

# PROMISING PRACTICES

## MILITARY SPOUSE LICENSE RECOGNITION FOR POLICYMAKERS AND LICENSING ADMINISTRATORS



This document is intended to help state occupational licensing agencies and licensing boards support military spouses who work in licensed occupations. It highlights promising practices that states are using to implement license recognition options, so that those options are easily accessible to military spouses when they move to a new state.

## INTRODUCTION

In October 2018, there were over 630,000 military spouses in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Compared to civilians, military spouses are 10 times more likely to have moved across state lines in the last year due to military relocation. Those who work in licensed occupations can find it time-consuming and costly to obtain licensing in a new state. Often, each state has different procedures and requirements to obtain occupational licensing within the same occupation. These difficulties contribute to “employment gaps and underemployment within military families, which lead to additional stress and financial strain that could also impact military spouses’ health and well being, as well as service members’ military readiness.”<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, most states have passed laws creating less burdensome license recognition options for military spouses. However, the impact of these laws on spouses depends on the extent to which the laws are implemented and operationalized by state agencies and licensing bodies. This document highlights some promising practices adopted by states that make license recognition procedures more transparent and easy to access for relocating military spouses.<sup>3</sup>

### PROMISING PRACTICES FOR LICENSE RECOGNITION FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

- ✓ ADOPTING LICENSE RECOGNITION OPTIONS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES
- ✓ CLEARLY EXPLAINING THE LICENSE RECOGNITION OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY SPOUSES
- ✓ CREATING A SIMPLE APPLICATION PROCESS
- ✓ WAIVING APPLICATION FEES
- ✓ TRAINING LICENSING BOARD STAFF
- ✓ PROVIDING A KNOWLEDGEABLE POINT OF CONTACT

## ADOPTING LICENSE RECOGNITION OPTIONS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Most states have adopted one or more of three license recognition best practice options: licensing by endorsement, temporary licensing, and expedited processing. Each is briefly described below.

- › **LICENSING BY ENDORSEMENT** (also known as “recognition”). Licensing by endorsement is a process by which a licensing board issues a permanent license to applicants who hold a valid license in another jurisdiction with similar standards, without further examination. This approach typically requires a demonstration of equivalency between the applicant’s previous training and certification and the standards of the new state of residence.
- › **TEMPORARY LICENSING.** Temporary licensing allows an individual to practice their profession for a designated period of time, while fulfilling the requirements to qualify for a permanent license in their new state. Temporary licenses are typically valid for 6 to 12 months. Many states permit military spouses to receive a temporary or provisional license upon relocation.
- › **EXPEDITED APPLICATION REVIEW.** Expedited review of applications allows military spouses to begin work in their field quickly, upon relocation to a state.

Interested in the specific laws that apply to military spouse license recognition options in your state? The U.S. Department of Labor has compiled a list of current state laws regarding military spouse licensing, which can be accessed by visiting a helpful map resource located at <https://www.veterans.gov/milspouses/>.



State participation in national licensing compacts or interstate agreements, which often use a combination of these three options, can provide a streamlined approach to license recognition within an occupation. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing’s ([NCSBN Nurse Licensure Compact \(NLC\)](#)) and [National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification \(NASDTEC\) Interstate Agreement](#) are two prominent examples of national licensing compacts or interstate agreements that benefit military spouses and others seeking to have their license recognized in the state to which they are relocating.

<sup>1</sup> Active duty military spouses (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard), by Zip Code of residence, aggregated by State, Source: Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System, Data as of October 25, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Military Community and Family Policy. (2017). Demographics: A profile of the military community.

<sup>3</sup> It is not the goal of military license recognition accommodations to lessen the requirements of licensing or to weaken the competencies required of military spouses to possess professional licenses. The promising practices presented in this document are intended to ease the burden of cross-state license recognition challenges and create an efficient process for military spouses, who move and are required to explore license recognition options more often than other professionals.

## CLEARLY EXPLAINING THE LICENSE RECOGNITION OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

In order for license recognition options to help military families, spouses must be able to learn about and use these options easily. The following are a few approaches many states are taking to ensure that spouses can easily find and quickly understand the options available to them.

**PROMINENTLY DISPLAY INFORMATION ABOUT MILITARY SPOUSE LICENSE RECOGNITION OPTIONS.** States like Colorado include clearly marked military spouse licensing information on licensing board and/or state agency website menus and make them searchable from main search boxes.

