



WHITE PAPER

# SUPPORTING MILITARY SPOUSES: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

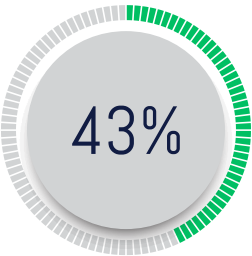
**Military spouses play an essential role in supporting the military mission. However, they face unique challenges related to frequent moves, deployments, and isolation. These challenges can negatively impact the mental health, employment, and overall well-being of military spouses.**

**This white paper provides an overview of the challenges faced by military spouses and explores the existing support systems. Additionally, the paper proposes recommendations to enhance the support for military spouses.**

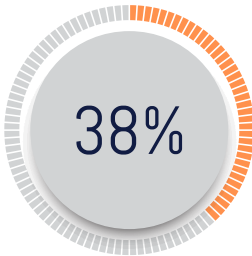


# Heroes at Home

Military spouses are an integral part of the military community, but they often face unique challenges related to frequent moves, deployments, and isolation. This white paper examines the challenges faced by military spouses, the existing support systems, and the opportunities to enhance the support for military spouses. The paper draws on the latest research and statistics to highlight the critical issues and proposes recommendations to improve the quality of life for military spouses.



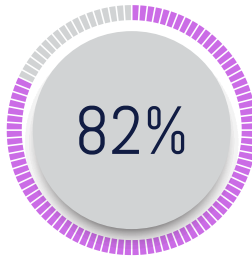
43% of military spouses reported that frequent relocation was a significant barrier to their employment reported by the Military Family Advisory Network.



According to the Military Officers Association of America, the average military spouse earns 38% less than their civilian peers.



Blue Star Families reports 56% of military spouses reported feeling stressed or overwhelmed due to their spouse's military service.



According to a survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 82% of military spouses reported that a company's support for military families is an important factor in their employment decisions.





# Challenges Faced by Military Spouses

## Un/Under Employment

Military spouses face high rates of unemployment and underemployment due to frequent moves and employer biases.



## Frequent Moves

Military families move every two to three years, which can disrupt the education and employment of military spouses.



## Deployment

Military spouses often experience increased stress, anxiety, and depression when their partners are deployed.






## Isolation

Military spouses often feel isolated from their families, friends, and communities due to frequent moves and deployments.



## Existing Support Systems:

There are several existing support systems for military spouses, including:




-  **Military family support programs:**  
The Department of Defense (DoD) provides a range of programs and services to support military families, including counseling, financial assistance, and educational programs.
-  **Military spouse organizations:**  
There are numerous military spouse organizations that provide peer support, networking opportunities, and advocacy for military spouses.
-  **Military community resources:**  
Military spouses can access a range of resources, including childcare, housing, and healthcare, through military installations and the surrounding communities.

## Supporting Military Spouses:

### Strategies for Addressing Unique Challenges

#### Frequent Relocations:

Military spouses may experience long separations when their partner is deployed or away for training. This can be a challenging time for spouses, who may need support and resources to cope. The following strategies can help:

-  **Provide career counseling services:**  
Military spouses may need help identifying career options that are portable and flexible. Career counseling services can help spouses explore job opportunities that align with their interests and skills and can be pursued in different locations.
-  **Increase access to education and training:**  
Military spouses may face challenges in accessing education and training opportunities due to frequent relocations. Programs such as online courses or distance learning can provide flexibility and make it easier for spouses to continue their education.
-  **Promote telework and flexible work arrangements:**  
Employers can provide telework and flexible work arrangements that enable military spouses to work from home or on a flexible schedule. This can help spouses maintain employment even if they need to relocate frequently.



# Supporting Military Spouses:

## Strategies for Addressing Unique Challenges

### Long Separations:

Military spouses may experience long separations when their partner is deployed or away for training. This can be a challenging time for spouses, who may need support and resources to cope. The following strategies can help:



#### **Provide mental health services:**

Military spouses may experience stress, anxiety, and depression during long separations. Mental health services can provide support and resources to help spouses cope with these challenges.



#### **Offer support groups:**

Support groups can provide a sense of community and connection for military spouses who are experiencing long separations. These groups can be facilitated in person or online and can provide a space for spouses to share their experiences and receive support.



#### **Provide financial counseling:**

Long separations can be financially challenging for military spouses who may need to manage their household finances alone. Financial counseling services can help spouses navigate their finances and plan for the future.



# Supporting Military Spouses:

## Strategies for Addressing Unique Challenges

### Difficulty Finding Employment:

Military spouses may face difficulty finding employment due to frequent relocations, employer bias, and other factors. The following strategies can help:



#### Increase awareness and understanding among employers:

Employers may not be aware of the unique challenges faced by military spouses and may have biases that prevent them from hiring military spouses. Efforts to increase awareness and understanding can help overcome these biases.



#### Provide hiring incentives

Employers can provide incentives such as tax breaks, training subsidies, or relocation assistance to attract and retain military spouses. These incentives can make it more attractive for employers to hire military spouses.



#### Provide financial counseling

Military spouse organizations can help connect military spouses with employment opportunities and provide support and resources. Employers can establish partnerships with these organizations to increase their visibility among military spouses.







# Opportunities to Enhance Support for Military Spouses:

## Strategies for the DOD

To enhance the support for military spouses, the following recommendations are proposed for the DOD:



**Enhance military spouse education benefits:**  
The DoD should increase funding for military spouse education benefits, including scholarships, grants, and tuition assistance.



**Increase employment opportunities:**  
The DoD should partner with employers to increase employment opportunities for military spouses, including remote work options and flexible schedules.



**Expand support for military spouse entrepreneurship:**  
The DoD should provide resources and support for military spouses interested in starting their own businesses.



**Improve access to mental health services:**  
The DoD should increase the availability and accessibility of mental health services for military spouses, including telehealth services.



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# CONCLUSION

Military spouses face unique challenges related to frequent moves, deployments, and isolation. While there are existing support systems, there are opportunities to enhance the support for military spouses.

By improving access to mental health services, increasing employment opportunities, enhancing education benefits, and expanding support for entrepreneurship, we can improve the quality of life for military spouses and support the overall mission readiness of the military.

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