

Expanding Employment Opportunities for Military Spouses in Washington

Reducing Barriers and Enhancing Supports for Spouses of Active-Duty Service Members
June 2024



SOUTH SOUND MILITARY &
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2200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1000
Seattle, Washington 98121
P (206) 324-8760
www.berkconsulting.com

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Project Team

Julia Tesch · Project Manager

Sabrina Santos · Lead Analyst

Stella Streufert · Analyst

Brian Murphy · Strategic Advisor

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Acronyms

BAH Basic Allowance for Housing

CDC Childcare Development Center

COLA Cost of Living Adjustment

DoD Department of Defense

FAFB Fairchild Air Force Base

FCC Family Child Care program

JBLM Joint Base Lewis-McChord

MCCYN/MCCYN-Plus Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood and Plus Expansion

MyCAA My Career Advancement Account

NASWI Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

NBK Naval Base Kitsap

NSE Naval Station Everett

PCS Permanent Change of Station

QRIS Quality Rating and Improvement System

SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SSMCP South Sound Military & Communities Partnership

TAP Transition Assistance Program

WIC Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program supplement for Women, Infants, and children

WDVA Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs



Executive Summary

Military spouse employment has long been a significant issue for military families, as evidenced by substantial national research. In 2023, 48% of active-duty families reported spousal employment challenges as a major family stressor and in 2021, 18% reported it as a potential reason for separating from the military.¹ Military spouse employment issues also impact the military's recruitment, as military families' quality of life—of which spouse employment is a top concern—impacts their likelihood to recommend military service to others.² With recruitment and retention at a 50-year low,³ it is essential to the military's mission-readiness to improve the state of military spouse employment.

While military spouse employment challenges are well-studied at the national level, there has been limited research into this issue specific to the state of Washington. Given this gap, this study aimed to identify Washington-specific barriers to military spouse employment through direct engagement of military spouses and representatives from groups in the public, private, nonprofit, and military sectors and recommend actions to address these barriers. The resulting 19 recommendations and supporting strategies in this report focus on six areas: (1) outreach, (2) childcare for military families, (3) employment resources, (4) employment opportunity, (5) financial resources and basic needs, and (6) data, research, and advocacy.

Key Findings

- ▶ **Employment barriers that military spouses experience in Washington closely match national barriers.**
- ▶ **Most working spouses' incomes are essential to meeting their families' basic needs.** More than half of surveyed, employed spouses report they could not meet their family's basic needs without their income.
- ▶ **A top barrier to military spouse employment is childcare,** with two-thirds of military spouses surveyed reporting this as a challenge. Cost is the primary barrier to childcare access, with four in five surveyed spouses reporting difficulties with the high cost of childcare. Other common childcare-related challenges include issues with service members' unpredictable schedules and limited availability of childcare providers, both of which impact about two-thirds of surveyed spouses.
- ▶ **Other top barriers include difficulty finding suitable employment, financial challenges, and issues related to moving between installations.** Approximately two in five surveyed spouses reported each of these challenges.

¹ Blue Star Families. Military Families Lifestyle Survey. 2023. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BSF_MFLS_Spring23_Comp_Infographic.pdf; Blue Star Families. 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. 2020. https://www.bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FULL.pdf.

² Blue Star Families. 2021 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. 2021. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BSF_MFLS_Results2021_ComprehensiveReport_3_22.pdf.

³ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of Defense Announces Recruitment and Retention Numbers for Fiscal Year 2023. 2023. prhome.defense.gov/Portals/52/Press%20Release%20May%2023%20-%20Recruiting%20and%20Retention%20Report.pdf.



- ▶ **There are significant existing efforts to support military spouse employment, but many military spouses are unaware of the resources available to them.** A diverse network of organizations, governments, and the military offer resources for military spouses, including for employment, childcare, and family financial readiness. However, engagement with military spouses revealed limited awareness of many of these resources, and one-third of surveyed spouses want to receive more employment-related information.

Recommendations

This report includes 19 recommendations to strengthen military spouse employment. Recommendations address six focus areas:

- A. Outreach: opportunities to share information and increase awareness of resources.** While the military, public sector, and private sector have substantial programs available to military spouses, these programs can only be effective if military spouses are aware of them.
- B. Childcare for military families: opportunities to increase military families' access to affordable childcare.** The statewide survey of military spouses identified childcare as the greatest employment challenge for military spouses, affecting nearly two in three spouses in Washington.
- C. Employment resources: ways to strengthen existing employment-related resources for military spouses, build new supports, and better connect spouses to the available opportunities.** Engagement with spouses and organizations throughout this study revealed opportunities to strengthen existing resources and introduce new resources to support military spouse employment.
- D. Employment opportunity: methods to increase the employment opportunities available to military spouses.** Some employers are not well-prepared to hire and retain military spouses. Work is needed to educate and incentivize employers to hire military spouses, as are stronger protections from bias for military spouses.
- E. Financial resources and basic needs: ways to help military families better meet their basic needs to free up military spouses to seek and maintain employment.** Strengthening military families' overall financial resources can alleviate some pressures that can inhibit military spouse employment.
- F. Data, research, and advocacy: how key groups can broadly continue to advance support for military spouse employment.** To meaningfully advance military spouse employment opportunity, there must be deep collaboration and ongoing evaluation of progress.

Effecting Change in Washington and Beyond

A broad landscape of organizations influences military spouse employment, including key groups in the military, public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Each strategy supporting the recommendations in this study is linked to one or more of these key groups. Many key groups have already been involved in this work to date, and others will need to be more deeply engaged moving forward. As Washington's key groups work to implement these recommendations, cross-sector involvement and robust collaboration will be essential to success.

Washington's five major installations are diverse, representing different service branches and community sizes, demographics, and attributes. Despite these differences, this study finds that there are common



patterns in military spouses' employment challenges across installations. Further, this study finds that the employment challenges that military spouses experience across Washington align with national challenges. Given these parallels, the recommendations in this report likely have broad applicability to communities across the country, offering a potential pathway to improve military spouse employment nationwide.



Introduction

Military spouses have long reported that they face obstacles to employment. Although military spouses are highly educated—nearly 75% have at least some college education compared to 55% for all civilian, non-institutionalized Americans of working age⁴—the unemployment rate of military spouses nationally is three to four times that of the general population, and spousal employment is reported as the top issue facing military families.⁵ Among active-duty military families, almost half (48%) report spousal employment challenges as a major family stressor⁶ and 18% report spousal employment challenges as a reason for potentially choosing to separate from the military.⁷ When military spouses are satisfied with their employment options, they are more likely to support their spouse’s continued service in the military. Given that military recruitment and retention are at a 50-year low,⁸ retention of service members is essential for mission-readiness.

The South Sound Military & Communities Partnership (SSMCP)⁹ led a statewide study to:

1. Identify barriers to military spouse employment across Washington.
2. Develop strategies to address these barriers and enhance support for military spouse employment.

The Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) funded the study and BERK Consulting provided analytic support. The study launched in April 2023 and concluded in June 2024.

Washington’s Military Communities

There are five major U.S. military installations in Washington, comprising 69,725 service members. Exhibit 1 describes key attributes of each of these installations, and the following bullets describe the installations within the context of their host communities. Exhibit 2 shows a map of the installations.

- **Fairchild Air Force Base (FAFB).** Since 1942, FAFB has served as a key center for air refueling and operational support for a range of military operations. FAFB’s Center of Excellence for Air Refueling is

⁴ U.S. Council of Economic Advisers. Military Spouses in the Labor Market. 2018.

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>.

⁵ Blue Star Families. Military Family Lifestyle Survey: 2023 Comprehensive Report. 2023. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/BSF_MFLS_Comp_Report_Full_Digital-042424.pdf.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Blue Star Families. 2021 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. 2021. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BSF_MFLS_Results2021_ComprehensiveReport_3_22.pdf.

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of Defense Announces Recruitment and Retention Numbers for Fiscal Year 2023. 2023, prhome.defense.gov/Portals/52/Press%20Release%20May%202023%20-%20Recruiting%20and%20Retention%20Report.pdf.

⁹ **SSMCP** is a partnership of more than 50 members in the South Sound region, including cities, counties, tribes, nonprofits, corporations, organizations, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord. SSMCP seeks to bridge military and civilian communities through innovative and flexible partnerships and performing mutually beneficial work in the South Sound.



home to the Air Force’s premier tanker base and a survival training school. FAFB is within the Spokane-Spokane Valley metro area, which has an estimated population of 597,919 residents.¹⁰ Principal nearby communities include the cities of Airway Heights, Medical Lake, and Spokane.

- ▶ **Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM).** JBLM is a training and mobilization center for all services and the only Army power-projection platform west of the Rockies. Its geographic location provides strategic access to the ports of Tacoma, Olympia, and Seattle and the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. JBLM is within the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metro area, which has an estimated population of 4,034,248 residents.¹¹ Communities closest to the base include Lakewood, Tacoma, Lacey, Dupont, Olympia, and Yelm.
- ▶ **Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI).** As the sole naval aviation support in the Pacific Northwest, NASWI provides facilities, services, and products to the naval aviation community. Because of its geographic location on an island, NASWI is relatively isolated, and the principal nearby community is the City of Oak Harbor, which has an estimated population of 24,404 residents.¹²
- ▶ **Naval Base Kitsap (NBK).** NBK serves as host command for the Navy's fleet throughout West Puget Sound and provides base operating services, including support to submarines, aircraft carriers and surface ships home ported at Bremerton and Bangor. NBK is within the Bremerton-Silverdale-Port Orchard metro area, which has an estimated population of 277,673 residents.¹³ The principal nearby community is the City of Bremerton.
- ▶ **Naval Station Everett (NSE).** As the most modern shore installation in the US and one of only two Navy-owned deep-water ports on the continental west coast, NSE provides shore station support to U.S. Naval and Coast Guard forces. Like JBLM, NSE is in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metro Area. The principal nearby community is the City of Everett.

Exhibit 1. Overview of Washington Installations

Installation	Location	Service Branches	# of Military Personnel
FAFB	Spokane County	Air Force	4,410
JBLM	Pierce County	Army, Air Force	34,364
NASWI	Island County	Navy	9,000
NBK	Kitsap County	Navy	15,601
NSE	Snohomish County	Navy	6,350

Sources: Military OneSource, 2024; NASWI, 2018; NBK, 2024; BERK, 2024.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. 2022. *American Community Survey*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.



Exhibit 2. Major military installations in Washington



Source: BERK, 2024.

Building on Existing Work

For decades, a diverse network of organizations, governments, and the military have worked to support military spouses, and the recommendations in this report are intended to supplement and expand on this existing work. This report includes hyperlinks to relevant national and statewide initiatives to draw these connections. This textbox highlights key examples—not an exhaustive list—of existing work to support military spouses in Washington.

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs' Military Spouse Liaison and Military Spouse Initiative

In 2020, [SB 6626](#) created the Washington Military Spouse Liaison position at the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to provide information to military spouses and coordinate research; make recommendations; and advocate for support for military spouses partnership with other State departments. This position has been essential in coordinating and advancing work to support military spouses statewide.

The Military Spouse Liaison conducts this work through the statewide [Military Spouse Initiative](#). This program seeks to reduce and remove employment barriers; connect spouses to resources and available benefits; and convene collaborations of partners who serve military spouses. The program focuses on research and communication; outreach and advocacy; direct engagement of spouses; and tracking and reporting on data regarding military spouse employment, hiring, and licenses. The Initiative facilitates several cross-sector workgroups that convene key groups from across the state, including:

- ▶ [Washington State Military Spouse Employment Workgroup](#).
- ▶ [Washington State Military Spouse Licensing/ Credentials Workgroup](#). This workgroup will be combined with the Employment Workgroup in 2024.
- ▶ [Washington State Child Care for Military Families Workgroup](#).

Existing Employment Resources for Military Spouses

There is a wide range of employment resources available to military spouses through both the military and the nonprofit and private sectors, including:

- ▶ **Fleet and Family Support Centers** at installations offer extensive employment-related and other navigation services to military spouses.
- ▶ **The Department of Defense (DoD) [Spouse Education and Career Opportunities](#)** (MySECO) is a national program that offers coaching services in industry-specific or lifestyle-specific topics. MySECO includes the [Military Spouse Employment Partnership](#) (MSEP), a job board accessible to both employers and military spouses to connect over 700 companies with military spouses seeking employment.
- ▶ **The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's [Hiring Our Heroes](#)** (HoH) initiative offers a wide range of resources to military families, including the [Career Forward](#) training program; virtual and in-person workshops such as [Career Community](#) or [Amplify](#); one-on-one job counseling through [Career Connectors](#); virtual and in-person [hiring events](#); the [Military Spouse Professional Network](#), which offers career development and networking opportunities at JBLM and other military communities outside of the state; and [fellowship programs](#), including a military-spouse-specific [program](#) that provides fellows with training, networking, and hands-on experience in the civilian workforce.
- ▶ **Private job fairs and recruiting programs** offer job boards, career fairs, and general career support. Examples include [RecruitMilitary](#) or [Hire Heroes USA](#) (not to be confused with Hiring Our Heroes).
- ▶ **Community organizations and nonprofits** offer resources and supports to military spouses. See Appendix F: Key Group Research for a list of organizations that support military spouses in Washington.



Methodology

This study developed recommendations through in-depth engagement with both military spouses and key groups that work or volunteer to support military spouses.

Military Spouses

- ▶ **Statewide survey.** A statewide survey of military spouses was conducted to understand the challenges they experience with respect to employment in Washington. Through robust outreach in collaboration with organizations statewide, many of which are listed in Appendix F: Key Group Research, input was gathered from 646 spouses connected to all five of the major installations in the state. See Survey Instrument and Appendix B: Survey Findings for more details on the survey and findings.
- ▶ **Discussion groups.** Three discussion groups with military spouses were held to gather feedback on draft recommendations. See Appendix C: Discussion Groups for more details on takeaways from these conversations.

Key Groups

- ▶ **Project Steering Committee.** A committee of representatives from installations and organizations that work or volunteer to support military spouses met four times throughout the project to guide the project approach, interpret findings from the statewide survey of military spouses, and provide input into draft recommendations. See Appendix D: Project Steering Committee Membership for a list of members of the Committee.
- ▶ **One-on-one Interviews.** The study team interviewed several representatives from installations and organizations that support military spouse employment. Interviews focused on interpreting findings from the statewide survey of military spouses; understanding current work at the local, state, and national level that supports military spouse employment; and identifying potential work to support military spouses further. See Appendix E: Key Group Representative Interviews for a list of interviewees and more details on takeaways from these conversations.
- ▶ **Meetings with WDVA Work Groups.** The study team coordinated with the WDVA Military Spouse Liaison to meet with two WDVA Work Groups that support military spouses: the Washington State Child Care for Military Families Workgroup and the Washington State Military Spouse Employment Workgroup. Discussions with these Workgroups focused on gathering feedback on draft recommendations. See Appendix C: Discussion Groups for participating members of these conversations and more details on takeaways.

Continuing the Conversation

The recommendations in this report were primarily developed with input from military spouses themselves, the military, state government, and nonprofit organizations. The ultimate success of these recommendations will rely on continued and expanded engagement. Groups to engage further as these recommendations are implemented include local governments, employers, and Tribes. See Recommendations for more details on recommended ongoing engagement and research.



Current State of Military Spouse Employment in Washington

A core component of this project was to evaluate existing barriers to military spouse employment in Washington. Prior to this study, most research into military spouse employment had been conducted at the national level, and there was little Washington-specific information available. To fill this gap, a statewide survey of military spouses was conducted to understand the challenges they experience with respect to employment in Washington. The survey received responses from a total of 646 spouses, including 187 spouses from JBLM, 187 from NASWI, 94 from NBK, 67 from NSE, 30 from FAFB, and 14 from other military affiliations, such as recruitment.

The following sections describe key findings from this survey, and Exhibit 3 shows a summary of the challenges that the survey respondents reported. See Appendix B: Survey Findings for a full explanation of Exhibit 3 and for more information on survey respondents and in-depth survey findings.

Employment Rate

Nearly one-half of respondents are employed. 46 percent of respondents are currently employed either full-time or part-time and 43% are not currently employed.

Many part-time employed respondents are underemployed, indicating they would like to work more hours, and many currently unemployed respondents would like to start working. Satisfaction with the number of hours worked is highest (73%) among full-time employed respondents. Nearly half of part-time employed respondents (45%) would like to work more hours and three-fifths of currently unemployed respondents (61%) would like to start working.

Importance of Military Spouse Incomes

Most respondents' incomes are essential to meeting their families' basic needs. Among currently employed respondents, well over half (57%) say they could not meet their family's basic needs without their income. There is some variation by respondents' current duty station, branch, race(s) or ethnicity(ies), and whether a respondent provides care to a child or children.

Challenges to Employment

Childcare Challenges

Most respondents are caregivers. 87% of respondents provide care to at least one person. Most provide care to a child or children under the age of 18, though some provide care to adults.

The most common employment challenge is childcare-related. Nearly two-thirds of all respondents (64%) reported having experienced childcare challenges related to actual or potential employment. This proportion increases to 89% for those who currently care for at least one child under the age of six, and 76% for respondents who currently care for at least one child between the ages of 6 and 18.



The high cost of childcare is the top childcare-related challenge that respondents face in their employment experiences, which prevents some respondents from working or keeps others underemployed. Of the respondents who indicated they have experienced childcare-related challenges with their employment, 82% reported having experienced difficulties with the high cost of childcare. In open-ended comments, several respondents noted that they do not work because the cost of childcare would surpass their wages.

