

# *Military Spouse Preference in Employment*

## **Overview**

Programs that help military spouses find employment.

- Military Spouse Preference Program
- Government positions available for MSP
- Effect on MSP when you accept a position
- Other resources

As a military spouse you are likely to move many times, which means that finding a job and building a career can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are several programs and organizations that help military spouses who are looking for employment. The following information will help you understand what these programs are and how to take advantage of them.

## **Military Spouse Preference Program**

The Military Spouse Preference program (MSP), established under the Military Family Act of 1985, offers employment placement preference in Department of Defense (DoD) civilian personnel positions to military spouses who meet certain criteria. The program applies to DoD vacancies only, and there are variations and exceptions that allow the local hiring authorities to tailor their policies to meet their requirements. To be eligible for the MSP, you should:

- Be an eligible spouse of an active-duty military member of the U.S. armed forces, including the U.S. Coast Guard and full-time National Guard.
- Be relocating to accompany your military sponsor under a permanent change-of-station (PCS) move to an active-duty assignment. The relocation may not be for separation or retirement. You may apply for MSP as early as 30 days prior to your reporting date at the new duty station.
- Have been married to the military sponsor prior to the sponsor's reporting date at the new assignment.
- Apply for a position within commuting distance of the sponsor's permanent new duty station.
- Rank among the "best qualified" job candidates for the position.

## **Government positions available for MSP**

There are two main types of federal employment opportunities within the DoD to which MSP applies: civil service or Appropriated Fund (AF) and Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF). They are considered separate hiring authorities and generally have separate hiring offices on military installations.

## **Appropriated Fund vacancies**

Civil service or Appropriated Fund (AF) vacancies are filled through the civilian personnel office (CPO) or human resources office (HRO) on military installations. Spouse preference is available for AF positions at grades GS-15 and below or equivalent wage-grade positions. However, certain positions, such as

## 2 • Military Spouse Preference in Employment

DoD school teachers and positions in intelligence-related activities, may be excluded. The following information applies to AF vacancies within the continental U.S. (CONUS). (Overseas, spouses may use MSP according to procedures established by the local CPO or HRO. Because regulations and procedures vary overseas, you should contact your installation's CPO or HRO for more information.)

To use MSP for AF vacancies within the U.S., you must:

- *Create an application.* Most applications for civil service vacancies are created through a resume-building Web site:
  - CHART for the Navy and Marine Corps (<http://chart.donbr.navy.mil>).
  - Civilian Personnel Online (CPOL) for the Army ([www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil)).
  - Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) for the Air Force (<http://ask.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>).
- *Have an appointability or eligibility in the civil service system.* This can include current or previous work experience in the federal government (AF or NAF) or military service. If you are creating an application through one of the resume-building Web sites listed above, you will find a section that lists (and may explain) the types of eligibilities. In addition to your other eligibilities, you will want to check “military spouse preference,” if it is an option. However, military spouse preference alone does not give you eligibility in the civil service system. For additional details on eligibilities, contact your local CPO or HRO.
- *Register for MSP.* If you meet the requirement for eligibility, you must apply for Program “S”, the Priority Placement Program for military spouses. This is the *only* way you can exercise your military spouse preference for an AF position (within CONUS). You can apply for the program through you local civilian personnel office. You will be asked to provide certain documentation, which includes:
  - A copy of your sponsor's PCS orders
  - A copy of an SF-50 (if you have prior federal employment experience) or your DD214 (if you are a former service member)
  - A copy of your most recent performance appraisal (if you are a current or former federal employee)
  - Other documentation, such as college transcripts or licenses, as required for the position

### Non-Appropriated Fund vacancies

These positions are filled by the NAF human resources office on your military installation. MSP applies to NAF positions at grades NF-3 and below (or equivalent grade levels). NAF positions include jobs at military exchanges,

### 3 • Military Spouse Preference in Employment

recreation facilities, restaurants, and other NAF activities. To use your MSP for an NAF position, you will need:

- *An application.* On many installations, you will need to fill out an application in person and return it to your NAF human resources office. However, some installations have Web sites where you may fill out the application.
- *Copy of your sponsor's PCS orders.* Attach this to your application when you return it to the NAF human resources office.
- *Request for Military Spouse Preference.* In some cases, the hiring office may have a form you can fill out to request MSP. However, you may want to have a written statement requesting MSP when you go to the NAF human resources office.

