



## POLICY BRIEFING SERIES

### WORK-FAMILY INFORMATION FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

SUPPORTED BY: THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

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COMMENTS BY: KENTUCKY REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT DAMRON (D)



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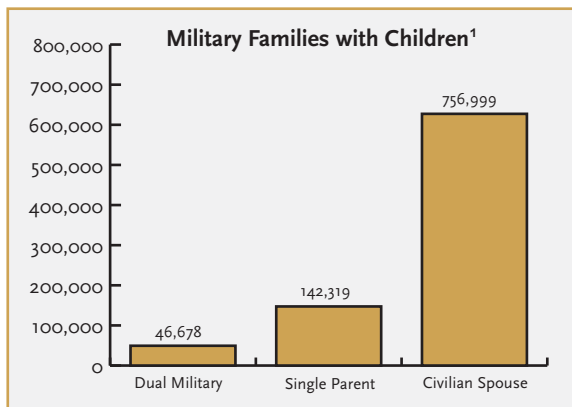
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## STATE POLICYMAKERS: SUPPORTING MILITARY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

*Managing work and family responsibilities is particularly difficult for military families with children. While military life has always been demanding, in recent years an increasing number of military personnel in both the Active Duty Force and Selected Reserves have had to confront the additional demands of parenthood. Providing resources to support parents who serve in the military and the nearly 1.8 million children living in military families has become a priority for state legislators.*

HOW MANY MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE PARENTS?<sup>2</sup>Among all military personnel:<sup>1</sup>

- 2.1% are in a dual military marriage and have children
- 6.5% are single parents
- 34.4% are married to a civilian and have children

Overall, nearly one million military personnel are parents, which represents 43% of all military personnel.<sup>1</sup>

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE FACED BY MILITARY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN?<sup>2</sup>

Military life places unique demands on military families with children, including:

**Frequent Moves**

Because of reassignments, known as a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move, military families move significantly more often than civilian families.<sup>2</sup>

**Disruptions in Schooling**

The average military child will attend between six and nine schools between grades K-12.<sup>3</sup> Over a third of Army personnel reported problems related to transferring their child(ren) to a new school.<sup>4</sup>

**Family Separation**

Twenty percent of active duty military personnel reported concerns about the impact of their deployment on child care arrangements<sup>5</sup> while less than half of spouses of deployed personnel reported managing child care arrangements well or very well.<sup>4</sup>

**Financial Difficulties**

Frequent moves and family separations pose financial difficulties for many military families.<sup>4</sup> Not all moving expenses are reimbursable, and it is not uncommon for military personnel to take out a loan in order to finance a PCS move.<sup>5</sup> Due to disruptions in employment, PCS moves also negatively impact the earning power of spouses of military personnel. For these reasons, it is not surprising that over half of families of enlisted personnel report occasional or frequent difficulty paying bills.<sup>5</sup>

**Under-employment of Military Spouses**

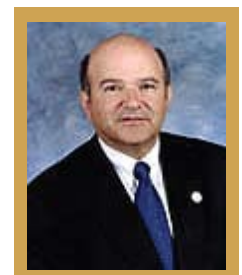
Wives of military personnel are less likely to be employed than wives of civilians and those that are employed earn significantly less than wives of civilians.<sup>6</sup> Spouses of reservists have also reported difficulty in maintaining full-time employment during a spouse's deployment due to child care issues.<sup>4</sup>

**Risk of Injury or Death of Military Personnel**

When military personnel are injured or killed, immediate and permanent disruptions in family life occur.<sup>7</sup>

*"OUR ACTIVE MILITARY DEFENDS AND PROTECTS OUR FREEDOMS EVERYDAY. WE AS POLICY MAKERS MUST MAKE SURE THAT THE STRESS AND SACRIFICE THEY ENDURE FOR OUR COUNTRY IS NOT COMPOUNDED BY ASKING THEIR CHILDREN TO SACRIFICE THEIR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. WE SHOULD PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO THE CHILDREN OF OUR ACTIVE MILITARY IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE, AS A SMALL RECOGNITION OF THE SACRIFICE THAT THEIR FAMILIES MAKE FOR US."*

KENTUCKY REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT DAMRON



Because of the resources the military provides to military families, many assume that the needs of military children are 'taken care of.' However, the military cannot address a number of structural issues affecting children in military families. The resources military families with children need to address these issues must be legislated. Policymakers can provide military families with children access to resources that will:

- *Facilitate successful school transfers for children in military families*
- *Address dependent care needs that arise during a parental separation*
- *Provide tax exemptions for additional expenses incurred from PCS moves*
- *Provide employment opportunities for spouses of military personnel*

## THE MILITARY AND THE PUBLIC BENEFIT WHEN MILITARY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE SUPPORTED

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The ability of the military to serve and protect the public is compromised when there are conflicts between the work and family demands of military personnel. Resources enabling military families with children to manage these demands successfully can help the military maintain a strong, well-trained force that is ready to serve. Benefits may include:

- *Higher Retention Rates*  
Work-family conflict is positively associated with intentions to leave the military.<sup>8</sup> Army personnel and their families have identified problems managing both military and family responsibilities as a primary reason for leaving the Army.<sup>4</sup> Policies providing resources to military families with children can support the military in retaining experienced, well-trained personnel.
- *Increased Recruitment*  
Individuals with family responsibilities who are considering joining the military may be more likely to do so if they know that resources to support them and their families are available.<sup>9</sup>
- *Improved Performance and Readiness*  
Individual and familial well-being impact readiness to serve.<sup>10</sup> Family-related stress has been linked to decreased job performance among a large segment of the military population.<sup>11</sup>

## WHAT STATES HAVE ENACTED LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN?

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- Nine states (CA, IL, IN, ME, MN, NE, NY, RI, WA) have passed laws that provide family members of the armed forces who have been ordered to active duty with the opportunity to take family leave.<sup>12</sup> This resource ensures that a caretaker is present to address problems experienced by military children during deployment.<sup>11</sup> Similar legislation was introduced in Hawaii and Wisconsin in the 2007-2008 legislative session.
- Twenty-three states (AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IN, KS, MD, NC, NE, NJ, NM, NV, ME, MT, OK, PA, RI, SC, TX, WA) provide unemployment compensation to spouses of military personnel under certain circumstances. This resource can provide military families with the financial means to meet child care needs during family separations and to assist children during the relocation process.<sup>13</sup> Kentucky introduced similar legislation in the 2007-2008 legislative session.
- Eleven states (AZ, CO, CT, DE, FL, KS, KY, MI, MO, NC, and OK)<sup>3</sup> have enacted the Interstate Compact of Educational Opportunity for Military Children, to address key problems related to eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation encountered by military children. Twelve additional states introduced related legislation in the 2007-2008 legislative session.

