



U.S. Department of Defense

# Working With State Policymakers to Support Military Families



## 2024 State Policy Priorities

- Military Access to Quality Family Child Care
- Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities
- Defining Armed Forces in State Policy
- Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils
- State Support for Military Families With Special Education Needs
- Open Enrollment Flexibility
- Child Abuse Identification and Reporting
- Military Family Anti-Discrimination Status
- State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence
- Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction

## Background

The Defense-State Liaison Office works with state policymakers to change laws and policies to improve military family well-being. Each year, the DSLO focuses on 10 key priorities. For each priority, the Military State Policy Source website provides background information, official Defense Department data and status updates on relevant information across states.

## Purpose

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

## What We Do

The DSLO has eight regional liaisons who live and work in regions of the United States. The liaisons assist state policymakers by providing educational information, identifying “best practice” legislation, and presenting testimony when requested.

## Track Record

DSLO has assisted state policymakers in enacting more than 1,150 bills since 2008 covering occupational licensure, employment protection, consumer protection, family law, child care, child protection, voting, education, health care and state judicial systems.

## Explore Military State Policy Source

Visit our website to access information on state policy priorities, track the status of legislation on these priorities across states and connect to official data from the Defense Department. Learn more at [statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil](https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil).



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**Military Access to Quality Family Child Care:** In many cases, DOD-certified military family child care providers must also be licensed or registered by the state when simply caring for DOD children. By recognizing military family child care certification, in lieu of requiring state licensing, states can enhance access to military child care and reduce the time on waitlists. States can also support Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS, which increases access for active-duty, National Guard and reserve families.

**Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities:** Many military spouse professionals must relicense each time they transfer with their active-duty spouse. As states implement the provision of the Military Spouse Licensing Relief Act, they can help military spouses maintain professional and financial stability by enacting licensing compacts and ensuring that licensing agencies make their application processes accessible to military spouses.

**Defining Armed Forces in State Policy:** Recent force structure changes require updates to ensure that states' definitions of military service align with federal law. States can minimize disruptions in benefits and services for eligible service members and dependents by clearly defining "armed forces."

**Military Community Representation on State Boards and Councils:** By including members of the military community, states can ensure that unique operational requirements and military family priorities are considered across pertinent policy areas.

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

**Open Enrollment Flexibility:** Military families are at a disadvantage when it comes to school enrollment options due to military-directed assignments. States can provide military families with improved schooling options by modifying open enrollment policies.

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

**Military Family Anti-Discrimination Status:** To supplement employment protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, states can add military family status as a class protected in state education, housing, public utilities and civil rights laws.

**State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence:** While the DOD has led the implementation of enterprise-wide guidance on prevention, states can address harmful behaviors, such as sexual assault and domestic violence, by expanding protections for victims. Enacting state policy best practices can supplement federal program efforts and changes.

**Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction:** On military installations subject to exclusive federal jurisdiction, investigation and adjudication of juvenile offenses is limited because cases may only be adjudicated in the federal system. States can adopt concurrent jurisdiction policies to ensure access to state resources and juvenile courts for appropriate adjudication options to better respond to juvenile needs.

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