Other common childcare challenges include the service member's unpredictable schedule (67%) and limited availability of childcare providers (64%).

Other Challenges

More than two in five respondents (42%) have faced difficulty finding employment in their chosen field or at their level of education or experience.

Forty percent of respondents face financial challenges with employment. Two in five respondents indicated they had faced challenges with too little pay or benefits. In open-ended comments, several respondents noted that low pay is a particular challenge given the high cost of living in the state.

Forty percent of respondents indicated they have experienced Permanent Change of Station (PCS)- or move-related challenges. In open-ended comments, respondents described issues with lack of long-term work experience and related employer bias; loss of retirement benefits; and a need to repeatedly seek new work. Length of time to find work does not appear to be a major PCS-related challenge: two-thirds of respondents (66%) accepted a job within six months of their most recent PCS into or within Washington, and most respondents (85%) began work in the same month or the month after they accepted a job.

Licensing and certification present challenges for some respondents. Over half of respondents (52%) currently hold jobs that require a professional certification or license and about one-third of respondents (30%) seeking employment are seeking work in a licensed field. More than one-third of respondents (36%) who are currently employed in a licensed or certified field have experienced issues with licensing or certification. Additionally, PCS-related challenges are higher for respondents who are currently seeking employment in a licensed field (50%) compared to those seeking work in an unlicensed field (30%).

About one in three respondents (29%) have experienced housing challenges and about one-quarter (23%) have experienced transportation challenges. In open-ended comments, some respondents noted that they would like to see more remote work options to give them access to employment without commuting.

Variation among installations may offer opportunities for identifying best practices to support spouses. In some cases, military spouses at different installations report challenges at different rates. It may be possible to extend practices at installations with lower rates of certain challenges to other installations.

Employment Information and Resources

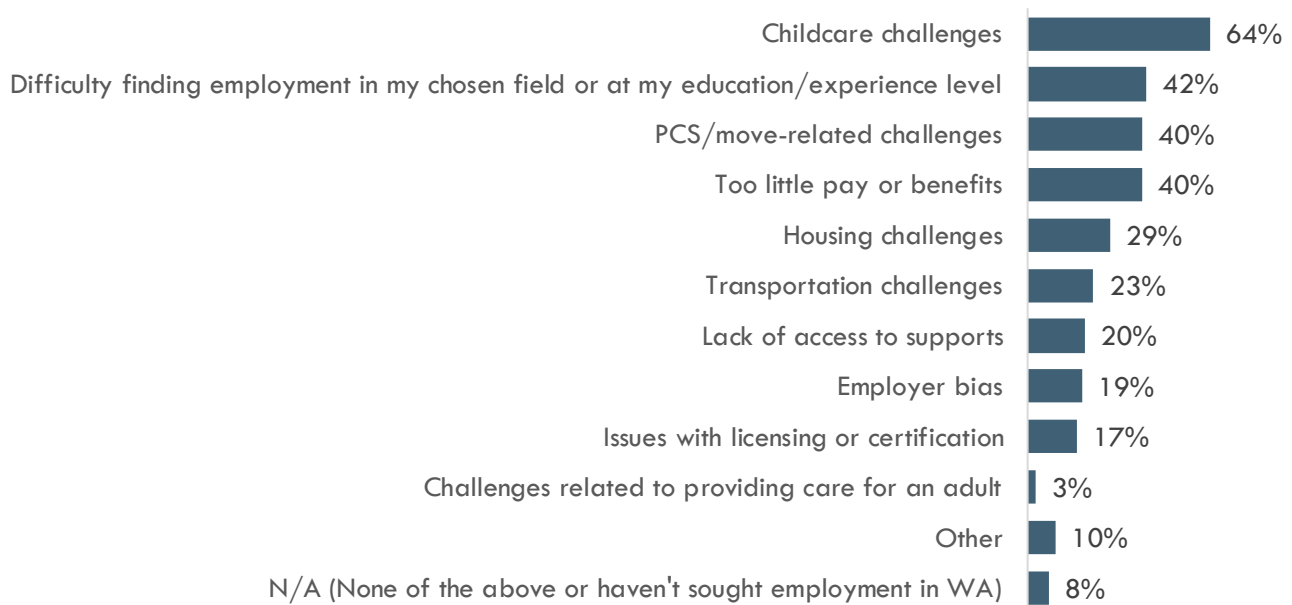
Most respondents reported receiving enough employment-related information, but many would like to receive more. About two-thirds of respondents (65%) report that they receive enough information about employment opportunities within Washington state and about one-third (35%) would like to receive more information.



Job search websites and official government sources are the most preferred sources for employment-related information. More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) include job search websites in their top two sources for employment-related information in Washington, and more than half (57%) include official government sources in their top two sources.

Exhibit 3. Employment Challenges Experienced by Respondents in Washington (n = 616)

Survey Question: Whether or not you are currently employed, which of the following challenges have you encountered in your employment experience(s) as a military spouse in Washington?
Check all that apply.



Notes: Respondents could select multiple options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

Challenges listed in the above exhibit have been edited for brevity. The survey offered the following explanations:

- Childcare challenges (e.g., cost; limited availability; service member’s unpredictable schedule to coordinate care times)
- PCS/move-related challenges (e.g., financial contracts; loss of networks; lack of job portability)
- Housing challenges (e.g., cost; limited internet)
- Transportation challenges (e.g., cost; time/distance)
- Lack of access to supports (e.g., difficulty finding/reaching resources; stigma with using services)
- Challenges related to providing care for an adult (e.g., lack of time)
- Other (e.g., sickness or disability; laid off; employer went out of business)
- N/A – I have not experienced any of the above challenges in my employment experiences and/or have not wanted to be employed during my time as a military spouse in Washington.


Source: BERK, 2023.



Recommendations

Overview

The following pages outline the **recommendations** and supporting **strategies** to support military spouse employment. Recommendations are categorized into six **focus areas** and are listed in no particular order:

- A. **Outreach: opportunities to share information and increase awareness of resources.** One in three survey respondents indicated they would like to receive more employment-related information, and conversations in military spouse discussion groups indicated significant gaps in military spouses' awareness of existing resources. While the military, public sector, and private sector have substantial programs available to military spouses, these programs can only be effective if military spouses are aware of them. As a result, several other focus areas include outreach strategies, noted with a megaphone icon .
- B. **Childcare for military families: opportunities to increase military families' access to affordable childcare.** The survey of Washington military spouses identified childcare as the greatest employment challenge, affecting nearly two in three spouses in Washington. Many military families may not have reasonable access to on- or off-base childcare due to high costs or long waitlists. For many families, the high cost of childcare may effectively negate a spouse's wages and lead many spouses to choose not to work. Increasing families' access to affordable childcare would reduce this significant barrier to military spouse employment.
- C. **Employment resources: ways to strengthen existing employment-related resources for military spouses, build new supports, and better connect spouses to available opportunities.** Many programs and supports currently exist to support military spouses in seeking and retaining suitable employment, including career coaching, professional networks, streamlined licensing and certification processes for military spouses, and educational scholarships. However, the survey found that many military spouses face challenges that could be addressed through additional or strengthened resources. For example, two in five respondents have faced difficulty finding employment in their chosen field or at their education or experience level; one in five has faced issues with lack of access to supports; and 17 percent have faced issues with licensing or certification.
- D. **Employment opportunity: methods to increase the employment opportunities available to military spouses.** Some employers may not be well-prepared to hire and retain military spouses, and some employers may be biased against hiring military spouses, considering a military spouse's tenure to be

Broader Reform for Social Supports

The challenges that military spouses face are not always unique to this group. Many families across the nation also experience challenges with issues such as limited availability of childcare or high costs of housing. Certainly, efforts that benefit a broader population would also serve military spouses—and military entities like the DOD could leverage their political influence for advocacy in these comprehensive reforms. However, to avoid a level of broadness that would border on overambition, these recommendations more narrowly focus on solutions that are specific to military spouses.



highly volatile due to an anticipated future PCS. One in five survey respondents indicated they have experienced employer bias as a military spouse, such as being directly asked during an interview whether they are a military spouse and how long they anticipate being able to keep the job. To support military spouse employment, efforts are needed to protect military spouses from this bias and address the root cause of the bias by reeducating employers about military spouses.

E. Financial resources and basic needs: ways to help military families better meet their basic needs to free up military spouses to seek and maintain employment. The survey identified multiple financial challenges to military spouse employment:

- ▷ Nearly one in three survey respondents reported having experienced housing challenges, including issues with affordability. This can lead to families living far from employment opportunities for spouses. Relatedly, one in five reported having experienced transportation challenges. For example, some families report being able to afford no more than a single car that the service member typically uses to commute to base, thereby limiting a spouse’s ability to access employment opportunities.
- ▷ Childcare is the employment challenge survey respondents most commonly reported, with childcare affordability as a primary challenge. As noted above, high costs of childcare may lead to some spouses choosing to care for their children instead of working.

While military spouse employment can certainly enhance a family’s financial wellbeing—in fact, more than half of employed survey respondents reported they could not meet their family’s basic needs without their income—if a family’s basic needs are not met, military spouse employment may not be feasible. Finding employment can take time—one in three employed survey respondents reported taking more than six months to begin work after PCS—and so spouses may prioritize their efforts on addressing immediate family needs instead of focusing on their employment. Strengthening military families’ overall financial resources can alleviate some pressures that can inhibit military spouse employment.

F. Data, research, and advocacy: how key groups can broadly continue to advance support for military spouse employment. As noted above, there are substantial existing efforts to support military spouse employment. A diverse network of key groups work in this landscape on both collaborative and separate efforts—see Appendix F: Key Group Research for more information. Robust evaluation, data sharing, coordination, and collaboration among these varied contributors will best support meaningful advances.

Military Spouses: a Diverse Group

Military spouses represent a broad cross-section of America’s population, with a range of skills, educational attainment, and experiences. Like any group of people, military spouses have a range of employment goals, and support for them should recognize and address this diversity. And, like any group of people, opportunity and resources are not spread evenly across military spouses—some may need more support to achieve their employment goals.

While these recommendations are intended to broadly serve the landscape of military spouse employment, there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to military spouse employment challenges.



These focus areas and the nested recommendations and strategies listed in the tables on the following pages are intersectional: some strategies may serve more than one recommendation and some recommendations may support more than one focus area.

Key Groups

The following pages identify one or more key groups that could advance each strategy. Key groups identified in this report represent the broad range of groups that can support military spouses, including within the military, government, and private and nonprofit sectors. See Exhibit 4 for descriptions of the key groups.

Exhibit 4. Key Groups

Military	
DoD	DoD sets some policies for military spouses at a federal level, while other policies are set at the service branch or installation level.
Service branches	In Washington, this includes the Navy, Army, and Air Force.
Installations	Washington’s five main installations include: JBLM; FAFB; NASWI; NBK; and NSE.
Government	
Federal government	This includes federal policymakers and federal agencies, including but not limited to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Labor.
State government	This includes the Governor’s office and State agencies, including but not limited to the WDVA; the Washington State Department of Licensing; the Washington State Employment Security Department; and the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
Local government	This includes municipal and county governments, particularly those that include or are near military installations.
Private and nonprofit	
Employers	This includes existing and potential employers of military spouses.
Community organizations	This includes advocacy organizations; workforce development organizations; Chambers of Commerce; nonprofit groups that provide direct services to military spouses; and more.
Off-base childcare providers	This group is comprised of childcare providers located off-base that may be used by military families.

Source: BERK, 2024.



Focus Areas, Recommendations, and Strategies

Focus Area A: Outreach

Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
1. Improve outreach about resources to military spouses.									
A. Communicate with military spouses in ways and on platforms that are most likely to reach them, including on social media and through channels not focused on families to reach spouses without children.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
B. Maintain up-to-date official military and government webpages about resources for military spouses and develop a single online hub that centralizes this information. Include national, statewide, service-branch-level, and installation-specific information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Employment (e.g., USAjobs.com or installation employment readiness program websites) ▶ Housing (e.g., MilitaryOneSource.mil) ▶ Childcare (e.g., MilitaryChildCare.com) ▶ Education for military spouses and children ▶ Licensing and certification 	✓	✓	✓		✓				
C. Increase in-person outreach to spouses, including in off-base communities where military families live.		✓	✓					✓	
D. Strengthen the volunteer system that supports information-sharing with spouses by ensuring all commands have filled ombudsman positions, sponsors, and key support liaisons . Strengthen training and consider paying people for this work.		✓	✓					✓	
E. Expand outreach specific to foreign-born military spouses who immigrate to the United States through collaboration with the Foreign Born Military Spouse Association .	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
F. Incentivize military spouses to participate in base in-processing classes.	✓	✓	✓						
G. Evaluate spouse participation in Transition Assistance Program (TAP) classes, consider expanding capacity of these classes or offering TAP Too classes for spouses, and incentivize military spouses to participate.	✓	✓	✓						
H. Expand ongoing communications to service members about support available for their spouses.	✓	✓	✓					✓	



Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
2. Provide additional information to service members and spouses before and during PCS to ensure they have information and access to resources during their family's move.									
A. Expand outreach to military spouses before and shortly after they PCS into Washington to provide them with resources, information about the community, and support. Consider mailing materials directly to service members' homes to increase the likelihood that information will reach military spouses.		✓	✓		✓				
B. Include spouses as well as military personnel at the beginning of PCS out-processing protocols and incentivize their participation, with their own breakout track focused on employment, education, licensing, and childcare, including for families in the Exceptional Family Member Program .		✓	✓						



Focus Area B: Childcare for Military Families

Childcare and early childhood education is a pressing issue facing many families—not just military families—nationwide. While meaningful progress on childcare will likely require national reform, this focus area centers on childcare specific to military families. Many of these recommendations build on “[Supporting the Child Care Needs of Military Families in Washington: Quantifying Need, Identifying Barriers, and Establishing Recommendations](#),” a 2023 report published by WDVA through its Military Spouse Initiative. See Appendix G: Military Childcare Resources for a summary of existing childcare resources offered through the military.

Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
1. Increase direct DoD provision of high-quality childcare.									
A. Fully staff existing on-base childcare development centers (CDCs). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Expand incentives to recruit and retain CDC workers, including increased wages, benefits, and bonuses. ▶ Hire, train, and adequately compensate dedicated staff to care for children with special needs. ▶ Strengthen training, educational, and leadership pathways for CDC staff, including paid professional, credential, and degree programs. ▶ Expand recruitment of military spouses as CDC providers. ▶ Consider policy changes to enable off-base childcare providers to run CDC facilities that are currently closed due to understaffing. 	✓	✓	✓						
B. Increase availability of back-up, hourly daycare for intermittent childcare needs, such as when a service member cannot provide care due to an unpredictable schedule. Raise awareness of services.		✓	✓						
C. Expand on-base CDC facilities by increasing the capacity of existing facilities or constructing new facilities.		✓	✓						
2. Expand childcare provider participation in Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN/MCCYN-PLUS).									
A. Recruit providers to participate in MCCYN/MCCYN-PLUS.		✓	✓					✓	✓
B. Increase the number of eligible providers by modifying the minimum Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) rating to level two in Washington for provider eligibility to better align with DoD standards.	✓	✓							
C. Work with Child Care Aware (CCA) of Washington and CCA of America to reduce barriers to provider participation by minimizing paperwork requirements and streamlining paperwork submission.	✓	✓						✓	






Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
3. Improve the affordability of off-base childcare for military families.									
A. Consider making childcare a paid entitlement allowance if care is not received on installation.	✓	✓		✓					
B. Adjust the provider rate cap based on geography and age to accommodate higher costs of childcare in specific areas and for some age groups, particularly infants.		✓							
C. Raise the family income cap for participation in MCCYN/MCCYN-PLUS to allow more families with middle incomes to participate.		✓							
D. Explore opportunities to establish blanket purchase agreements with off-base childcare providers to offer childcare at the same cost as at on-base CDCs. See this RFQ from Space Base Delta 1, United States Air Force Academy, and Fort Carson as an example.	✓	✓	✓						
4. Improve family access to off-base childcare.									
A. Increase MCCYN/MCCYN-PLUS funding to minimize or eliminate waitlists.	✓	✓							
B. Partner with local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Councils, and other organizations to attract and recruit providers of childcare and early childhood learning in communities where military families live.			✓	✓				✓	✓
C. Reduce barriers to establishment of new childcare facilities in communities where military families live, by waiving fees, expediting permitting timelines, or creating additional regulatory flexibility. Refer to guidance from the Municipal Research and Services Center for details.				✓	✓	✓		✓	
D. Expand outreach to families about MilitaryChildCare.com and offer additional support for enrollment.		✓	✓					✓	
E. Simplify processes for requesting care and submitting information, including allowing families to enroll in MCCYN/MCCYN-PLUS without first applying for on-base childcare.		✓							




Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
5. Refine the Family Child Care program (FCC) to make it a more viable employment opportunity for military spouses and to create childcare slots.									
A. Improve recruitment of military spouses as FCC providers, including through clear explanation of potential wages and awareness-building of state benefits for providers who live off-base.		✓	✓					✓	
B. Increase wages and benefits for FCC providers.		✓							
C. Minimize out-of-pocket start-up and transfer costs for military spouse FCC providers by offering childcare to military spouses during their onboarding and including costs for required classes, insurance, licensure, and supplies in DoD reimbursement or direct funding.	✓	✓	✓		✓				
D. Prioritize FCC providers for on-base housing.		✓	✓						
E. Evaluate the feasibility of building or modifying existing on-base housing designated for FCC providers, including separate spaces for childcare and living spaces.		✓	✓						
6. Build awareness of other financial supports for childcare.									
A. Raise awareness of federal and state childcare subsidy programs among military spouses to supplement military subsidies and provide support for military families to apply.			✓	✓	✓			✓	
B. Raise awareness of the new Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account available to service members.		✓	✓					✓	