### COLORADO DIVISION OF PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS

The Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies' Division of Professions and Occupations, which oversees licensing for over 50 occupations, has a "Career Transition for Military and Spouse" link prominently [featured in the "Links" section of its homepage](#).

### CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The State of California [Department of Consumer Affairs](#) (DCA) also prominently features a link to "Information for Military Personnel and their Spouses/Domestic Partners" on their ["Licensees" page](#). This link then leads to basic [information about requirements for expedited licensing](#) of spouses and domestic partners of active duty military personnel in occupations overseen by DCA.

**USE THE PHRASE "MILITARY SPOUSE" IN MENU LANGUAGE AND LINKS.** Most military spouses do not expect to find information relevant to them under menu items directed at active duty military and veterans. Including the phrase "military spouses" in high-level labels and links allows for clear identification that there are distinct processes and benefits for military spouses, and a clear indication of where to find this information.

### FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

While the information provided for military spouses by the Florida Department of Health regarding licensing of healthcare occupations is combined with accommodations for veterans and active duty military members, there still is a clear call-out to spouses and a dedicated tab for military spouse information.

### FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Florida Department of Health utilizes a separate website called Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response, or VALOR. This registration system website is promoted and links are provided in several places throughout the department's ["Licensing for Military Members and Spouses"](#) webpages. This site walks military spouses through the specific requirements relevant to their application procedure, including how to identify themselves as a military spouse applicant.

**PROVIDE CLEAR LINKS TO THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES.** Easy-to-locate application information for all licensees and applicants should be a priority, but if there are accommodations or differences in the license application process for military spouses, the process and associated documents/forms should be clear. Including a message to military spouses like "Are you a military spouse? Click here to learn about expedited processing" is a good way to make key information easy to find.

## USE PLAIN LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE THE PROCESS FOR ACCESSING LICENSE RECOGNITION OPTIONS.

Many states move beyond a mere description of associated laws to include easy-to-understand descriptions of military spouse licensing options. Avoiding "government jargon" when guiding military spouses through the application process can be helpful. Be clear in application language what the step-by-step process is for new licenses versus out-of-state license transfers. In addition, supportive language that recognizes the burden of frequent military spouse relocation will resonate with this audience.

### COLORADO DIVISION OF PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS

The [Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies](#)' Division of Professions and Occupations includes the language below on their site, which acknowledges that active duty servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses have served their country and deserve supportive customer service.

"You've done your duty for your country. Now you're focused on your own career. The Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA)... is committed to providing professional support and customer service to military personnel, including Active Duty, Reserves, National Guard, military spouses and Veterans."<sup>4</sup>

## CREATING A SIMPLE APPLICATION PROCESS

States are working hard to make sure that spouses can access license recognition options through straightforward application processes. Here are promising approaches that states are currently using.

### WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The [Washington State Department of Health](#) oversees the Nursing Commission, which issues licenses for nursing occupations. Links to clear and comprehensive application packets exist on the ["Nurse Licensing" page](#). An examination of the ["Registered Nurse Endorsement Application Packet"](#) provides a nice example of a check box to self-identify as a military spouse in both the instructions checklist and the application itself. Specific instructions exist and are clearly identified in the packet for spouses and registered domestic partners of military members being transferred to or stationed in Washington.

### MODIFY EXISTING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS.

Some states modify existing applications to allow military spouses to self-identify, and they include concise application instructions that apply to military spouses as part of the application document.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.colorado.gov/dora-military>



### USE SUPPLEMENTAL FORMS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES.

Other states create a supplemental form that accompanies the standard application. States provide a prominent link to this form on all application webpages and, if possible, the form/process should be referenced on the general application to catch any military spouses who may not be aware of the supplemental form.

### TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATION

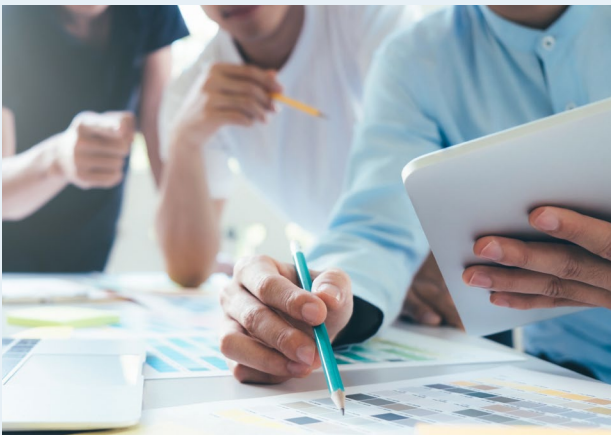
The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation provides a separate [“Military Service Member, Military Veteran, or Military Spouse Supplemental Application Instructions”](#) and [“Expedited Processing” application form](#), which clearly defines the step-by-step process for military spouses, and describes fee waivers and expedited processing. The form is available on a specific page titled “Information for Military Service Members, Veterans and Spouses.”