#### **Effect on MSP when you accept a position**

Generally, you can use your MSP only once at each new duty station when you accept a “continuing position.” Continuing positions are positions to which appointments are made without time limitation, and which are required to have a fixed work schedule, i.e., part-time or full-time.

If you accept a “non-continuing position” you do not lose your MSP. “Non-continuing positions are positions to which appointments are made with time limitation and/or which do not have a required fixed work schedule, including:

- Any temporary position, regardless of work schedule.
- Any term position, regardless of work schedule.
- Permanent positions with an intermittent work schedule, e.g., substitute-teaching positions with DoD Dependents Schools.
- NAF positions with a “flexible” work schedule, or any NAF position for which the employment category is identified as “flexible.”

#### **Other resources**

Both military and civilian organizations are available to improve employment opportunities for military spouses. These include:

#### **On-installation spouse or family-member employment programs**

Most installations have an office with trained professionals to help military spouses find local employment. The staff can give you more information about MSP, refer you to on-installation hiring authorities (AF and NAF), help you write a resume, and refer you to potential employers in the local community. Depending on your service branch, this office may be in your Fleet and Family Support Center, Marine Corps Community Services, Airman and Family Readiness Center, or Army Community Service Center.

### **Army Spouse Employment Partnership (ASEP)**

*www.myarmylifetoo.com*

*www.militaryspousejobsearch.org*

Through this partnership, the Army and certain civilian organizations work together to help spouses meet their employment, career, and financial goals. You can find more information about the partnership on the Army Community Service Web site at *www.myarmylifetoo.com* (follow the links under Work and Careers). ASEP also sponsors a job-search site at *www.militaryspousejobsearch.org*.

### **Spouses to Teachers**

*www.spousestoteachers.com*

This Department of Defense pilot program currently helps military spouses living in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah become public school teachers. The program provides information and tuition assistance, and may expand to include other states in the future.

### **Adecco's Career Accelerator Program**

*www.usadecco.com/careeraccelerator*

Adecco, a temporary and permanent placement agency, has joined with the military to offer spouses a variety of employment opportunities. Because Adecco has many locations nationwide, you may be able to transfer your benefits from one Adecco office to another when you move, as long as there is an Adecco office nearby.

### **Military Spouse Career Center**

*www.military.com/spouse*

Military.com, Monster.com, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) have partnered to develop this military spouse employment site. Features include a job-posting site and a way to apply for jobs online.

### **MilSpouse.org**

*www.milspouse.org*

Sponsored by The Department of Defense and the Department of Labor, this site is dedicated to improving spouse employment opportunities. Includes information about starting a job search, licensing and certification requirements by state, and finding child care.

### **Military Spouses' Career Network**

*www.mscn.org*

Promotes and supports military spouse employment with information and an interactive e-mail connection allows you to ask and receive answers from a career coach.

### **Military OneSource**

This free 24-hour service, provided by the Department of Defense, is available to all active duty, Guard, and Reserve members and their families. Consultants provide information and make referrals on a wide range of issues. You can reach the program by telephone at 1-800-342-9647 or through the Web site at *www.militaryonesource.com*.

This article was written with the assistance of Maxine Composto, former HQMC FMEAP Program Manager; Betsy Archer, former FMEAP Counselor, MCRD Parris Island; Mary Craig, former HQMC Section Head, Marine Corps Family Team Building; Annette Duncan of the Military Spouse Corporate Career Network; and Terry Rivera, Manager, Army Readiness Program.

©2005 Ceridian Corporation. All rights reserved.