Focus Area C: Employment Resources


Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
1. Enhance direct employment support for military spouses.									
A. Expand staffing at fleet and family support centers and in other support positions to ensure military spouses can access personal support.	✓	✓	✓						
B. Strengthen coaching and resources to support military spouses in conducting effective job searches that meet their employment objectives, including seeking remote work and navigating potential employer bias.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
 C. Amplify and expand existing professional networks of military spouses at installations, such as Hiring our Heroes' Military Spouse Professional Networks , and establish new networks where none exist.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
 D. Emphasize military spouses in employment support provided to the broader military community.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
2. Continue to streamline licensing and certification for military spouses moving to Washington.									
 A. Implement and build awareness about new licensure and certification reciprocity for military spouses moving to Washington.	✓	✓	✓		✓				
B. Continue to pursue interstate licensure compacts for greater portability of military spouse licensure between states.					✓			✓	
C. Identify additional opportunities for State licensing agencies to prioritize the needs of military spouses.		✓	✓		✓				
D. Develop a policy to enable military spouses who immigrate to the United States to translate their foreign licensures, certifications, and degrees into Washington opportunities.	✓	✓			✓			✓	
E. Fully cover the costs for spouses' licensure or certification following PCS.		✓			✓				








Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
3. Support skill-building for military spouses who seek additional education.									
 A. Build awareness of spouse access to DoD educational benefits, including the My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship tuition assistance program , Military Child Care Fee Assistance Program , and the G.I. Bill.	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
B. Continue efforts to prevent predatory practices toward military spouses using the MyCAA program by some educational institutions.	✓	✓							
C. Expand existing training programs for skilled on-base jobs that are transferrable between installations and establish new programs. Recruit military spouses for these programs.	✓	✓							
D. Evaluate the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot and adapt and expand this program to reach additional spouses.	✓	✓							
E. Expand existing programs for military spouses at workforce development organizations and create new programs.					✓			✓	



Focus Area D: Employment Opportunity

Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base Childcare
1. Encourage employers to hire military spouses.									
A. Conduct a data-informed awareness campaign to educate employers on military spouses' employment strengths and improve employers' cultural competency regarding military spouses. Build on existing efforts through the WDVA Military Spouse Cultural Competency Training program and in the private sector (example here).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
B. Offer federal and state tax incentives to employers to hire military spouses, including a state incentive through HB 1005 (2023) .	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
C. Encourage employers to participate in initiatives like Blue Star Families' 4+1 Commitment or the Military Spouse Employment Act Hiring Demonstration Campaign .		✓	✓				✓	✓	
2. Facilitate employers' abilities to hire and retain military spouses.									
A. Facilitate out-of-state employers to employ military spouses in Washington through simplified administrative policies around issues like tax withholding, unemployment insurance, and other administrative concerns, and market these simplifications to out-of-state employers.					✓				
B. Expand tools and guidance for employers to improve their readiness to employ military spouses.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. Protect military spouses from employer bias.									
A. Introduce antidiscrimination protections for military spouses at the state and federal levels.	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
 B. Build awareness of existing protections for military spouses at the state and federal levels.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Focus Area E: Financial Resources and Basic Needs

Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base
1. Strengthen programs and supports specific to military families' basic needs.									
 A. Expand work to connect military families to supports available through the G.I. bill.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
B. Restructure the Rental Partnership Program to better incentivize participation by landlords.	✓	✓	✓						
 C. Increase awareness of veterans' assistance programs for military spouses who are veterans, including options to reevaluate disability benefits under the PACT Act .	✓	✓	✓					✓	
 D. Expand, initiate, and fund Loan Closet programs to free up spouses' time and energy following PCS to focus on seeking employment.	✓	✓	✓						
 E. Build awareness of and reduce stigmas around nonprofit loan programs available to service members and their families, including through the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society , Army Emergency Relief , and Air Force Aid Society .		✓	✓					✓	
2. Expand military families' access to financial support and basic needs assistance available outside the military community.									
 A. Build awareness among military families about financial assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and supplement for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and when Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is or is not included in income eligibility calculations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
B. Exclude BAH in calculating family income for SNAP eligibility.					✓				
C. Strengthen relationships between installations and food banks.			✓			✓		✓	
3. Increase financial resources for service members and spouses who work on-base.									
A. Further increase wages and benefits for service members, including regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), to reflect rising costs of living. This supports military spouse employment by enabling military families to live in neighborhoods with access to employment opportunities and childcare.	✓	✓	✓	✓					
B. Increase wages and benefits for on-base employment to better support military spouses in those positions.	✓	✓	✓						



Focus Area F: Data, Research, and Advocacy

Recommendations	Key Groups								
	Military			Govt			Private & nonprofit		
	DoD	Service Branches	Installations	Federal Govt	State Govt	Local Govt	Employers	Community Orgs	Off-Base
1. Cultivate a strong, cross-sector network of groups that support military spouse employment.									
A. Continue and expand collaboration and resource-sharing regionally and statewide through existing bodies, including workgroups hosted by WDVA.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
B. Enhance communication across groups to build on existing work through tools such as an online portal to facilitate information-sharing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2. Conduct research to ensure efforts are data-informed and relevant.									
A. Regularly engage military spouses to gather feedback on current efforts and gaps.	✓	✓	✓					✓	
B. Evaluate program efficacy to identify opportunities for improvements or reinvestment of funds.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
C. Invest in pilot projects to test strategies to better support military spouses.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
D. Begin conversations to evaluate whether and how to extend support to service members' unmarried partners.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	



Conclusion


This report identifies a broad set of recommendations and supporting strategies to improve employment opportunities for military spouses in Washington. Advancing these efforts will require collaboration from key groups in the military, public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Many key groups have already been involved in this work to date, and others will need to be more deeply engaged moving forward. As groups in the state work to implement these recommendations, cross-sector involvement and robust collaboration will be essential to success.

And, similarities in military spouses' employment challenges across Washington and the country indicate potential for broad applicability of these recommendations to communities nationwide. As these recommendations are implemented in Washington, lessons learned can offer a pathway to improve military spouse employment across the country.



Appendix A: Survey Instrument

This appendix shows the survey instrument used for this study. Required questions are marked with an asterisk and annotations identify whether all or a subset of respondents answered each question.



Washington State Military Spouse Survey


Washington State Military Spouse Survey

Are you a spouse of an active-duty member of the US Armed Forces? Tell us about your experiences working or not working in Washington.


This survey should take 5 minutes. It's funded by the Department of Defense and will help identify ways that the military, governments, and partners can better support military spouses in Washington.

If you are a member of the US armed services, you may respond on behalf of your spouse. Please only submit one response per family.

Amazon gift card raffle: If you participate in this survey, you can enter into a raffle for one of several Amazon gift cards, up to \$200!



U.S. Department of Defense
Office of Local Defense
Community Cooperation



Question 1 is a screening question. Those who answered “Veteran” or “Reserve” were disqualified from the survey. This report uses the term “respondents” to refer to those who indicated “Active duty.”

* 1. Which of the following best describes the service member to whom you’re married?

- Active duty
- Veteran
- Reserve

All respondents answered questions 2 and 3.

Overview

* 2. Approximately how many hours do you work per week?

Not currently employed (e.g., homemaker, volunteer)

Full-time (35 or more hours per week)

Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)

3. Whether or not you are currently employed, are you satisfied with the number of hours you work or do not work?

I am **satisfied with the number of hours I work or do not work.**

I would like to **work more hours** or start working.

I would like to **work fewer hours.**

Only respondents who answered “full-time” or “part-time” in question 2 answered questions 4 through 6.

Your work

4. Does your current job require a professional certification or license?
If you work more than one job, select “yes” if any of your current jobs require a professional certification or license.

Yes

No

Unsure

5. Could you or your family meet your family’s basic needs (e.g., food, housing) if you did not have your income?

Yes

No

Unsure

6. Approximately how many months did it take you to accept a job and begin work after your last Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or move into or within Washington?
Skip the second part of this question if you haven't yet begun work.

Number of months after moving **to accept a job**

Number of months after moving **to begin work**

Only respondents who answered “not currently employed” in question 2 answered question 7.

7. Are you seeking work in a licensed field?

Seeking work in a **licensed field**

Seeking work in an **unlicensed field**

N/A - **not seeking employment**

Unsure



All respondents answered questions 8 through 21.

Employment challenges

8. Whether or not you are currently employed, which of the following challenges have you encountered in your employment experience(s) as a military spouse in Washington?

Check all that apply.

- Employer bias**
- Too little pay or benefits**
- Difficulty finding employment in my chosen field or at my education/experience level**
- PCS/move-related challenges** (e.g., financial contracts; loss of networks; lack of job portability)
- Lack of access to supports** (e.g., difficulty finding/reaching resources; stigma with using services)
- Issues with licensing or certification**
- Housing challenges** (e.g., cost; limited internet)
- Transportation challenges** (e.g., cost; time/distance)
- Childcare challenges** (e.g., cost; limited availability; service member's unpredictable schedule to coordinate care times)
- Challenges related to providing care for an adult** (e.g., lack of time)
- Other** (e.g., sickness or disability; laid off; employer went out of business)
- N/A** - I have not experienced any of the above challenges in my employment experiences and/or have not wanted to be employed during my time as a military spouse in Washington.

9. If applicable, which of the following childcare challenges have impacted your employment as a military spouse within Washington state?

Check all that apply.

- Limited availability of childcare providers
- High cost of childcare
- Inconvenient locations for available childcare
- Inadequate public transportation to reach childcare locations
- Work schedule not flexible enough to accommodate childcare needs
- Service member's unpredictable schedule prevents coordination of care times
- Can't work as many hours as I would like to due to childcare responsibilities
- N/A - I have not needed any childcare as a military spouse

Resources

10. Do you receive enough information about employment opportunities within Washington state?

- I receive enough information
- I would like to receive more information



11. Which of the following resources have you used to seek employment in Washington?

Check all that apply.

- Career One Stop (Department of Labor Transition Employment Assistance for Military Spouses)
- Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) scholarship program
- Military One Source Career Center or website
- Hiring our Heroes
- Resources at a local installation (e.g., support office, website)
- WorkSource
- Job search websites (e.g., LinkedIn, CareerBuilder, Indeed)
- Other (please specify)

- None of the above

* 12. What are your preferred sources for information about employment in Washington?

Select your top two.

- Word of mouth
- Official government sources (e.g., employment support offices at installations or cities)
- Job search websites (e.g., LinkedIn, CareerBuilder, Indeed)
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)
- Other (e.g., recruiters, posters, newspapers)

13. **OPTIONAL** Is there anything else you would like us to know about employment for military spouses in Washington?

About You

The following questions are about you, as a spouse, and about your sponsor. Many of these questions are optional to respond to, and answers will not be personally identifiable.

* 14. **(Required)** What is your current ZIP code?

* 15. **(Required)** Approximately how many months have you been located at your current duty station?

Please enter a whole number of months.



* 16. **(Required)** Where is your spouse stationed?

- Fairchild Air Force Base
- Joint Base Lewis-McChord
- Naval Air Station Whidbey Island
- Naval Base Kitsap
- Naval Station Everett
- Other (e.g., recruiting)

17. **(Optional)** Which branch is your spouse in?

- Air Force
- Army
- Coast Guard
- Marine Corps
- National Guard
- Navy
- Space Force



18. **(Optional)** How many of the following people are you a primary caretaker of?

Please enter "0" in each box that does not apply to you.

Children under the age of 6

Children ages 6 - 18

Adults with special needs

19. **(Optional)** What race(s) and/or ethnicity(ies) do you identify with? Check all that apply.

- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify)

20. **(Optional)** How did you hear about this survey?

- Email, social media, or flyer from an **official military source or on-base location**
- Email, social media, or flyer from a **community organization or business**
- Word of mouth

21. If you would like to be entered into the raffle for one of several Amazon gift cards, please enter your email below.

Email address



Appendix B: Survey Findings

This appendix describes the approach to the military spouse survey and the key takeaways.

We conducted a statewide survey of military spouses in October and November 2023. The purpose of this survey was to understand the challenges that military spouses face with respect to employment in Washington. See Appendix A: Survey Instrument for all survey questions.

This survey was open for participation by spouses of active-duty members of the US Armed Forces. Military members were invited to reply on behalf of their spouses as needed. The survey gathered responses from 646 participants.

The survey was offered online in English. Participants could enter into a raffle for multiple gift cards ranging in value from \$50 to \$200.

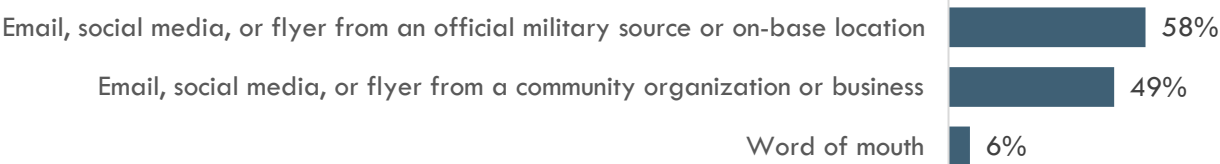
Survey Outreach

Survey participation was advertised through a range of channels, including those listed in the following bullets. Exhibit 5 shows how survey respondents report having heard about this survey.

- ▶ **Military installations.** The study team conducted outreach to a range of on-base channels at the five major installations in Washington, including education centers, employment readiness offices, family readiness groups, public affairs offices, and more. As shown in Exhibit 5, more than half of respondents (58%) heard about the survey from an official military source or on-base location.
- ▶ **Community groups and organizations.** The study team contacted 161 organizations and individuals that support military spouses and families to invite them to spread the word about the survey. As shown in Exhibit 5, about one-half of respondents (49%) heard about the survey from a community organization or business.
- ▶ **Military spouse Facebook groups.** The study team reached out to 36 military spouse groups on Facebook to request that they share the survey information with group members.
- ▶ **Social media.** SSMCP and several community groups and organizations advertised the survey on social media platforms. See Exhibit 6 for the social media graphics used to advertise this survey.

Exhibit 5. Respondents' Method of Learning About this Survey (n = 573)

Survey Question: (Optional) How did you hear about this survey?



Note: Respondents could select multiple options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

Source: BERK, 2023.

Exhibit 6. Social Media Graphics



Source: BERK, 2023.

Crosstabulations

In some cases, this analysis disaggregates results by respondents' attributes to understand potential correlations between respondents' attributes and their survey responses. The attributes for these crosstabulations ("crosstabs") include:

- ▶ **Work status.** Whether a respondent currently works full-time, works part-time, or does not work for pay. See Exhibit 7.
- ▶ **Current duty station.** The installation at which a respondent's spouse (the service member) is stationed. See Exhibit 8.
- ▶ **Length of time at current duty station.** The amount of time a respondent's spouse has been stationed at their current duty station, in months. See Exhibit 10.
- ▶ **Caregiver status.** Whether a respondent provides care for one or more children or adults. See Exhibit 12.
- ▶ **Race or ethnicity.** A respondent's racial or ethnic identity or identities. See Exhibit 13.
- ▶ **Licensing or certification status.** Whether a respondent is currently employed in a field that requires a license or certification. See Exhibit 14.

Throughout this appendix, all cases in which crosstabs were analyzed are noted, including cases in which crosstabs revealed no notable patterns.



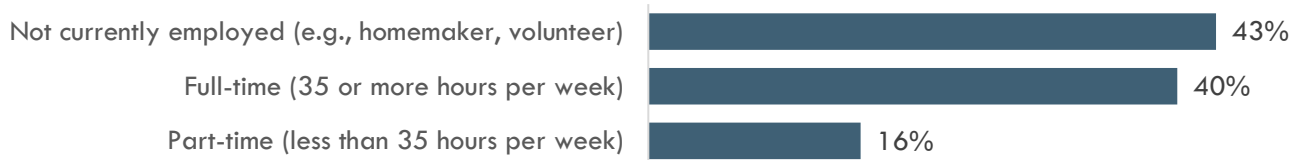
Respondent Attributes

Military Spouses' Work Status

Exhibit 7 shows the current work status of respondents. Over half of respondents (56%) are currently employed full-time (40%) or part-time (16%). Nearly half of respondents (43%) are not currently employed.

Exhibit 7. Respondents' Work Status (n = 641)

Survey Question: Approximately how many hours do you work per week?



