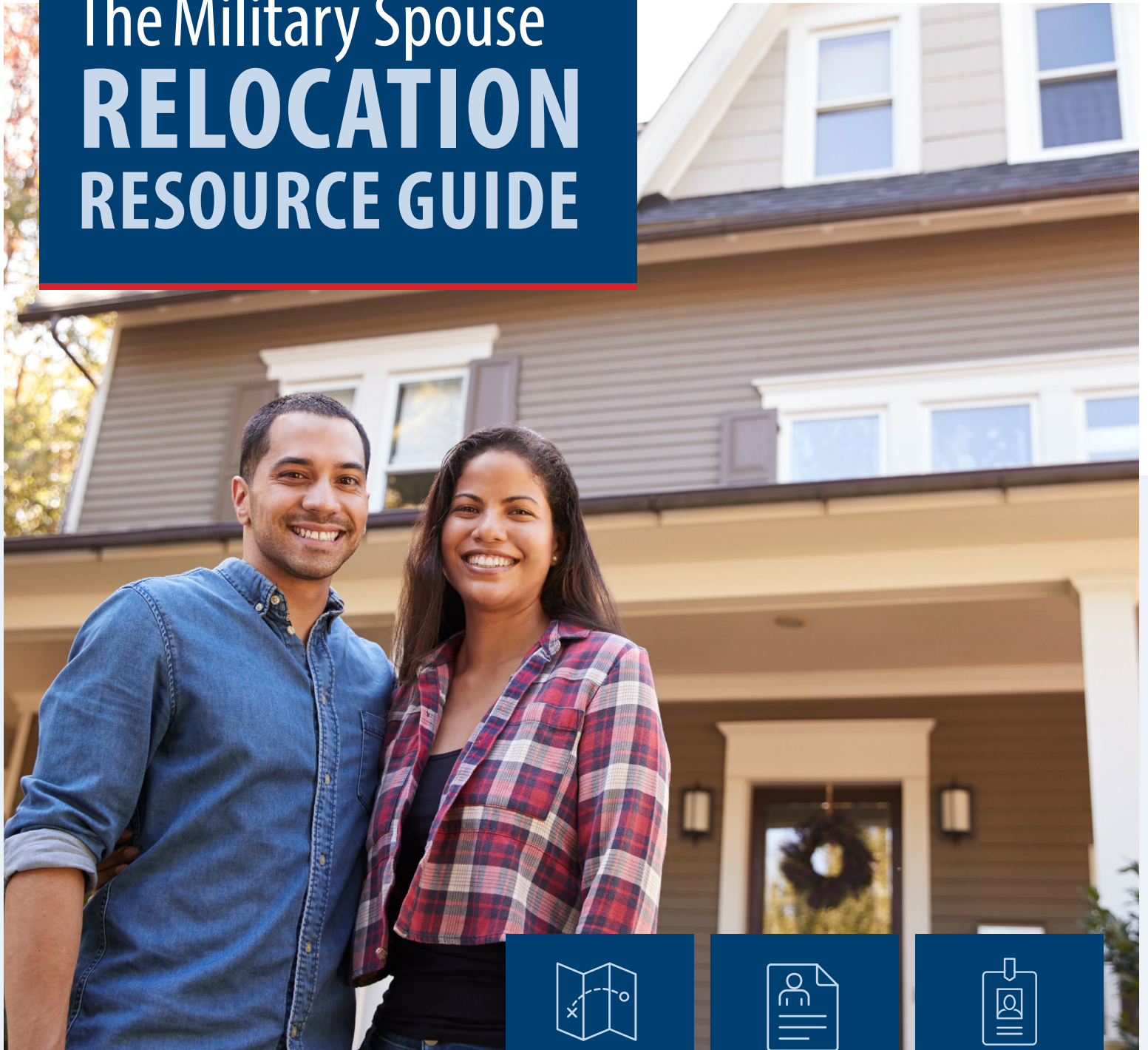




The Military Spouse **RELOCATION** **RESOURCE GUIDE**



Navigating the
Federal hiring
process



Applying
for Federal
jobs



Finding
employment
at VA

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*To build the
strongest possible
workforce to serve
our Nation's heroes,
we need to hire and
support military
spouses - many of
whom are Veterans
themselves.*

**Denis R. McDonough,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs**

THE MILITARY SPOUSE RELOCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

VA Creates Federal Employment Pathways for Relocating Military Spouses

At the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), ensuring the Nation's Veterans, transitioning Service members, and military spouses have access to career services and employment opportunities is a critical component of services that advance VA's mission and contribute to the success of the national workforce.