### INCLUDE AN EASILY LOCATED, COMPREHENSIVE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) SECTION, FACT SHEETS, AND SCENARIOS.

To address a range of questions and complex scenarios, states and licensing boards often provide detailed FAQ documents. The example below is clearly targeted for military spouses and provides links to other relevant information and forms. Accessible and concise one-page fact sheets are also helpful resources to guide military spouses through licensing processes. Including case scenarios to illustrate different requirements or approaches can be helpful to military spouses when identifying their individual licensing circumstances and recognition requirements.

### CALIFORNIA BOARD OF STATE VOCATIONAL NURSING AND PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIANS

The [California Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians](#) highlights military spouses on their [“Licensees” page](#) and provides clear links to relevant forms and information. Once you click on the [“Information for Military Personnel and Their Spouses/Domestic Partners” menu item](#), detailed military spouse information is presented, including an FAQ section.



### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE BOARDS OF NURSING

One example of a comprehensive, user-friendly FAQ webpage that also utilizes one-page fact sheets and relatable scenarios is the FAQ section provided by the [National Council of State Boards of Nursing \(NCSBN\)](#), which oversees the [Nurse Licensure Compact \(NLC\)](#). The NLC section of NCSBN’s website includes a [comprehensive FAQ](#) with a section dedicated to how the compact works for military and military spouses. This item directs military spouses to a [“Federal/Military Nurses and Spouses” fact sheet](#) that provides information regarding licensing in participating NLC states, and an example scenario.

## WAIVING APPLICATION FEES

To alleviate the financial burden of application fees on military spouses (who may move as often as every two years), some states, such as Florida and Texas, provide a waiver of these fees to military spouses and make information about fee waivers readily available on their websites.

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### FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

The Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation [provides clear, easy-to-locate website language regarding licensing fee waivers](#) for military spouses and the required documents needed to receive this fee waiver.

## TRAINING LICENSING BOARD STAFF

Full implementation of military spouse license recognition options includes training for licensing board staff so that these critical partners are aware of the options available to spouses and how to access them. States are creating training and reference materials and disseminating them to state licensing board staff. These include information about the unique challenges facing military spouses in license recognition, including the frequency with which they are often required to relocate. To accommodate staff turnover and policy updates, states schedule these trainings on a recurring basis and update materials routinely to account for evolving legislation, policies, and procedures regarding military spouse licensing accommodations.

### TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATION

The [Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation \(TDLR\)](#) created a [“Lessons Learned” document](#) that clearly summarizes military-related laws, approaches to priority of service and expedited licensing for military and spouses, and administrative rules and procedures to ease the burden of frequent license transfer. This document also includes a list of additional resources as well as FAQ responses to be used by TDLR and licensing board staff. A resource like this is a great way not only to disseminate information to military spouses, but also to build consistent knowledge and expectations among licensing board staff.

### TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

The Texas Board of Nursing conducts regularly scheduled training on licensing and compact requirements due to the complexity of the process. They also establish a single point of contact for military and military spouse licensing questions to keep information accurate and consistent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Conversation with Mark Majek, Texas Board of Nursing.

## PROVIDING A KNOWLEDGEABLE POINT OF CONTACT

Some states establish a single point of contact or subject matter expert in military, veteran, and military spouse license recognition options. This approach not only establishes a clear point of entry for military spouse licensing information but can provide subject matter expertise for internal training purposes and knowledge transfer as well. Having a knowledgeable resource and staff empathetic to the unique challenges of frequent military family relocation can elevate customer service to military spouses across a state's licensing boards and agencies.

### COLORADO DIVISION OF PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS

The Division of Professions and Occupations (DPO) within the [Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies \(DORA\)](#) has a military liaison who fields questions from veterans, members of the military, or military spouses regarding licensing requirements for professions DPO regulates. Having a staff person devoted to military spouse licensing and available to other staff across multiple licensing boards is a great way to ensure consistency in and knowledge of Colorado's approach to military spouse licensing accommodations.



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