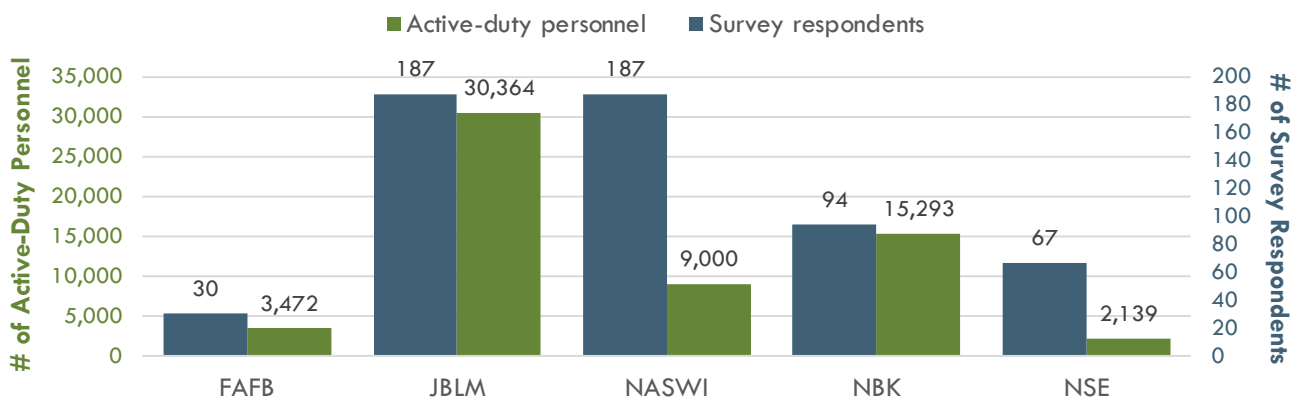
Source: BERK, 2023.

Service Members' Current Duty Station and Branch

Exhibit 8 shows the current duty station of respondents' service members alongside the number of active-duty personnel at each installation. The survey received responses from 187 spouses from JBLM, 187 from NASWI, 94 from NBK, 67 from NSE, 30 from FAFB, and 14 from other military affiliations, such as recruitment. NASWI and NSE were overrepresented in the survey.

Exhibit 8. Service Members' Current Duty Station and Number of Active-Duty Personnel by Installation (n = 579)

Survey Question: Where is your spouse stationed?



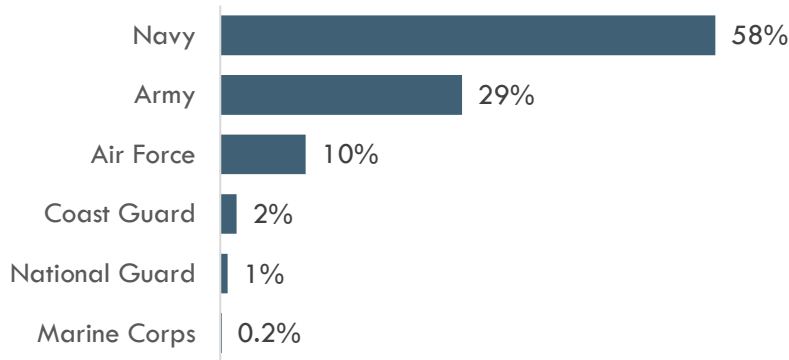
Sources: Military OneSource, 2023; BERK, 2023.



Exhibit 9 shows the branch of the military in which respondents' spouses (service members) serve. Nearly three in five of respondents' spouses (58%) are in the Navy, 29% are in the Army, and 10% are in the Air Force. The remainder are in the Coast Guard (2%), National Guard (1%), and Marine Corps (0.2%).

Exhibit 9. Service Members' Branch (n = 575)

Survey Question: Which branch is your spouse in?



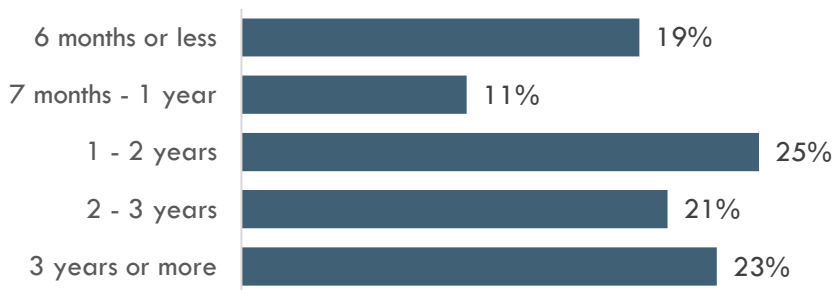
Source: BERK, 2023.

Length of Time at Current Duty Station

Exhibit 10 shows the length of time that respondents and their families have been located at their current duty station. About one-third of respondents (30%) have been at their current duty station for one year or less, one-quarter (25%) for one to two years, one-fifth (21%) for two to three years, and one-quarter (23%) for three years or more.

Exhibit 10. Respondents' Length of Time at Current Duty Station (n = 580)

Survey Question: Approximately how many months have you been located at your current duty station? Please enter a whole number of months.



Source: BERK, 2023.

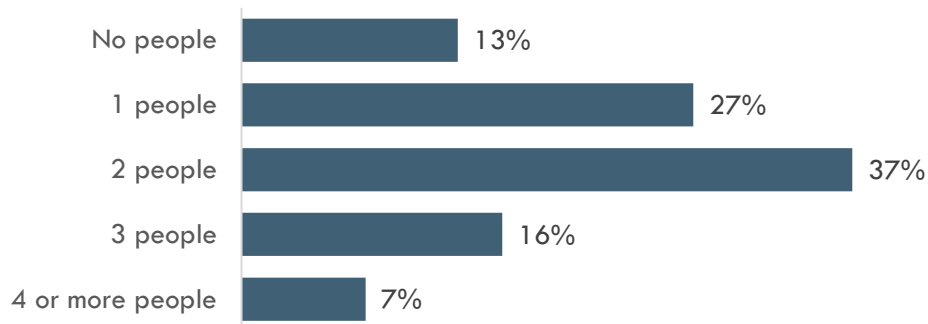


Military Spouses' Caregiver Status

Exhibit 11 shows the number of people—including both children and adults—for whom respondents provide care. 87 percent of respondents provide care to at least one person. About one-quarter (27%) provide care for one person, more than one-third (37%) provide care for two people, 16% provide care for three people, and 7% provide care for four or more people.

Exhibit 11. Number of People for whom Respondents Provide Care (n = 523)

Survey Question: How many of the following people are you a primary caretaker of? Please enter "0" in each box that does not apply to you.

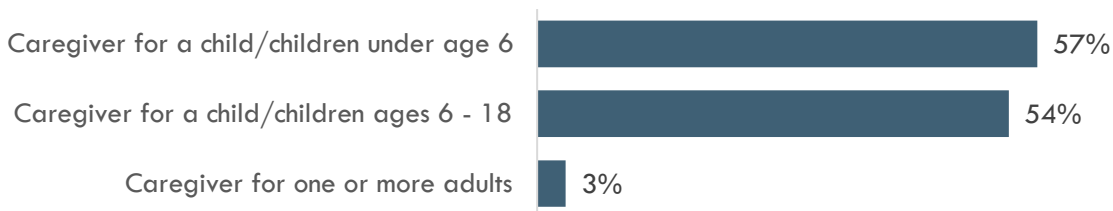


Source: BERK, 2023.

Exhibit 12 shows the ages of people for whom caregiver respondents provide care. Of the respondents who provide care to at least one child or adult, 57% provide care to a child or children under the age of six, more than half (54%) provide care to a child or children between the ages of six and 18, and a small proportion (3%) provide care to one or more adults.

Exhibit 12. Ages of People for whom Caregiver Respondents Provide Care (n = 523)

Survey Question: How many of the following people are you a primary caretaker of? Please enter "0" in each box that does not apply to you.



Note: Respondents could select multiple options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

Source: BERK, 2023.

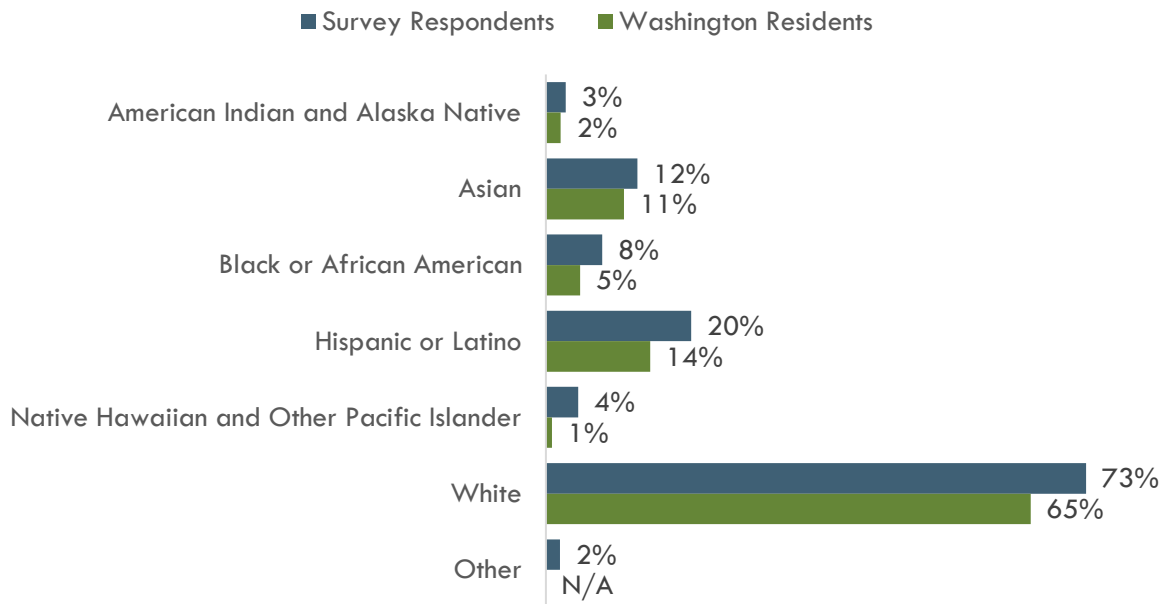


Military Spouses' Racial and Ethnic Identities

Exhibit 13 shows the racial and ethnic identities of respondents as compared to Washington's population. The racial and ethnic identities of survey respondents closely match that of the state's population.

Exhibit 13. Respondents' Racial and Ethnic Identities (n = 528)

Survey Question: What race(s) and/or ethnicity(ies) do you identify with? Check all that apply.



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one option, while statistics for Washington residents show only individuals who indicated a single option. As a result, the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

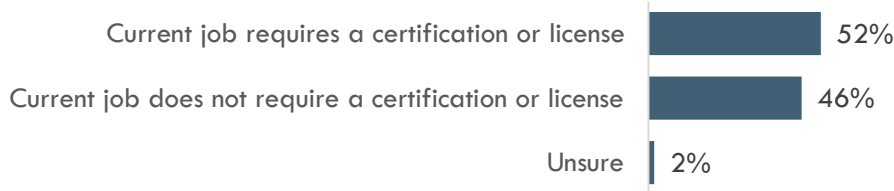
Sources: American Community Survey, 2022; BERK, 2023.

Licensing and Certification

Exhibit 14 shows the proportion of currently employed respondents who work in a certified or licensed field. Over half of respondents (52%) currently hold jobs that require a professional certification or license.

Exhibit 14. Currently Employed Respondents Working in Certified or Licensed Fields (n = 350)

Survey Question: Does your current job require a professional certification or license? If you work more than one job, select “yes” if any of your current jobs require a professional certification or license.



Source: BERK, 2023.

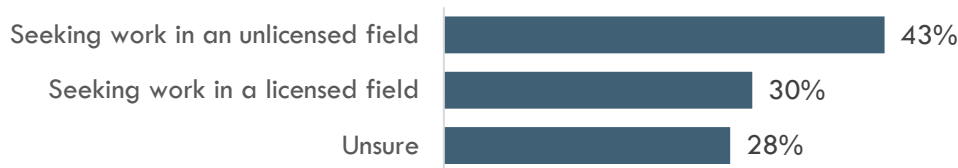
Exhibit 15 shows the proportion of currently unemployed respondents who are seeking work in a certified or licensed field. Of the respondents who are seeking employment, 43% are seeking work in an unlicensed field, 30% are seeking work in a licensed field, and 28% of are unsure whether they are seeking work in a licensed field.

About one-third (32%) of unemployed respondents indicated in this question that they are not currently seeking employment, and thus are excluded from the exhibit below.

Crosstabs by current duty station did not reveal any notable patterns.

Exhibit 15. Currently Unemployed Respondents Seeking Work in a Certified or Licensed Field (n = 188)

Survey Question: Are you seeking work in a licensed field?



Source: BERK, 2023.

In-Depth Findings

This section presents respondents' feedback on a range of single-choice and multiple-choice questions focused on respondents' employment experiences as military spouses in Washington.

The survey also gathered input from 147 respondents to an open-ended question: "Is there anything else you would like us to know about employment for military spouses in Washington?" Overall, themes raised in comment responses closely matched the findings of close-ended questions, so this section summarizes respondents' comments in the relevant subsections.

We also include notable examples of comments to illustrate the kinds of feedback received.¹⁴ See Open-Ended Survey Responses for all responses.

Military Spouse Employment Challenges

General Employment Challenges

Exhibit 3 in the Current State of Military Spouse Employment in Washington section shows the proportion of respondents who have experienced various employment challenges as a military spouse in Washington, and this section describes that exhibit in depth. Respondents could select all options that applied to them.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) indicated they have experienced childcare challenges. This proportion increases for those providing care for children: 89% of respondents who provide care for at least one child under the age of six report childcare challenges and 76% of respondents who provide care for at least one child between the ages of 6 and 18 report this challenge. See Childcare Challenges in the section Current State of Military Spouse Employment in Washington for more details on these challenges.

Just over four in ten respondents (42%) indicated that they have faced difficulty finding employment in their chosen field or at their education or experience level. At NSE, NBK, and FAFB, a lower proportion of respondents (31%) report having had difficulty with this challenge, while a higher proportion of respondents at NASWI (47%) report having had this challenge. Several open-ended comments confirmed this challenge—see the textbox at right for an example comment.

About four in ten respondents (40%) indicated that they have had challenges with too little pay or benefits. Several open-ended comments confirmed this challenge, and noted that this is a particular challenge given the high cost of living in the state. See the textbox at right for an example comment.

"It was very **challenging to complete the education required to pursue my career** with the unpredictable nature of spouse's schedule, PCS moves, and lack of family/childcare support. Most working spouses I come into contact with **take menial jobs** because of similar difficulties."

"The current **salary levels in the area are not sufficient to the cost of living**. Because of the military's restriction on where we can live, I **am not able to commute to areas that pay more.**"

¹⁴ Comments have been lightly edited for clarity and typos, and emphasis has been added.



About four in ten respondents (40%) indicated that they have experienced PCS- or move-related challenges. At NBK, a lower proportion of respondents (24%) report having had this challenge, while a higher proportion of respondents at JBLM (47%) report having had this challenge. For respondents who are currently seeking employment, 50% of those seeking employment in a licensed field have experienced PCS- or move-related challenges compared to 30% of those seeking work in an unlicensed field. Several open-ended comments described difficulties finding work after moving due to a PCS, including lack of long-term work experience and related employer bias; loss of retirement benefits; and a need to repeatedly seek new work. Several noted their difficulties in finding work when moving to the state. See the textbox at right for two example comments.

“As a professional the biggest challenge I have is promoting. With PCS changes every 3 years, **I am starting over just when I am becoming eligible for promotions.**”

“It was very difficult to get a job as a military spouse with a **career history of only 2-5 years employment per duty station.**”

Slightly fewer than one-third of respondents (29%) have experienced housing challenges and about one-quarter (23%) have experienced transportation challenges. Fewer respondents at FAFB indicated they have faced housing challenges (10%) than respondents at all other installations (29%) and fewer respondents at FAFB indicated that they have faced transportation challenges (10%) than at all other installations (24%).

One-fifth (20%) have experienced lack of access to supports. At JBLM, the proportion of respondents experiencing this challenge is higher, at 25% of respondents. In contrast, just 3% of respondents at FAFB have faced this challenge. Similarly, a somewhat higher proportion of respondents with spouses in the Army experience challenges with lack of access to supports (27%) than respondents with spouses in the Air Force or Navy (18%).

About one-fifth (19%) have experienced issues with employer bias. At JBLM, a higher proportion of respondents (26%) report having encountered employer bias compared to respondents at all other installations (14%).

About one in six respondents (17%) have experienced issues with licensing or certification. However, this figure rises to more than one-third (36%) when considering just respondents who are currently employed in a licensed or certified field. Fewer respondents at NSE report having experienced challenges with licensing or certification (6%) than respondents at all other installations (17%). And, a higher proportion of respondents in the Air Force experience challenges related to licensing or certification (29%) than respondents with spouses in the Army or Navy (16%).

Few (3%) have experienced challenges related to providing care for an adult. About one in twelve respondents (8%) indicated that they have not experienced any of the listed challenges or have not sought employment in Washington.

Crosstabs by race and ethnicity revealed no notable patterns by this variable.

Childcare-Related Employment Challenges

Of the 646 total survey respondents, 438 respondents identified that they have experienced childcare-related challenges with their employment. Exhibit 16 shows the proportions of these respondents who experienced various types of childcare challenges in Washington. More than four out of five of these respondents (82%) report having experienced difficulties with the high cost of childcare, and about two-thirds have experienced issues with their spouse’s unpredictable schedule (67%) or the limited availability of childcare providers (64%). A higher proportion of respondents at NASWI report challenges with limited availability of childcare providers (76%) than at all other installations (58%).

About four in ten respondents have experienced issues with an inadequately flexible work schedule (42%) or being unable to work as much as desired due to childcare responsibilities (38%). About one-quarter (26%) have had challenges related to inconvenient childcare locations.

Few respondents (5%) report having had challenges with inadequate public transportation to reach childcare.

Crosstabs by race and ethnicity revealed no notable patterns by this variable.