The Veteran and Military Spouse Talent Engagement Program (VMSTEP), established in 2018, oversees and supports VA employment initiatives that promote recruitment and retention of Veterans, transitioning Service members, eligible military spouses, and



survivors. VMSTEP, a strategic program management office of VA, provides employment readiness assistance, outreach, and other professional resources to help Veterans and military spouses understand and navigate the Federal hiring process while advocating the use of special hiring authorities, employment programs, and Veteran retention strategies, to position VA as the employer of choice for Veterans and military spouses.

Recent Presidential executive orders to advance the economic security for members of the military community have prompted renewed hiring priorities, specifically to improve military spouse recruitment and retention across the Federal Government and VA. The Military Spouse Hiring Toolkit released by the White House (2024), as well as the Office of Personnel Management's Playbook for Rebuilding the Federal Workforce (2021), guides Federal hiring managers on the use of relevant hiring authorities authorized to help increase the number of military spouses hired into the Federal workforce.

VMSTEP's Military Spouse Relocation Resource Guide is a product that can support military spouses who are relocating to capitalize on Federal hiring policies and find meaningful career opportunities within VA. This resource guide also provides professional and educational development resources to support military spouses in retaining and growing their careers, all while supporting their Service members and families during relocation.

VA demonstrates a deep understanding of the unique challenges military spouses and their families encounter. As an employer, VA is leading the way in eliminating barriers with military spouse employment and career opportunities, particularly for those relocating. This resource guide highlights why VA is the employer of choice for military spouses and how VA can create meaningful careers wherever a military spouse may relocate.



THE MILITARY SPOUSE UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

VA Recognizes the Challenges Military Spouses Experience in the Workforce

Military spouses are valuable assets to any workforce, bringing a broad range of professional skills and experiences, combined with strong character traits such as resiliency, problem-solving, and adaptability.

However, this skilled, talented, and diverse population consistently experiences underemployment and unemployment. According to the Department of Defense (DoD) Active Duty Spouse Survey (2021), military spouse unemployment is approximately 21%, which is consistent with an active-duty spouse survey conducted in 2015 (U.S. Department of Defense, 2015). Moreover, according to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report (2024), approximately 74,000

military spouses were unemployed and seeking employment. Unemployment statistics have fluctuated since the pandemic. In a Hiring Our Heroes (HOH) Military Spouse Flash Survey (2023), unemployment rates for military spouses post-COVID-19 were estimated around 38%.

According to VA, more than 600,000 military families move or transition out of military service every year (VA News, 2023). Relocation is a significant factor in military spouses underemployment and unemployment. In the 2021 Military Spouse at a

We are grateful for your selfless service to the Nation. At VA, we appreciate that you and your families are serving and sacrificing right alongside your loved ones.

Secretary McDonough



Glance DoD Survey of Active Duty Spouses, 48% of spouses stated that finding employment was their most significant problem during a Permanent Change of Station (PCS).

DoD also reports that military families move every 2-3 years on average—sometimes sooner—based on the needs of the branch of service. This demanding operations tempo not only uproots established support networks for the military spouse, but also leads them to leave their current employers, reconsider another career path, or leave the workforce altogether. Additionally, 28% of active-duty military spouses who experienced a PCS move within a year saw their chances of unemployment more than double. Moreover, once a spouse arrives at a new location, it can take months to secure new employment. In the DoD 2021 survey, 26% of surveyed spouses reported that it took them more than 7 months to find new employment.