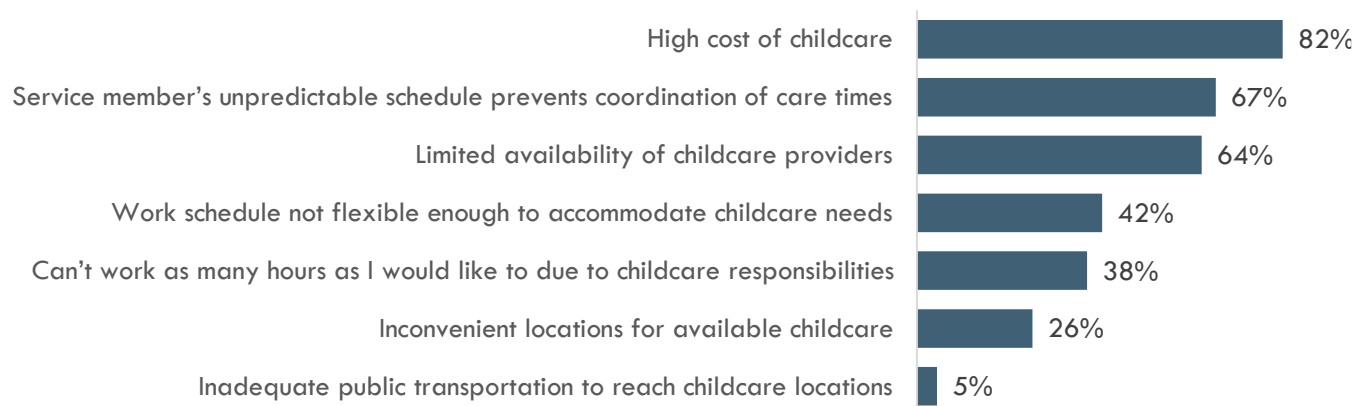
A large proportion of respondents who provided open-ended feedback emphasized difficulties with childcare in Washington, including its high cost, lack of availability, and scheduling issues. Several respondents noted that they do not work because the cost of childcare surpasses their wages, and a few respondents noted that there are not adequate childcare options for their children with special needs. See the textbox at right for two example comments.

“Childcare **costs are outrageously high**. My current pay does not even cover the cost of one child in childcare, let alone three. As a result, **I’ve had to take jobs that offered more flexibility** in order to work around my kids’ schedules, because I cannot rely on my service member’s.”

“The employment is not the problem, there’s plenty of jobs but **the price of daycare is outrageous**. I would be **working to pay for the daycare**, basically. Wouldn’t make any money. **But if my kid was in CDC daycare, it would be life-changing**. **But unfortunately, since I’m not working, I’m not priority on the waitlist** that I’ve been on for over a year now.”

Exhibit 16. Childcare Challenges Experienced by Respondents in Washington (n = 438)

Survey Question: If applicable, which of the following childcare challenges have impacted your employment as a military spouse within Washington state? Check all that apply.



Note: Respondents could select multiple options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.



Source: BERK, 2023.

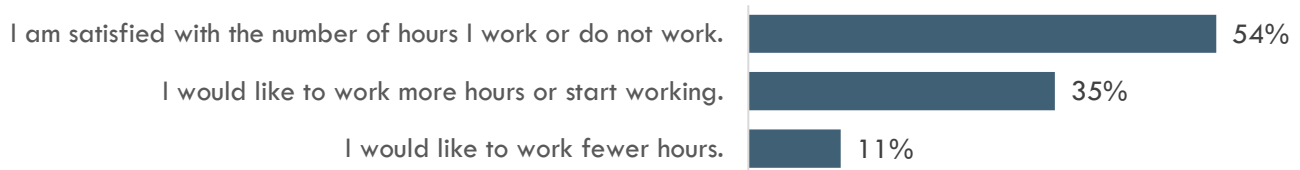
Military Spouse Satisfaction with Amount of Work

Exhibit 17 shows respondents' satisfaction with the number of hours they currently work. Over half of respondents (54%) are satisfied with the number of hours they do or do not work, more than one-third (35%) would like to work more hours or start working, and about one in ten (11%) would like to work fewer hours.

Crosstabs by race and ethnicity, current duty station, or date of most recent PCS revealed no notable patterns by these variables.

Exhibit 17. Respondents' Satisfaction with Current Number of Hours Worked (n = 639)

Survey Question: Whether or not you are currently employed, are you satisfied with the number of hours you work or do not work?

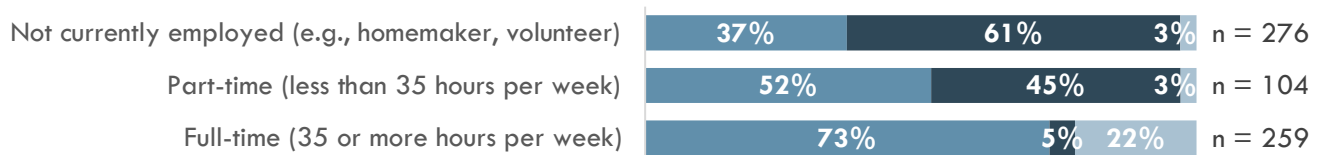


Source: BERK, 2023.

Exhibit 18 shows a crosstabulation of respondents' satisfaction with their current number of hours worked and their current employment status. About three-quarters of full-time employed respondents (73%) are satisfied with the number of hours they currently work, compared to about half (52%) of part-time employed respondents and about one-third of respondents (37%) who are not currently employed. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) who are not currently employed would like to start working.

Exhibit 18. Respondents' Satisfaction with Current Number of Hours Worked, Disaggregated by Current Employment Status

Survey Question: Whether or not you are currently employed, are you satisfied with the number of hours you work or do not work?



- I am satisfied with the number of hours I work or do not work.
- I would like to work more hours or start working.
- I would like to work fewer hours.

Source: BERK, 2023.



Importance of Military Spouse Income to Meeting Family's Basic Needs

Exhibit 19 shows how employed respondents evaluate the importance of their income to their families' abilities to meet their basic needs. Well over half (57%) of employed respondents said that they **could not** meet their family's basic needs without their income.

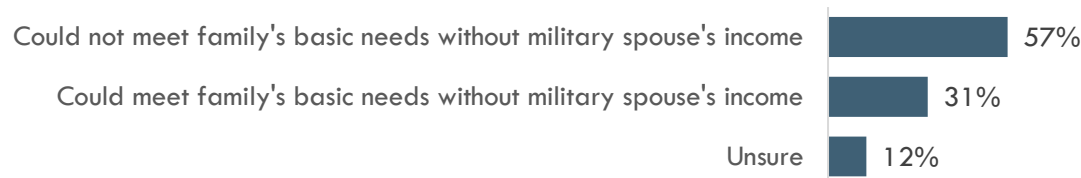
The proportion of employed respondents who indicate they **could** meet their family's basic needs without their incomes is higher at FAFB (47%) and NSE (37%) than at NASWI (28%), NBK (28%), and JBLM (26%). Similarly, a higher proportion of respondents in the Air Force (44%) say they **could** meet their family's basic needs than respondents in the Army and Navy (30%).

A smaller proportion of employed respondents who are Black or African American or Hispanic or Latino indicate they **could** meet their family's basic needs without their income (21%) compared to employed respondents who are White (30%) or Asian (38%).

Perhaps counterintuitively, a higher proportion of employed respondents who provide care to a child or children of any age indicate they **could** meet their family's basic needs without their income (31%) compared to employed respondents with no dependents (24%).

Exhibit 19. Importance of Employed Respondents' Income to Family's Ability to Meet Basic Needs (n = 350)

Survey Question: Could you or your family meet your family's basic needs (e.g., food, housing) if you did not have your income?



Source: BERK, 2023.

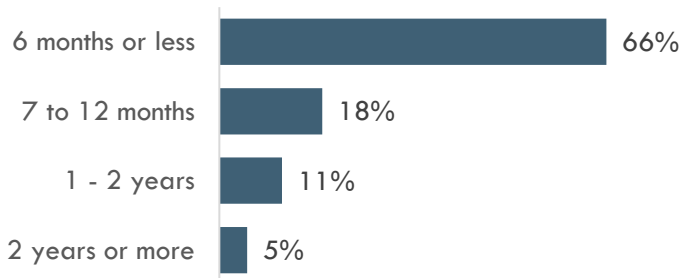
Length of Time to Find Employment Following PCS

Exhibit 20 shows how long it took currently employed respondents to accept a job after their most recent PCS into or within Washington. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) accepted a job within six months of their most recent PCS into or within Washington. About one in six (18%) accepted a job between seven months and one year after their most recent PCS into or within Washington, and about one in ten respondents (11%) accepted a job between one and two years after their most recent PCS. Five percent of respondents accepted a job more than two years after their most recent PCS into or within Washington.

Crosstabs by current duty station and whether the respondent currently works in a licensed or certified field revealed no notable patterns by these variables.

Exhibit 20. Number of Months after Moving to Accept a Job (n = 333)

Survey Question: Approximately how many months did it take you to accept a job and begin work after your last Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or move into or within Washington? Skip the second part of this question if you haven't yet begun work.



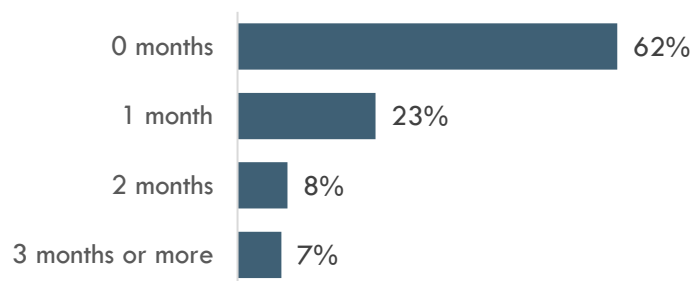
Source: BERK, 2023.

Exhibit 21 shows the amount of time it took currently employed respondents to begin work after accepting a job following their last PCS into or within Washington. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) began work in the same month they accepted a job, and nearly one-quarter (23%) in the month following their acceptance. Eight percent began work two months after accepting a job, and 7% began work three or more months after accepting a job.

Crosstabs by whether the respondent currently works in a licensed or certified field revealed no notable patterns by this variable.

Exhibit 21. Time between Accepting a Job and Beginning Work (n = 306)

Survey Question: Approximately how many months did it take you to accept a job and begin work after your last Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or more into or within Washington? Skip the second part of this question if you haven't yet begun work.



Source: BERK, 2023.



Military Spouse Use of Employment Information and Resources

Exhibit 22 shows the proportion of respondents who report that they receive an adequate amount of employment-related information. About two-thirds of respondents (65%) report that they receive enough information about employment opportunities within Washington state, and about one-third (35%) would like to receive more information. This proportion of respondents who would like to receive more information is higher for respondents who have been located at their current duty station for less than one year (43%), and lowest for respondents who have been at their current duty station for five or more years (24%).

A higher proportion of respondents at JBLM would like to receive more information (41%), while a lower proportion of respondents at NSE would like to receive more information (27%).

Crosstabs by whether the respondent currently works in or is seeking work in a licensed or certified field revealed no notable patterns by this variable.

Exhibit 22. Adequacy of Amount of Employment-Related Information Respondents Receive (n = 593)

Survey Question: Do you receive enough information about employment opportunities within Washington state?

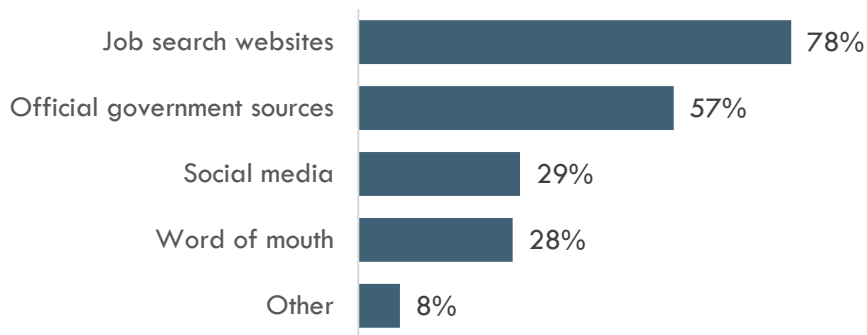


Source: BERK, 2023.

Exhibit 23 shows respondents' preferred sources for employment-related information in Washington. More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) include job search websites in their top two sources and nearly three-fifths (57%) include official government sources in their top two sources. About three in 10 respondents consider social media (29%) or word of mouth (28%) to be one of their top two sources, and about one in ten (9%) prefer another source. Respondents who indicated they used a resource other than those listed in the survey question most commonly referenced recruiters or visiting employers' websites.

Exhibit 23. Respondents' Preferred Sources for Employment-Related Information in Washington (n = 597)

Survey Question: What are your preferred sources for information about employment in Washington? Select your top two.



Note: Respondents could select up to two options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

Note: Resources listed in the above exhibit have been edited for brevity. The survey offered the following explanations:

- Job search websites (e.g., LinkedIn, CareerBuilder, Indeed)
- Official government sources (e.g., employment support offices at installations or cities)
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)
- Other (e.g., recruiters, posters, newspapers)

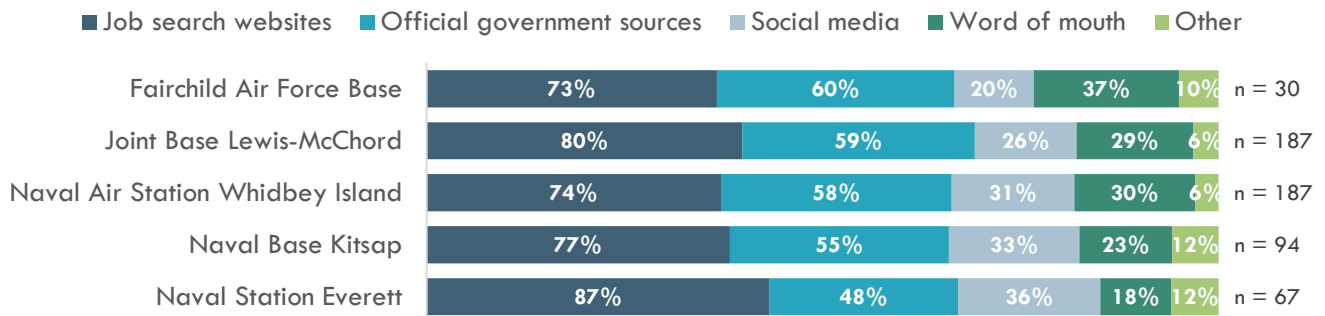
Source: BERK, 2023.



Exhibit 24 shows that there are some differences in respondents' preferred sources for employment-related information by their spouses' current duty stations. At NSE, greater proportions of respondents prefer job search websites (87%) and social media (36%) and smaller proportions prefer official government sources (48%) or word of mouth (11%). At FAFB, a greater proportion of respondents prefer word of mouth (37%) and a smaller proportion prefers social media (20%).

Exhibit 24. Respondents' Preferred Sources for Employment-Related Information in Washington, Disaggregated by Spouse's Current Duty Station

Survey Question: What are your preferred sources for information about employment in Washington? Select your top two.



Note: Respondents could select up to two options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

Note: The above exhibit does not show respondents who indicated their spouse has another affiliation than those listed because the sample size for this group (n = 14) is too small.

Source: BERK, 2023.

Exhibit 25 shows the proportions of respondents who have used various resources to seek employment. About two-thirds of respondents (65%) have used job search websites such as LinkedIn, Career Builder, or Indeed. About one-third (30%) have used the Military One Source Career Center or website. Less than one-quarter of respondents have used each of the other resources listed. Respondents who indicated they used a resource other than those listed in the survey question most commonly referenced conducting independent research or using USA Jobs.

A lower proportion of respondents from FAFB have used resources at that installation (7%). A higher proportion of respondents at JBLM have used Hiring Our Heroes (27%) than respondents at all other installations (11%).

In open-ended comments, many respondents described a desire for additional resources to support military spouses in seeking employment. See the textbox at right for two example comments.

“Resources are far and few between.

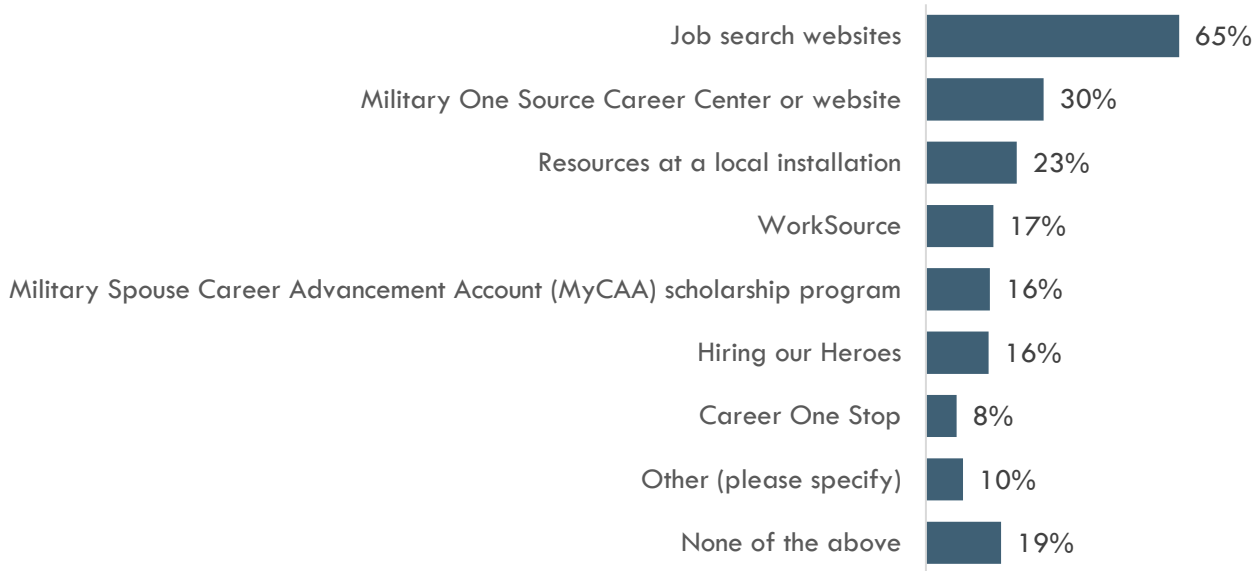
Washington would be such a great place for military families if we only had more support and more resources, but because we don't, we struggle immensely. Most of us can't wait to change duty stations so we can have access to support/resources.”

“I am disabled and can only work from home, and **I feel that there is a lack of resources for those in that situation.**”



Exhibit 25. Respondents' Use of Resources to Seek Employment (n = 593)

Survey Question: Which of the following resources have you used to seek employment in Washington? Check all that apply.



Notes: Respondents could select multiple options, so the percentages above do not sum to 100%.

Resources listed in the above exhibit have been edited for brevity. The survey offered the following explanations:

- Job search websites (e.g., LinkedIn, CareerBuilder, Indeed)
- Resources at a local installation (e.g., support office, website)
- Career One Stop (Department of Labor Transition Employment Assistance for Military Spouses)

Source: BERK, 2023.



Other Open-Ended Feedback

Open-ended feedback provided in the survey covered the following additional topics:

- ▶ **Need for more remote work options.** Some respondents noted that they would like to see more remote work options to enable more flexible work schedules or to give them access to employment in areas to which they cannot commute.

*“I think it’s valuable to have access to **more remote opportunities** since some bases are far from any major cities.”*

- ▶ **Other challenges.** Respondents described other challenges including issues with licensing; transportation challenges; issues with the service member’s schedule; employer bias; a desire for more government jobs; and low BAH.
- ▶ **Positive experiences.** Some respondents noted that they have had positive experiences seeking employment and with licensure in Washington.

*“I’d like to give some **kudos to WA state** and the tremendous support system that is in place for spouses of military members, **in particular, the Military Spouse Liaison** with Department of Veterans Affairs. This position has been invaluable to us as working spouses. I have encouraged other state’s VA programs to consider this formal position in support of military spouse advocacy. I am also extremely impressed with the time/attention our WA state representatives give to this community. **They take our issues seriously and act** on significant impacts. WA is on the right track and I am so pleased!”*

Open-Ended Survey Responses

The following responses have not been modified from their original form and may include typos or other minor errors.

I have a MSW with 10+ years of professional experience however, I have been unable to obtain my LICSW because we have moved each time before I had time finish all the requirements of that state. We have lived in Georgia Florida, & Washington and each state has different requirements in order to obtain a LICSW. It's a very costly process with no guarantee that a LICSW license could be obtained before we PCS again.

I am in the Army reserve and a spouse to an Active-duty member. If not for my status in the reserve, I do not think I would find work as fast as I have. It takes time doing this to be great at it. So, for the first-time spouses PCSing. I think having a mentor helps.

A lot of the time if employers know you’re a military spouse I’ve found a bias in which they’re afraid to hire you with fear you’re leaving

Basically as military spouse with children means I have to operate as a single parent; not able to rely on my spouse as secondary care.

Childcare costs are outrageously high. My current pay does not even cover the cost of one child in childcare let alone three. As a result, I’ve had to take jobs that offered more flexibility in order to work around my kids schedules because I cannot rely on my service members.

I currently work at a childcare here in Washington state. What are jobs that require you to work from home and still put your children in the military childcare.



I am disabled and can only work from home and I feel that there is a lack of resources for those in that situation and while I recognize that everybody wants to work from home for convenience in a post-pandemic world, I feel that there should really be some kind of preference or way for those of us who have no other options to find those jobs easier.
Resources for small business start ups are hard to find. Grants for costs associated with starting a business over after pcs. Resources for help with adolescent child care when they require care but are too old for regular daycare.
Many military spouses are foreign nationals. The base Ns areas around the base do not support or have resources for foreign nationals. I am an Italian citizen and have been discriminated against and profiled because of my ethnicity. The base and area around the base, the Americans, and all employers are non-accommodating to me nor any of the foreign spouses in the area. Coming to America was a huge disappointment; so much for the American dream...
Foreign spouses from overseas have a harder time finding a job.
It has been absolutely AWFUL!! I am underemployed and underutilized. I work for a government contractor and teach transitioning service members how to get civilian jobs and I can't get one myself that utilizes my knowledge, skills and abilities!! It took me 8 months to even get that!! I am apart of every resource and group for a military spouse. Most of the spouse ambassador programs are for entry level to gain more skills. There needs to be more support for the seasoned milspouse that has 18+ years of job experience and needs to make minimum of \$65k. I go to all the military career fairs, apart of Worksource, HOH, USO transitions, employment readiness, and filed out over 11 government applications and 7 state and absolutely nothing!!! I have been to numerous federal workshops and webinars and I have 3 career counselors that are barely old enough to drink. When your husband is in Senior Leadership Commanding 500+ soldiers and your are forced to go to food banks to feed your family because you employer gives you 0-16 hrs a week when they promised 30 and you make \$20 an hour with degrees and 18+ years job years this is absolutely a disservice and AWFUL!!! We want to work full-time and we want to be paid more than \$20 an hour! Tired of everyone saying they support milspouses when in actuality they don't!
How can we get the minimum WA salary to apply to spouses stationed in WA state? My employer is headquartered in VA, and I work remotely from home. Are these employers exempt? And if not, how do they get this information? Just something to look into. Thank you!
They need to promote more often
Having to live in Washington and being a working military spouse I've found that there is definitely not enough family time .
Would love more jobs where they train you to work for them with little experience
It would be beneficial if spouse retirement plans were reciprocated in each state instead of starting over.
Getting licensed and credentialed in another state for my profession is a very long and lengthy process. In addition, while it is a great benefit to my spouse to have his student loans forgiven through the PSLF program is nearly impossible to have my own student loans forgiven through the public student loan forgiveness program due to the constant moving and inability to maintain a consistent 10 years working with an organization that would qualify for the program.
There should be more time off for spouses pre and post deployment without needing to use PTO.
The federal system is based on who you know. The hiring managers do not follow the process of hiring military spouses.
Federal employment opportunities
The biggest barrier to spouses in the current job market is their lack of stabilization for more than 2-3 years. Most employers want a person to stay in a job for 5+ (we are easily a non-starter during the interview process) or employers want experience in one role for 5+ years, which is a rare occurrence for a military spouse. On average it has taken me 6 months of searching after arriving and being situated in housing to get employment. In the current market it takes 9-12 months, giving me maybe a year and a half in one role. USA jobs is a joke for spouses. Many spouses don't use their military spouse preference because if you get an offer for a government employer, you're at their mercy. If a government employer refuses to negotiate pay, once an offer is extended you lose your preference, often through no fault of your own simply because you advocated for your market value. Government pay is not on par with cost of living in most military post cities, forget being competitive with civilian sector. The pay gap is simply an unlivable wage, particularly overseas, as the cost of childcare makes any wage you earn pay neutral. In addition, any spouse with students loans still owes on them, even while looking for work and being relocated, that's why many spouses don't work or attempt to get a degree while their spouse is enlisted. If you have children almost all CYS facilities have a waitlist and often the staff are not really qualified to work with kids. I've had way better childcare experiences off post then on, because the accountability is better. The arbitrary bureaucracy of the military lifestyle, in all its facets, makes living infinitely more difficult than it has ever been in today's current socioeconomic system.



More DOD or civilian jobs open for active duty spouses. Have secret clearance and was a GS at previous base but there were no openings at this base.
The school district doesn't always provide buses home for student-athletes, which causes issues with work hours.
School bus system has been unreliable which made me stay home longer even I have been wanting to start working
The unemployment process is confusing. I am currently going through possibly obtaining unemployment due to a PCS, but any questions I have are met with confusion because being a military spouse is very specific. Also the process is difficult during a time when I have 10,000 other things to do to move. My service member isn't always able to help me. The hiring process took a while too. Getting through the usajobs process took a good 3 months from start to finish, I just don't have that kind of time at some duty stations.
Spouses cannot work if childcare is not available and if childcare costs similar to or more than what we can make. I am a very educated person with a decent income potential and when childcare can cost up to 1400 per child per month for full time care it makes it difficult to justify working.
I do not work because I cannot find afford childcare for my kids.
The employment is not the problem, there's plenty of job but the price of daycare is outrageous. I would be working to pay the daycare basically. Wouldn't make any money. But if my kid was in CDC daycare, it would be life changing. But unfortunately, since im not working, im not priority on the waitlist that ive been on for over a year now. If i would be working, i would probably get a spot for my son way faster, but how can i work if i don't have anywhere to put my son, pay a 1800-2000\$ months daycare or even worst, find one! A lot of daycare have a long waitlist. I think all military family kids should benefit from CDC no matter what their work situation is. They get to learn so much, interact with other kids, etc. I TOTALLY understand that active duty mom/dad/parents need it asap. Maybe a bigger facility or more employees?
The majority of the time the cost of childcare is more the pay of working
Higher pay please! Childcare is ridiculously expensive and there is no way I would take a low paying job just to cover childcare fee.
When we arrived in Washington, it was pretty straight forward to get information and determine how to switch my license. The lack of appropriate childcare was surprising. We saw wait lists of a year and very few providers available for preschool aged kids. We decided that I would stay home with my son and homeschool, so we didn't look very hard for resources after a quick initial search.
Child care is too expensive. Me working would mean all my pay would go to child care so there isn't a point
Cost if childcare is ridiculously expensive, and not worth it for a part-time job like I have. Now my children are in school, but even after-school care costs too much for how little I work, so my availability is limited
Clean up the city—Looks like a dump
I hope we get more benefits like short term disabikity and the like theiugh our spouses
100% work from home opportunities that are flexible so parents with kids in therapies can still work and earn an income. Even if it's not FT, extra income is most appreciated with therapy needs and costs.
13 years classroom teaching experience, raving references, certified in four states ((including Washington) but did not get any of the four jobs I applied for in Washington. Was required to take endorsement exams for my Washington teaching certificate even though I've been a teacher for 13 years. Have a degree in English and a Master's in curriculum and instruction and 13 years of English teaching experience but I'm still not qualified to teach English in Washington. But I took and passed the elementary education endorsement exam and am now fully qualified to teach elementary students with zero training or experience. Make this make sense!
After school care for older children. Many parents are struggling trying to find work during school hours because there is no care after school. Many families are also required to pick up/drop off their students because they live to close to the school.
Almost impossible to work with childcare expenses and poor income even as an E6.
As a professional the biggest challenge I have is promoting. With PCS changes every 3 years I am starting over just when I am becoming eligible for promotions.
As a teacher, it was very easy to transfer my license over to WA state.



As much as i want to work, because of child care problem i am sourcing to remote, work from home jobs.
Childcare is incredibly difficult to find in the Kitsap area. Having a new baby here is even harder. I had to get family to move here to help watch my newborn as went back to work. The closure of one of the CDCs was detrimental to the childcare crisis already happening.
Childcare is the biggest obstacle .
Cost of childcare and cost of living make it impossible for military spouses to have a career, therefore they must chose and live within their means.
Distance to travel in WA is difficult. I lucked out learning software development and being able to work remotely. But relying on the freeway for all the travel to get anywhere is hard. Public transportation doesn't make it easier. I hope there are better resources for those on base for transportation. Some of the programs on base are nice and any suggestions help. I like people encouraging each other to apply and spread opportunities out via Facebook or community groups. Job fairs are great but I like to see more outreach for those who don't even know where to start.
Employers in WA do not support military spouses and our shared responsibilities. We become single parents when our spouse is deployed or in the field yet there is nothing done to help accommodate that.
Employers should really be encouraged to allow military spouses to keep their jobs remotely when PCSing. Or we should be given more options to stabilize at one base. It's very disruptive to my career to move every few years and have to restart.
Employment during Covid was difficult. With 6 kids, there was no way I could work for the first 2 years we were in WA.
Employment is nearly impossible as a spouse. When you have kids, it's hard. My spouse is gone constantly, and I never have a schedule I can stick to. Who would hire you?! On top of that I have a special needs child that schools at home and needs assistance. I would make just enough to cover the cost of a sitter/ mentor to help. It's an impossible situation. All we want is independence and all we get is beat down. We go to school and get educated, but what good is it when we can't get hired or even commit to a normal schedule? It is so disheartening. I have never once had childcare through the military nor has our family been able to afford ANY sort of childcare.
Employment laws concerning federal and state taxes and deductions
Experience in my field was not counted towards my pay
Extremely difficult
Financial assistance for certification or higher education should be available at all levels.2 income home and paying out of pocket is nor financially feasible for us.
Finding a job with a reasonable commute is challenging. I know many spouses, myself included, who commute ~1 hour, one way, without the possibility to telework some days.
Finding jobs to work in child's school hours since need to be home when husband is gone and underway
For us, I was the bread winner , moving here with a disabled 4 year old I had to stop working because the state doesn't support disabled children well. I had to find all new care and re apply for DDA which took 3 years. In those 3 years It was incredibly challenging to work. I finally found remote work making over \$100,000 a year and that was needed because my child's needs precludes her from CYS care and we are not offered a voucher for in home care giving. Due to that high cost of private childcare I would never have been able to afford it if I did not find a job that payed me over 6 figures. That's sad! EFMP families who move here are not supported in the work force.
Get on childcare list asap while searching for a job.
Haven't used it but I like the military family leave act. I'd like to see more about laws and bill impacting military families.
Having additional educational programs offered would allow more people to obtain necessary degrees/certificates/licenses for portable careers. Having a program pathway like X-RAY/CT/MRI associate degree and partnered employer (like government healthcare facilities) would create qualified employees and less staff shortages as well as a portable career. Similar to the structure and benefits of the FCC program but with healthcare. Then upon the service member exiting the service both the former service member and the spouse have education and experience that would transfer in their next chapter. This would also positively impact retention rates as well as improve quality of life and reduce the need for assistance.



I believe I did well in finding employment quickly because of my networking abilities. I know that if I did not have that ability, I would have struggled to find employment because I'm in a state I don't know well I don't know the challenges yet and once I encounter the challenges, it would've been difficult to overcome them.
I coordinated my transfer months in advance. I technically work in Seattle and a challenge I face is my employer pressuring me to work in office, with is often a 1hr 45 min commute during rush hour. It would be helpful if there was an entity to pressure companies to be more flexible with military spouses.
I feel I've done it all alone, I'm not told resources unless my husband is aware of something but he's usually not—I find all my own information reasons I like indeed
I feel like Washington takes care of military families
I feel lucky, but coming here and finding a job was EXTREMELY difficult, I had to settle and took me another year (with job I had) to get a job more aligned with what I wanted
I had an extremely hard time finding a job in my field near this command. I actually found a remote job working remotely out of Minnesota. I think having that opportunity would have helped me land a job in the state of Washington, but I am extremely happy where I ended up employer wise.
I had to switch my career to work in a setting with less pay to support my child's care needs.
I have a Masters and over 25 years of experience. I have to start over every time we move and I lose all of the retirement match money. People look at my resume and want to hire me but not lose me. So, they move on.
I have applied and redone my resume multiple times to appeal to different jobs and I have yet to even get an interview. Seems like everyone who are getting the positions are a friend of someone else who works at the location. I can't find a job here that works with my children's school schedule since my husband is always deployed I'm the sole care provider. It was much easier at our last station and I'm looking forward to leaving here due to this issue.
I know countless women that are unemployed or underemployed due to lack of childcare options, no availability and cost of available options.
I receive unfair treatment on base, trying to find work as an army spouse new to my installation. I have been doxxed, and otherwise ostracized despite being a disabled spouse
I switched career fields and accepted a remote position, so that I could work part time without having to find and pay for full time childcare.
I think it's valuable to have access to more remote opportunities since some bases are far from any major cities.
I was lucky enough to transfer with my employer, if not locating a job would have taken 6 months compared to other wives I know.
I work for amazon as a regional I was able to get a lateral transfer from CA. However, coming here the BAH was 2k lower than CA and just as expensive as San Diego. Due to limited housing options we rent. On top of that child care was more than what I paid in WA and not a lot of pre schools / day cares here accept my military child care. If I didn't work, we would not be able to live above poverty level. Many spouses are struggling even working at amazon to make ends meet or find child care for their little ones. If my son is sick I have to stay home because my job comes second to my husbands. I wish employers understood more when spouses have to take days off to take care of their children.
I would like to learn more about how to go about seeking remote employment, specifically in my licensed field as a registered nurse. I had to give up my job at a hospital due to PCS and homeport shifts. I'd love to be able to continue in my field with something that can travel with me in future PCS moves.
I would stay here if my husband had to PCS anywhere I couldn't easily work because my income covers our home and helps us save money for the future
i wouldlik for an employer to give us options on hrs/time that we would like to work.state should protect military spouses from being fired due to some avoidable circumstances like when we call in work to take care of our children since the active duty has to leave unexpectedly