Relocation challenges are particularly compounded for licensed professionals who invest in specialized degrees or training, as they bear additional burden of annual licensing; 36% of active-duty spouses require

a state-issued license for their chosen career field, and 31% of responding spouses had to acquire a new professional license or credential for new work after their PCS move (U.S. Department of Defense, 2021).

These statistics show that many military spouses have put their careers on hold or left them entirely to prioritize the needs of their Service members. In the 2015 Survey of Active Duty Spouses (U.S. Department of Defense), spouses highlighted additional challenges they faced during a PCS, including loss of income (42%) and non-reimbursable moving costs (37%). There are significant impacts on overall economic wellness, retirement prospects, benefits, and job security for relocating military spouses.

At the Federal Government level, agencies like VA are working to address and overcome the military spouse employment barriers that have created challenges to consistent employment and career growth across the military spouse community. Recent Administrations have enacted policies, initiatives, and executive orders to find solutions that support and advance military spouse careers, specifically in the Federal sector.



MILITARY SPOUSES ARE VALUABLE AT VA.

Military Spouses are:

- ☑ Adaptable
- ☑ Resilient
- ☑ Diverse
- ☑ Collaborative
- ☑ Educated
- ☑ Connected
- ☑ Experienced
- ☑ Entrepreneurial
- ☑ Resourceful
- ☑ Dedicated
- ☑ Engaged
- ☑ Service Oriented

CREATING WORK-LIFE BALANCE THROUGH VA CAREER BENEFITS

VA is the Employer of Choice for Relocating Military Spouses

VA is committed to reducing military spouse underemployment and unemployment rates by increasing employment opportunities and agency benefits that support the military spouses and their families. Work-life balance is crucial to a thriving workplace and family. As a Federal agency, VA prides itself on creating access, pathways, and accommodations for military spouses.

Flexible schedules: A 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. job schedule may suit some, but it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Military families can benefit from flexible schedules that are more accommodating to their lifestyles through compressed work schedules and/or arrival and departure variances.

Compensation: VA offers competitive compensation with steady growth and incentives. Compensation and pay-based incentives can include recruitment and relocation bonuses, retention bonuses, performance-based increases, as well as premium rates for overtime, weekend, holiday, on-call, and night work.

Child Care: Financial assistance is available through the VA Childcare Subsidy Program (CCSP). It is designed to ease the financial burden of childcare expenses. The program is open to all permanent full-time VA employees with eligible children, including those assigned to U.S. territories.

Paid leave: VA offers up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave, 13 sick days annually with unlimited accumulation, and up to 26 days of paid annual leave.

Health care: If the Service member transitions out of service and leaves without full Tricare benefits, VA



offers insurance benefits that include comprehensive Federal health insurance with up to 75% of health premiums paid. Long-term care coverage for home care, adult day care, and facility care is also available. Lastly, tax-free flexible savings accounts are available to employees.

Retirement: VA employees have access to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and are eligible for monthly retirement benefits after 5 years of Federal service. Additionally, employees can access long-term disability benefits after 18 months of Federal service.

By implementing specific benefit programs and initiatives, VA aims to empower military spouses in keeping meaningful Federal careers while positively contributing to the well-being and stability of all those who serve.

THE 4+1 COMMITMENT

VA is Committed to Improving Military Spouse Employment Outcomes



In March 2024, VA signed the 4+1 Commitment, a voluntary partnership between the Federal Government and private employers to recruit, hire, train, and retain military spouses (VA News, 2024). Developed by Blue Star Families (BSF), HOH, and DoD's Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), the new campaign is championed by Dr. Jill Biden and made possible by Craig Newmark Philanthropies.

This voluntary commitment encourages Federal and private employers to not only hire military spouses, but also provides four proven pathways that can help them retain and grow their careers. Through 4+1, VA is strategically implementing policies across four key tenets to attract, hire, and retain military spouses.

At VA, integrating the 4+1 tenets into agency-wide hiring and retention priorities speaks to a deep commitment to military spouses by prioritizing their unique career experiences and needs. When VA hires and retains a military spouse, military families experience improved economic outcomes and have a stable foundation to thrive.