<p>I'm a military spouse of 16 years and I've never received resources or information at any of our duty stations. Unless I heard about resources from another spouse or by word of mouth I wasn't aware of the resources for job searching. I don't know if soldiers are getting the information from their coc and supposed to relay it to spouses but i believe there needs to be a better way for spouses to find out about all the resources available to us for job hunting.</p>
<p>I'd like to give some kudos to WA state and the tremendous support system that is in place for spouses of military members, in particular, the Military Spouse Liaison with Department of Veteran's Affairs. This position has been invaluable to us as working spouses. I have encouraged other state's VA programs to consider this formal position in support of military spouse advocacy. I am also extremely impressed with the time/attention our WA state representatives give to this community. They take our issues seriously and act on significant impacts. WA is on the right track and I am so pleased!</p>
<p>I'm a medical assistant and I would love to stay with one company for years but with PCS I don't get that chance. I would love for the military to hire more spouse so we can transfer jobs when we move.</p>
<p>It is almost impossible to survive at this duty station without dual income, BAH is extraordinarily low and not in line with current living expenses here- desperately trying to have someone address this issue. Many families with kids are on the brink of poverty just trying to survive until each paycheck. Months long wait for housing and lack of childcare become unintended obstacles in finding employment quickly and being able to sustain that career.</p>
<p>It is difficult to find employment when spouses work schedule is never consistent .</p>
<p>It is difficult to maintain the working hours required for Washington state licensure as a military spouse AND mom who moves around all the time. Most states only require yearly continuing education credit to keep your license active. I wish Washington would do the same.</p>
<p>It is difficult to obtain employment due to the ever changing schedule of my active duty spouse. I my availability is often unpredictable and unreliable and that is not attractive to potential employers. So I use my time I volunteer positions.</p>
<p>It is difficult. I am not working on my preferred field.</p>
<p>It is hard for milspouses ANYWHERE to get employment because of children needing care, but in Washington it is the worst I have seen. There just isn't enough childcare in the state to allow spouses to work.</p>
<p>It stinks having to find a new job every time we PCS... wish transferring were an option in my field</p>
<p>It was very challenging to complete education required to pursue my career with the unpredictable nature of spouses schedule, PCS moves, and lack of family/childcare support. Most working spouses I come into contact with take menial jobs because of similar difficulties.</p>
<p>It was very difficult to get a job as a military spouse with a career history of only 2-5 years employment per duty station.</p>
<p>It's difficult to have a job when your spouse is always deployed or on a detachment. I cannot count on my spouse to have parental responsibilities due to this. All responsibilities are on me since my active member is gone all the time and it's difficult for me to feel like I'm excelling at my job if I can't always put in the time needed as I'm the only one holding the household down.</p>
<p>It's hard to move up in companies with constant moving</p>
<p>It's nearly impossible.my husbands community moves us every 14-18 months. This makes finding work as a spouse nearly impossible.</p>
<p>It's scarce and takes a long time</p>
<p>It's very difficult to find a job when your spouse is constantly gone/can't help with dropping off/picking up children. CDC is no help bc you are low priority if don't already have a job lined up when you PCS then sit on the list for over 2yrs</p>
<p>It's very difficult with transferring my educator credentials from another state to Washington. Unlike other states there isn't reciprocity here and as a result, I have to apply for a new certification. This means that I will be paying for more professional development courses and an overall fee to receive a certificate that I was able to transfer easily in other states.</p>
<p>It's hard to find employment when you have a significant gap in unemployment time.</p>
<p>Jobs on base do not pay well enough to keep up with prices in Washington</p>



Just more information to military spouses about employment regardless of employment.
Just reinforcing the childcare situation is extremely difficult with the unpredictable military schedule. There are not enough FCC providers/long enough hours at the CDC to accommodate my schedule without cutting back hours.
Licensing for SLP took a very long time, almost 2 months after start due to difficulty with finger printing having to be in person.
Lots of stigma in Washington of not hiring military spouses. I applied a entry level position that I qualify at department of fish and wildlife and it was very obvious I was rejected because of my military spouse status.
Lots of time people don't want to hire cause they want someone ongoing term and not someone who doesn't know how long they will be stationed in said state. I've been denied 6 jobs based on being told "sorry, we are looking for someone long term". I had out of state drivers license and military ID. Rather disappointing to try and get work when they don't even want someone who has no control over if spouse suddenly has to PCS.
Many of us are under/unemployed because the cost of childcare would offset any money that we do make. Having better options for summer care—especially summer school—would be amazing. We previously lived in Kansas City and KCPS offered summer school options that included transportation, lunch, and some limited after school care. We were shocked at the lack of options for kids here in Washington, the lack of summer school options, and were appalled at the cost of any kind of summer care.
Many spouses are VERY over qualified for the positions they end up in due to the unpredictability of our lives, they take what they can get, or burn out from constantly starting at "the bottom" of their career field repeatedly.
Many spouses need to quit when their service member is deployed/TDY. They are also usually working at a loss if they have multiple children.
Maybe additional source of information of employment through gaining command so they can communicate through our sponsor.
Mid-level career options never seem to be available on or near the installation. I am consistently either underemployed or grasping to secure remote work opportunities which are either highly competitive or hard to find. With bad traffic, lost time, and transportation costs I can't fathom trying to make a daily commute to Seattle. JBLM is an isolating place for a career-oriented spouse.
My answers could skew results as my employer allows me to work from home and is flexible with PCS moves. I've retained the same job I've the past 12 years through several PCS moves. Childcare and finding housing has always been the greatest challenges.
My prolonged unemployment only ended because I am entirely unable to obtain work that will cover childcare and the gap left by the BAH and to secure a second vehicle. Right now I had to get work at a place that barely pays only because it is willing to take my son in and is along the way to the base. It's terrible and I was forced into this situation due to the horrible compensation that the military provides.
NASWI is a horrible awful place for a military spouse with any aspirations. I have an MBA and cannot find a decent paying career in the field I desire as it is too far from Seattle where all the decent jobs are. I have considered divorce because of this failed support for spouse consideration
Near by Schools for careers in which the spouses can make their own working hours would be great
Need more benefits for military spouse and more opportunities to find and get a job
No. I do not seek employment with them knowing I'm a spouse nor do I mention I am a spouse.
None, the lack of childcare is astonishing in this state. I relied a milspouse as a full time care taker
Nope childcare is expensive and hard to find
One of the biggest issues is child care: the CDC hours close at 5 when most jobs you work til 5. If you can not find a employer with full time work that is flexible, you will not be able to work. The cost of childcare is so high that even working a part time job and finding a private person to watch kids is not doable. I had people quoting me \$18 an hour when my starting pay was \$16. That is insane. That cost of child care is too high, the cost of living here at NAS is too high, bills and basic needs are just being met with the job I have now.



<p>Political ties & job scarcity mindset continue to plague the DoD and undermine MilSpouse Preference programs. There is a preference for organizational stability that many MilSpouses cannot always provide due to holding multiple hats in the physical or emotional absence of Military members. Not everyone desires or has the support systems to delegate their parental responsibilities. MORE remote opportunities are desired on a flexible part-time basis.</p>
<p>Provide more Employment for military spouse</p>
<p>Relevant Jobs to our Degrees</p>
<p>Resources are far and few between. Washington would be such a great place for military families if we only had more support and more resources, but because we don't, we struggle immensely. Most of us can't wait to change duty stations so we can have access to support/resources.</p>
<p>Resources to help with career change as needed to obtain a job</p>
<p>Teaching endorsements need to transfer state to state! I was unable to get a job as a special education teacher because Maryland only asked me to take a test and Washington is a test plus program state. I've already taught special ed for four years so I'm not going back to school.</p>
<p>That though many employers do not directly ask spouses if they are active-duty employers do find a way to ask discreetly and I've been denied jobs due to not being her long-term</p>
<p>The barrier is not lack of jobs. The barrier is lack of jobs that can be flexible AND childcare availability. We can't rely on our active duty spouse to be available, and most employers are not ok with you having to be 30 mins late or not being able to come because your spouse was not available to care for their kids whe. they were supposed to be, or the childcare you had suddenly fell thru. Also, most jobs that will hire a spouse aren't gonna pay enough to cover the costs of daycare or other options IF you can even find a safe, affordable, and comfortable location for your children to be at. It saves my household more money with me being a SAHM, than if I had to pay someone to watch my kids so I can work.</p>
<p>The childcare issue makes it nearly impossible to be a working military spouse. We have contemplated having me stay at home multiple times because of lack of quality care, but I enjoy working. It took 18 months for my first child to have a spot at CDC and our current baby was put on the waitlist at 7 weeks pregnant and the website says he will likely not get a spot until he is a toddler. The daycares out in town are in areas that are not safe, have questionable safety and security measures, and cost an incredible amount. I wish there was more information about military spouse employment opportunities in kitsap county specifically, and a larger or additional CDC to accommodate the need for childcare.</p>
<p>The childcare list is long (more than 12 months), housing on Whidbey is very expensive and the waitlist for housing is also very long, and BAH is very low compared to rental rates on Whidbey Island. Many people choose to commute to Whidbey because there are more job and daycare options further away from Whidbey Island but then the time of commute and cost of gas crates other challenges. BAH at all other duty stations has covered rent, water, sewer, trash, electricity and gas. The BAH for Whidbey Island does not cover any utilities that are required to live. My water bill is 200 a month and 150 of that is just to have service (no water usage!). Families are being forced to be dual working if they get stationed here. I choose to work and finished school at our last duty station but I couldn't have done that here.</p>
<p>The cost of living here in Washington is so high that we need a second income but with childcare waitlists, licensure and being underemployed (offered less than my skill set), we are struggling.</p>
<p>The cost of living is so high in WA that it was never possible for me to start working. I have a BA but between the cost of childcare (if you could even find openings) and the total inaccessibility, we chose to take the significant financial struggles and have me stay home. WA is the worst state for dual working parents and highest cost in the US.</p>
<p>The cost to live in Washington state is high and the pay is not enough.</p>
<p>The current salary levels in the area are not sufficient to the cost of living. Because of the military's restriction on where we can live, I am not able to commute to area that pay more.</p>
<p>The lack of affordable childcare makes working around my husband's active duty schedule near impossible. I am a CPhT who went to school and I am nationally certified, but working after having my son five years ago has been simply impossible. And working from home is hard in my field.</p>
<p>The pay isn't enough.</p>



There are lots of resources for medical building and certifications like that, but there's not a lot of resources for like hairdressing event planning the "outside the box" jobs.
There are no jobs that can accommodate the extreme demand on my time that having a large family does.
There are not enough jobs in Oak Harbor. The pay is not able to support the cost of living in Oak Harbor.
There are so few of us that have professional careers outside of the home.
There has been great strides in WA! Still not there though.
There is no childcare. The CDCs are full and the waitlist is so long I was informed it was unlikely I would ever have a spot for my child. Forced to change jobs due to this and really it is still not working well.
There should be an office in every base/post where you can go and seek help for employment.
Took a \$30k pay cut transferring to WA from TX
Washington is too expensive for families to not be dual income. Even the NCR was not this awful. Housing is unaffordable within most means. Childcare is expensive and as a healthcare provider difficult to find one that accommodates anything outside of a standard schedule and is not congruent with unpredictable military schedules. Professional licensing in this state is four times more expensive than any other state I have had to obtain a license in. Overall I would never voluntarily come to Washington state for any reason and currently I cannot wait to leave here.
We don't make enough money to thrive in life, we are just surviving. And we have fewer children than most families here seem to have.
we need after school programs for teens that do not discriminate based on vaccination status.
Whidbey island is just so difficult for reaching out to child care, and the housing is so expensive. We are poor even my husband got promoted.
Work from home
Work from home options



Appendix C: Discussion Groups

This appendix provides an overview of the discussion group conversations conducted in March and April 2024 to gather feedback on preliminary draft recommendations. Discussion groups were convened with individuals who work or volunteer to support military spouses and with military spouses themselves. See Exhibit 26 for a list of all discussion groups.

Exhibit 26. Discussion Groups

Date	Time	Group engaged	# of participants
Tue, Mar 19, 2024	12–1 pm	Washington State Military Spouse Employment Workgroup (see Exhibit 27 for individual participants)	16
Tue, Mar 26, 2024	1–2 pm	Washington State Child Care for Military Families Workgroup, plus additional childcare interests (see Exhibit 27 for individual participants)	14
Wed, Apr 17, 2024	9–10:15 am	Military spouses	5
Wed, Apr 17, 2024	11:30 am–12:45 pm	Military spouses	3
Wed, Apr 17, 2024	6–7:15 pm	Military spouses	8

Source: BERK, 2024.

Exhibit 27. Discussion Groups Participants from WDVA Workgroups

Discussion Participants from the Washington State Military Spouse Employment Workgroup	Discussion Participants from the Washington State Child Care for Military Families Workgroup, plus additional childcare interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Amanda Gallup, JBLM ▶ Angela Spitzer, National Guard Association of Washington ▶ Brian Newberry, Forward Fairchild ▶ Deborah Robins, Navy Region Northwest ▶ Gracie Martinez, Child Care Aware of Washington ▶ Heidi Pascoe, U.S. Coast Guard ▶ Janna Adams, FAFB ▶ Kayla Corbitt, The Operation Child Care Project ▶ Maria Quinn, The Operation Child Care Project ▶ Mark Sullivan, WDVA ▶ Roger Williams, JBLM ▶ Sandy Maldonado, Child Care Aware of Washington ▶ Theresa Ikstrums, NSE ▶ Venicia Morse, JBLM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Aleesha Roedel, Forward Fairchild ▶ Ashley McHan, FAFB ▶ Britt Feldman, Navy Region Northwest ▶ Christin Vine, U.S. Department of Labor ▶ Espy Garcia, U.S. Coast Guard ▶ Jessica Oxley, Hiring Our Heroes ▶ Jo Ann Enwall, JBLM ▶ Keleen Briales, JBLM ▶ Mark Sullivan, WDVA ▶ Meek Ward, JBLM ▶ Nakia Happli, NBK ▶ Rachel Carpenter, Blue Star Families, Puget Sound Chapter ▶ Shelby Bassett, NASWI ▶ Shellie Willis, WorkForce Central ▶ Sherry M. Hughes, NBK ▶ Sonia Garza, Blue Star Families

Source: BERK, 2024.



Discussion Questions

During discussion groups, BERK engage participants in discussions. Discussion questions varied by the group engaged and are listed below.

Discussion Questions for WDVA Workgroups

Discussion questions for the WDVA Workgroups aimed to gather feedback about the viability of recommendations and their implementation. Questions included:

- ▶ Do these recommendations seem actionable?
- ▶ What do you like about these recommendations and what is missing?
- ▶ Are there key players that should be added to or removed from any recommendations?

Discussion Questions for Military Spouse Discussion Groups

Discussion questions for military spouses aimed to gather feedback based on their firsthand experiences with employment challenges as military spouses. Questions included:

- ▶ **Prioritization:** Which recommendations do you think have the potential to have the greatest impact?
- ▶ **What's missing:** Do you or your peers have needs that these recommendations wouldn't address?
- ▶ **Implementation:** What should the key players keep in mind about military spouses when carrying out these recommendations? What roadblocks or challenges might they encounter based on your experiences?

Key Takeaways

Workgroup Discussion Groups

Participants from both WDVA workgroups expressed high-level support for the draft recommendations. Much of the discussion focused on clarifying and refining the details and framing of the specific strategies. In both cases, participants suggested emphasizing and expanding upon work that is already occurring to support military spouse employment. The following subsections describe additional areas of feedback from each workgroup.

Washington State Child Care for Military Families Workgroup and Additional Childcare Interests

This discussion group focused solely on the childcare focus area of the recommendations.

- ▶ The discussion group expressed interest in childcare as an entitlement.
- ▶ Recommendations should reflect the need for intermittent childcare.
- ▶ Outreach about childcare information is essential to supporting military spouses.



Washington State Military Spouse Employment Workgroup

This discussion group focused on all recommendation focus areas except the childcare focus area.

- ▶ There is a lack of awareness around existing legal protections for military spouse employment.
- ▶ More outreach is needed to inform individuals about financial support program eligibility.
- ▶ There is a need to support the specific needs of military spouses who are veterans.
- ▶ There is a difference between an employer being military-friendly and military-ready, and there is a need to help employers transition to military readiness.

Military Spouse Discussion Groups

The military spouse discussion groups each focused on different focus areas. In all three discussion groups, participants (1) shared experiences around a lack of awareness of existing resources, and (2) emphasized the need for a single centralized location to access resources and information. The following subsections describe additional areas of feedback from each discussion group.

Outreach, Financial Resources and Basic Needs, and Data, Research, and Advocacy Discussion Group

This discussion group focused on the areas of outreach, financial resources and basic needs, and data, research, and advocacy. Key input provided by spouses included:

- ▶ Military spouses should be engaged within the communities in which they live.
- ▶ Mailing informational packets directly to households would engage spouses and reduce reliance on service members for communication.
- ▶ Immigrant spouses need further communication about the resources available to them.
- ▶ Communication channels should be broadened to effectively reach spouses without children.
- ▶ Military spouses need more information about their community, schools, transit, and other location specific knowledge to ease transition during PCS moves.
- ▶ Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) families need additional support.
- ▶ Loan locker programs (which provide household goods on loan while military families await the delivery of their own belongings after a move) would alleviate stress and enable spouses to focus on employment during PCS moves.

Childcare for Military Families Discussion Group

This discussion group focused on childcare for military families. Much of this conversation centered around participants' limited awareness of existing resources. Key input provided by spouses included:

- ▶ Increased wages and benefits for FCC providers and childcare during onboarding classes could incentivize additional FCC participation.
- ▶ FCC providers could be prioritized for military housing, and housing could be developed specifically for FCC providers with designated childcare space and separate living spaces.



Employment Resources and Employment Opportunity Discussion Group

This discussion group focused on the employment resources and employment opportunity focus areas. Key input provided by spouses included:

- ▶ The volunteer-based and command-dependent resource delivery system leads to inconsistent experiences among spouses.
- ▶ State licensing agencies could prioritize military spouse applications, allow spouses to seek work before obtaining licensure, or explore other ways to support licensed military spouses.
- ▶ Colleges at which spouses use MyCAA benefits should be vetted to protect military spouses from predatory practices.
- ▶ More outreach is needed to clarify G.I. bill benefits for dependents.
- ▶ Military family loan programs can provide needed financial benefits to families, though current barriers include stigma and limited awareness.
- ▶ Implementation of these recommendations will take time, so there is a need for stop-gap measures to address immediate challenges.



Appendix D: Project Steering Committee Membership

Exhibit 28 lists all members of the Project Steering Committee.

Exhibit 28. Project Steering Committee Membership

Geography	Name	Organization(s)
NSE	Rashma Agarwal	Economic Alliance of Snohomish County
	Daniel Graham	NSE Family Employment Readiness
	Jesse Bennett	NSE Fleet & Family Support Center
FAFB	Aleesha Roedel / Brian Newberry	Forward Fairchild / Greater Spokane, Inc.
	Ashley McHan / Marlene Simock	FAFB
JBLM	Doug Mah	Thurston County Chamber
	Andrea Reay	Tacoma Pierce County Chamber
	Meek Ward	JBLM
NBK	Britt Feldman	NBK; Navy Region NW Diversity, Equity Inclusion, and Accessibility Community
	Nakia Happli / Sherry Hughes	NBK
	Tatiane Simons	Olympic College
NASWI	Shelby Bassett	NASWI Fleet and Family Support Center
	Sharon Sappington	Island County Economic Development Council
National	Laura Torres/ Karly Howell	Blue Star Families
	Kia Thompson	Support the Enlisted Project
Statewide	Olivia Burley	WDVA

Source: BERK, 2024.



Appendix E: Key Group Representative Interviews

This appendix details the interviewees engaged for this study, the interview protocol provided to all interviewees, and the key takeaways from interviews.

Interviewees

Exhibit 29 lists all individuals interviewed for this project. Interviewees were selected with guidance from Olivia Burley, the Washington Military Spouse Liaison at WDVA.

Exhibit 29. Key Group Representative Interviewees

Organization	Person	Title
Blue Star Families, Puget Sound Chapter	Rachel Carpenter	Program Manager
FAFB	Ashley McHan	Community Readiness Consultant
FAFB	Nancy Keeton	Community Child Care Coordinator
Hiring Our Heroes	Jessica Oxley	Program Manager, Military Spouse Fellowships
Military Family Advisory Network	Delia Johnson	Vice President, Operations
Military Officers Association of America	Jennifer Goodale	Director, Military Family and Survivor Policy
NBK	Nakia Happli	Family Employment Specialist
NBK	Sherry M. Hughes	Work and Family life Consultant
Navy Region Northwest	Britt Feldman	Regional Work and Family Life Coordinator
Navy Region Northwest	Deborah Robins	Region Child and Youth Program Manager
Department of Children Youth and Families	Charlotte Campbell	QRIS Government and Partnerships Liaison
WDVA	Olivia Burley	Washington State Military Spouse Liaison

Source: BERK, 2024.



Interview Protocol

Interviewees received the following study information and discussion questions in advance of the interview.

The Department of Defense's [Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation](#) has funded the South Sound Military Communities Partnership (SSMCP) to conduct a Military Spouse Employment Study. This study is focused on gathering a current understanding of military spouse employment across the state of Washington and developing recommendations for strategies to address barriers to employment. The study is being conducted in partnership with stakeholders of all five major installations in the state and with support from BERK Consulting. See the [project webpage](#) for more information.

To support this study, BERK conducted a statewide survey of military spouses in fall 2023. The survey identified childcare-related issues as the top challenge military spouses have faced seeking employment in Washington, with many spouses also facing other challenges.

This interview is designed to gather an overview of existing work to support military spouses to ensure that final recommendations build on efforts to-date rather than duplicating or competing with them. The conversation will take no more than 30 minutes and will occur virtually by Microsoft Teams.

The final report will identify opportunities to address direct and indirect to workforce participation workforce by military spouses. Strategies may involve collaboration among the military; federal, state, and local governments; and private, nonprofit, educational, and labor partners.

1. What is currently being done in your sector that could support military spouses? What is your organization's role? Consider:
 - ▷ **Childcare-related supports**
 - ▷ **Supports for direct issues with employment** (e.g., finding a job at relevant education or experience level; receiving adequate pay or benefits; employer bias; issues with licensing or certification)
 - ▷ **Supports for indirect issues with employment** (e.g., challenges related to moving due to a spouse's relocation; housing; transportation; access to support)
2. What else could your organization and/or sector do? What practices have you seen elsewhere to support military spouses? Consider:
 - ▷ Policy and legal supports.
 - ▷ On-the-ground supports.
3. How could other sectors complement your work? Consider:
 - ▷ **The military**, including the Department of Defense and military installations.
 - ▷ **Government** at the federal, state, and local level.
 - ▷ **Educational institutions**, including colleges and vocational schools.
 - ▷ **Community organizations**, including those focused on the military community or with a broader focus.
 - ▷ **Employers**, including HR professionals.
 - ▷ **Youth and childcare interests**, including childcare providers and advocacy organizations.
4. What resources or policy changes would be necessary to be successful in addressing barriers to military spouse employment?
5. Who else should we talk to?



Key Takeaways

Interviews yielded several takeaways around ways to support military spouses, described in the following sections.

Outreach

- ▶ Outreach and networking for military spouses should be held in-person when possible.
- ▶ Outreach to military spouses needs to consider components of cultural competency, in that military spouses experience a distinct lifestyle that should be considered when trying to reach them.
- ▶ Installations should conduct outreach to military spouses before they PCS into Washington, rather than after, to ensure that license and certification paperwork is completed in a timely manner.
- ▶ More focus should be put on reaching service members to encourage them to pass along information to spouses. However, to help spouses receive information directly, it may also be beneficial to invite military spouses to in-processing courses when possible.
- ▶ There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to outreach and support for military spouses. Interventions should be intentional, so that they address a wide range of needs and issues.
- ▶ It would be beneficial for the DoD to update its communications methods and to partner more with community organizations to reach military spouses.
- ▶ Military spouses often need more support and outreach around how to use existing resources, such as the USA Jobs website.

Childcare for Military Families

- ▶ Military families would also be well-served by broader efforts at the state and national level to improve access to and affordability of childcare.
- ▶ Military families lack access to childcare subsidy programs, partially due to a lack of awareness in military families, a lack of access for families with higher incomes, and issues around usability and awareness for providers.
- ▶ The process of accessing childcare subsidies is complicated and should be streamlined.
- ▶ The childcare sector struggles with staffing and retention, which affects childcare capacity and availability to families.

Employment Resources

- ▶ Military spouses should be centered in employment support systems, rather than added in with veteran employment supports, which may make military spouses feel like an afterthought.
- ▶ It could be helpful to create a program that offers training to military spouses for skilled on-base positions, so that these spouses can transfer their work between installations as their families PCS.



- ▶ Some military spouses need support with finding or sustaining a “job,” while others need support with finding or sustaining a “career.” Supports for these two needs are different, as finding or sustaining a “job” may be simpler than doing so for a “career,” because career-building tends to be more individually-tailored and complex.
- ▶ Military spouse career networks can be valuable ways to build connections and set military spouses up for success in their employment journeys.

Employment Opportunity

- ▶ Businesses should be encouraged to hire military spouses and become “military ready,” not just “military friendly,” through outreach, education, advocacy, trust-building, and case-making.
- ▶ Case-making to employers to hire military spouses should include information about military culture and the distinct strengths that accompany handling the challenges of the lifestyle.

Financial Resources and Basic Needs

- ▶ Military families may struggle with economic security, and this is often tied to spousal employment when spouses need to weigh the benefits of becoming or staying employed compared to handling other family needs such as childcare.
- ▶ At some bases, high housing costs lead to military families living farther from base, which can negatively affect transportation and childcare, and thereby become a deciding factor in whether a military spouse is financially able to pursue employment.
- ▶ Financial support for military families affects military retention, which can impact military readiness.

Data, Research, and Advocacy

- ▶ Preferred channels for outreach to military spouses are still relatively undocumented. Ongoing research should identify the best ways to reach military spouses, particularly in a post-pandemic landscape.
- ▶ Policy changes for military spouses are often based on outdated resources. New data should be consistently collected to ensure that policy solutions are still relevant when they come to fruition.
- ▶ Programs for military spouses should be evaluated over time to measure progress and success.
- ▶ Advocacy for military spouses should include military spouse voices directly and from the beginning of all processes.



Appendix F: Key Group Research

This appendix aggregates many important groups in the landscape of support for military spouse employment. This list of key groups is not intended to be comprehensive, but instead aims to illustrate the range of groups that can impact military spouse employment and the military installations to which they have the strongest connections.

The list categorizes each group into one of several categories described in the bullets below. While each group is categorized into just one category, many key groups could be categorized under multiple categories, demonstrating the intersectionality of the categories. Exhibit 30 lists all groups and their connections at the national, state, and installation levels.

- ▶ **Advocacy and community organizations** that support military spouses or military families.
- ▶ **Business interests**, including economic development councils, chambers of commerce, and other groups that support business.
- ▶ **Educational institutions and interests**, including career and technical colleges, school districts, and other organizations that support educational attainment.
- ▶ **Employment organizations**, including workforce development councils and other organizations that support career development and worker retraining.
- ▶ **Government entities**, including at the state, county, and local level.
- ▶ **Military entities**, including groups and offices at installations, service branches, or the national level.
- ▶ **Tribes** with reservations near military installations.
- ▶ **Youth and childcare organizations** that advocate for access to childcare. For a list of childcare providers in Washington, see <https://www.findchildcarewa.org/>.

The list was generated through brainstorming by the Project Steering Committee and supplemented through online research.

Exhibit 30. Key Groups in the Washington Military Spouse Employment Landscape

Organization	Nat'l	WA	NASWI	NSE	NBK	JBLM	FAFB
Advocacy and community organizations							
AM Vets						✓	
Blue Star Families	✓						
Cohen Clinic						✓	
Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Fellowship / Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot	✓	✓					
Hope Sparks						✓	
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades	✓						
Lacey Veteran Center						✓	
Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center							✓



Organization	Nat'l	WA	NASWI	NSE	NBK	JBLM	FAFB
Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN)	✓						
Navy League—Lake Washington and Everett Council				✓			
Navy League—Seattle Council			✓	✓		✓	
NineLine Veteran Services						✓	
Operation Homefront	✓				✓		
Operation Military Family		✓		✓			
Permission to Start Dreaming						✓	
PNW Vets			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Snohomish County Veterans Committee				✓			
South Sound Military and Communities Partnership						✓	
Support the Enlisted Project	✓					✓	
Thurston County Food Bank						✓	
United Way of Pierce County						✓	
United Way of Pierce County						✓	
USO	✓						
Vet Tribe					✓		
Whidbey Community Foundation			✓				
Whidbey Women in Business			✓				
Whidbey Young Professionals			✓				
Wounded Warrior Project						✓	
Business interests							
Bainbridge Chamber of Commerce					✓		
Business Impact NW		✓					
Economic Alliance of Snohomish County				✓			
Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County						✓	
Economic Development Council for Island County			✓				
Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County						✓	
Enterprise for Equity						✓	
Forward Fairchild / Greater Spokane, Inc.							✓
Greater Kitsap Chamber of Commerce					✓		
Greater Marysville Tulalip Chamber				✓			
Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce							✓
Greater Spokane, Inc.							✓
Kitsap Economic Development Alliance					✓		
Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce			✓				
PacMtn (Pacific Mountain Workforce)						✓	
Poulsbo Chamber of Commerce					✓		
Tacoma Pierce County Chamber						✓	
Thurston County Chamber						✓	
TIAG	✓						
United States Military Spouse Chamber of Commerce	✓						
Educational institutions and interests							
Bates Technical College						✓	
Clover Park Public School District						✓	
Grand Canyon University						✓	
North Thurston School District						✓	
Northwest Career Colleges Federation		✓				✓	
Northwest Carpenters Institute		✓					
Olympic College					✓		
Onward to Opportunity	✓						



Organization	Nat'l	WA	NASWI	NSE	NBK	JBLM	FAFB
Pierce College						✓	
Skagit Valley College, Oak Harbor Campus			✓				
Skagit Valley College, Worker Retraining Committee			✓				
South Puget Sound Community College						✓	
The Evergreen State College						✓	
Washington Student Achievement Council		✓					
Western Governors University		✓					
Employment organizations							
ANEW		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Career Team		✓					
Goodwill of the Rainier and Olympic Region		✓					
Hiring Our Heroes	✓						
Hiring Our Heroes / Military Spouse Professional Network	✓						
Island County Economic Development Council			✓				
Northwest Workforce Council			✓				
Olympic Consortium Workforce Development Council					✓		
Seahawks Task Force 12		✓					
Serco Career Facilitator/VetsinTech		✓					
Society for Human Resources Management	✓						
Spokane Workforce Council							✓
Tacoma Goodwill						✓	
Workforce Central						✓	
Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County						✓	
Workforce Education Board		✓					
Workforce Snohomish				✓			
WorkSource		✓					
WorkSource Island			✓				
WorkSource JBLM						✓	
Government entities							
City of Airway Heights							✓
City of Bremerton					✓		
City of Dupont						✓	
City of Everett				✓			
City of Lacey						✓	
City of Medical Lake							✓
City of Oak Harbor			✓				
City of Olympia						✓	
City of Spokane							✓
City of Tacoma						✓	
City of Yelm						✓	
Island County			✓				
Kitsap County					✓		
Pierce County						✓	
Snohomish County				✓			
Spokane County							✓
Thurston County						✓	
Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families		✓					
Washington State Department of Health / Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission		✓					
Washington State Department of Labor and Industries		✓					
Washington State Department of Licensing		✓					



Organization	Nat'l	WA	NASWI	NSE	NBK	JBLM	FAFB
WDVA		✓					
Washington State Employment Security Department		✓					
Washington State Office of Financial Management		✓					
Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction		✓					
Military entities							
62nd Air Wing						✓	
Army and Air Force Exchange Service						✓	
Army Directorate of HR						✓	
Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO)	✓						
DoD	✓	✓					
DoD / Military Spouse Employment Partnership	✓						
FAFB							✓
Installation Child and Youth Services			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Installation Employment Readiness Programs			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Installation Fleet & Family Support Centers			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Installation Spouse Clubs			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JBLM						✓	
JBLM Career Skills Program						✓	
Military Housing Office					✓		
Morale, Welfare, and Recreation						✓	
NASWI			✓				
NBK					✓		
NSE				✓			
Navy Region NW Diversity, Equity Inclusion, and Accessibility Community		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Ready and Resilient Division for the Family Advocacy Program						✓	
Sexual Assault Prevention Advocacy						✓	
SkillBridge programs	✓	✓					
Transition Assistance Program	✓						
U.S. Army Recovery Care Program	✓						
Washington Army National Guard		✓					
Washington Military Department		✓					
Tribes							
The Tulalip Tribes				✓			
Nisqually Tribe						✓	
Youth and childcare organizations							
Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State		✓					
Brightspark—ChildCare Aware of Pierce County						✓	
Child Care Action Council—ChildCare Aware of the Olympic Peninsula					✓		
ChildCare Aware of Northwest WA—Everett			✓	✓			
Community-Minded Enterprises (ChildCare Aware of Eastern WA)							✓
First5fundamentals						✓	
Parent Ambassadors		✓					
Pierce County Early Childhood Network						✓	
WA STEM		✓					
Washington Communities for Children		✓					
Washington State Alliance of YMCAs		✓					
YMCA of the Inland Northwest							✓

Source: BERK, 2024.



Appendix G: Military Childcare Resources

The military provides childcare to military families through both direct provision of childcare and fee assistance for non-military childcare providers. The following information is drawn from the 2023 report [“Supporting the Child Care Needs of Military Families in Washington: Quantifying Need, Identifying Barriers, and Establishing Recommendations,”](#) published by WDVA through WDVA’s Military Spouse Initiative.

Direct childcare provision

- ▶ **Child Development Centers** (CDCs) are on-base childcare facilities for military families.
- ▶ The **School-Age Care** (SAC) program provides before- and after-school care and full-day care on non-school days to children in kindergarten through sixth grade.

Fee assistance programs

- ▶ The [Family Child Care](#) (FCC) or [Child Development Home](#) (CDH) programs provides fee assistance for military families to access childcare in home-based childcare programs on- or off-base.
- ▶ The [Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood and Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood Plus](#) (MCCYN/MCCYN-PLUS) program provides fee assistance for military families to access childcare at off-base childcare providers.
- ▶ [Child Care in Your Home](#) (CCYH) is a pilot program in Seattle-Tacoma area that provides fee assistance for military families to have a full-time childcare provider come into their home.