TENET 1

Offer remote or telework

When feasible, VA offers telework and remote work positions for military spouse employees. For military spouses seeking employment, VA uses the remote jobs filter on USAJobs.gov to list these announcements.

TENET 2

Facilitate job transferability

VA supports the reassignment of VA military spouse employees to vacant, funded positions for which they are qualified when required to move as part of the Service member's military service.

TENET 3

Offer flexible work hours

Recognizing the ever-changing demands of military life, VA policy provides military spouses opportunities to request flexible work hours or compressed work schedules.

TENET 4

Provide paid or permissive Permanent Change of Station (PCS) leave

VA management officials can approve up to five days of paid administrative leave for military spouse employees during PCS. This leave may be used at any time during the relocation and taken intermittently. The granting of up to 5 days, as referenced in Executive Order 14100, has been communicated across VA through policy guidance.

DECODING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HIRING AUTHORITIES

VA Provides Pathways to Federal Opportunities for Eligible Military Spouses

Understanding military spouse hiring authorities is a critical part in navigating vacancies within the Federal Government and VA. These particular hiring authorities provide opportunities to spouses of active-duty Service members by offering enhanced access to Federal job vacancies. These provisions can facilitate hiring, career advancement, and stability for military spouses.

The Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Military Spouses (Executive Order 13473) hiring authority is the Government-wide hiring authority available to all Federal agencies for hiring certain eligible military spouses.

The authority does not take precedence over the use of other appointment mechanisms, nor does it entitle spouses to an appointment over any other applicant; it is used at the discretion of the agency.

Federal agencies are encouraged to hire military spouses to the greatest extent possible, under Executive Order 13832: Enhancing Noncompetitive Civil Service Appointments of Military Spouses. This is further emphasized in Executive Order 14100: Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors.



THE NONCOMPETITIVE APPOINTMENT OF CERTAIN MILITARY SPOUSES (EXECUTIVE ORDER 13473)

The Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Military Spouses (Executive Order 13473) hiring authority allows agencies to appoint certain military spouses without using traditional competitive examining procedures. This hiring authority currently applies to the following categories:

- » Spouses of Service members of the armed forces on active duty.
- » [Spouses of Service members who incurred a 100% disability because of their Service member's active duty.](#)
- » Spouses of Service members killed while on active duty.

Spouses must apply to the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) and be found qualified for the position for the hiring agency to consider them under this authority.

Spouses must provide acceptable documentation of their appointment eligibility. This documentation includes but is not limited to:

- » Narrative resume,
- » PCS orders,
- » Marriage certificate or license,
- » Notification of Personnel Action (SF50), if applicable,
- » Request for Preliminary Employment Data (SF75) documenting current or previous Federal appointment(s), if applicable; and
- » An updated and signed Military Spouse Priority Placement Program (PPP) Self-Certification Checklist must be submitted with each job application.



RELEVANT MILITARY SPOUSE NONCOMPETITIVE APPOINTING AUTHORITY RESOURCES:

Separately, the Military Spouse Preference (MSP) is a DoD program applicable only to DoD positions. Through this program, DoD has expanded employment opportunities for this population. MSP applies when positions are filled using competition procedures and the spouse is determined to be among the best qualified. Those who qualify for this program are spouses of active-duty Service members of the U.S. Armed Forces (including the Coast Guard), who relocate to accompany their sponsor on a PCS move.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND NETWORKS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

VA Provides Military Spouses with Communities of Support

VA prioritizes creating opportunities and connecting military spouses with the tools they need to access careers within VA that support military life. Following VA's historic pledge to the 4+1 Commitment, military spouses can anticipate an increase in products, resources, and services that create opportunities for attractive and sustainable Federal careers. VA will continue to advance military spouse careers by delivering pragmatic, solution-based support. This includes expansion of pre-existing resources such as Federal resume writing workshops, utilization of [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov), and guided assistance in creating Federal job applications. These practical tools, along with the assistance of a hiring manager, support military spouses through all stages of military relocation.

To learn more about VA resources and support for military spouses, visit [VA for Vets: Military Spouse Training and Resources](#).

Through communication channels, outreach, virtual support, and recruitment events, VA is proactively connecting military spouses and empowering them to find meaningful careers. Learn more about VA resources and support for military spouses below.

VETERAN AND MILITARY SPOUSE TALENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM (VMSTEP)

VMSTEP provides employment readiness and outreach to military spouses, as well as Veterans and transitioning Service members, through communications channels, virtual support, and in-person hiring and outreach events.

- » Visit the [VMSTEP website](#) for resources, including:
 - In-person and virtual hiring events.
 - Monthly Federal Application Process webinars.
 - [Tips for Military Spouses Fact Sheet](#).
- » Sign up for [GovDelivery e-bulletins](#) for remote and in-person featured jobs and virtual and local hiring events delivered monthly via email.
- » Visit the [VMSTEP Facebook page](#) for resources, hiring events, webinars, and more.

CONNECT WITH A VA RECRUITER

VA recruiters are available to help military spouses connect with opportunities in specialized career fields.

[Connect with a VA recruiter](#) to learn more.

VA CAREERS

VA Careers is the Department's recruitment organization that fills health care vacancies, such as medical providers, administrators, and support professionals, at more than 1,250 locations across the country. [Learn more and find open positions.](#)

VA MILITARY SPOUSE AND FAMILY EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP (ERG)

Established in 2023, VA's Military Spouse and Family Employee Resource Group (ERG) is open to all VA employees, contractors, volunteers, and retirees. It is organized to help VA attract and retain an agile, skilled, and representative workforce by developing creative, inclusive solutions for the unique challenges facing VA employees who are military spouses or family members. The ERG advocates for policies to enhance the recruitment, retention, and morale of military spouses and family employees. VA's ERG currently has more than 200 members. [Connect](#) with the VA Military Spouse and Family Employee Resource Group, via email.

TALK ABOUT IT TUESDAY

VA hosts "Talk About It Tuesday", a weekly LinkedIn series featuring tips on the Federal application process and available careers. [Learn more](#) or catch up on [past broadcasts](#).

DOD'S MILITARY ONESOURCE

[Military OneSource](#) is a one-stop shop for military spouses to navigate military life. Employment resources are emphasized.



MILITARY SPOUSE EDUCATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES (SECO)

Military spouses can find additional career and educational guidance, as well as resources, through the DoD program, [SECO](#).

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AND ASSOCIATIONS

VA encourages leveraging existing professional networks to connect with other career-driven military spouses and employers in targeted geographic or professional areas. For relocating military spouses, connecting to professional networks and associations can help rebuild or maintain strong communities of support. Consider reaching out to local military base hiring contacts, career-specific military spouse professional groups and associations, and other military spouse-connected organizations.



THE WAY FORWARD WITH VA

VA Wants Military Spouses in the Federal Workforce

VA's commitment is to serve not just the Veteran but also the military spouse and family. For military spouses navigating relocation, PCS orders, and active-duty military life, VA can provide the support and opportunities needed to help military spouses accomplish their career goals while supporting their Service member.

This resource guide can help leverage the tools and strategies available to overcome relocation challenges and maintain fulfilling employment. Whether it is updating a resume, building a profile on USAJobs.gov, talking with a hiring manager at VA, or exploring

professional resources and opportunities, VA and VMSTEP are here to assist every step of the way. VA and VMSTEP wish all military spouses' success in their pursuit of meaningful and rewarding Federal employment.

For more information, visit www.vaforvets.va.gov.

Our commitment to you is about career growth, opportunities to advance, and investments in your unique skills and talent.

We need you. Our Veterans need you. Join VA and be a part of this great team.

Secretary McDonough



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No one understands better than VA the invaluable experiences and contributions you, a military spouse, brings to our mission. And nobody understands Veterans and their families, military experiences, their hopes, and their dreams better than you.

Secretary McDonough

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