
MILITARY SPOUSE PREFERENCE (MSP)

1. What is military spouse preference?

The Military Family Act of 1985, Public Law 99-145, as amended, focused attention on the important role of military families in the Department of Defense (DoD). With this in mind, military spouse preference was established to provide improved employment opportunities for spouses of active duty military personnel. Military spouse preference provides priority in the employment selection process for military spouses who are relocating as a result of their military spouse's Permanent Change of Station (PCS). Preference does not mean that positions will be created or made available for the military spouses, and preference does not guarantee employment.

2. Who is a military spouse eligible?

A military spouse preference eligible is the spouse of an active duty military member of the U.S. Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard, Reserve, or the Coast Guard, who is relocating on PCS orders. For employment in USAFE, a military spouse must be on the sponsor's orders at the time of the PCS. A military spouse who marries after the sponsor's PCS and acquires command sponsorship will be entitled to family member preference, not military spouse preference. Spouse preference does not apply to separation or retirement moves.

3. What happens if a dual military couple travel overseas under separate PCS orders and one separates from active duty and wants to pursue civilian employment?

If the separated military member obtains command sponsorship, he/she receives consideration as a family member for employment purposes, military spouse preference does not apply.

4. When will military spouse preference begin for hiring purposes?

In the overseas area, preference is afforded upon arrival at the duty location and throughout the tour, but ends 6 months before the sponsor's tour expiration date.

5. To what positions does military spouse preference apply?

Spouse preference is not limited to the branch of military in which the sponsor is serving or to only those who have previously worked for the Federal government. Preference applies worldwide to most DoD appropriated fund positions at grades GS-15 and below (or the equivalent wage grade positions) in the competitive or excepted service in the commuting area of the permanent duty station of the sponsor. It does not apply to positions in intelligence-related activities or to educator (teacher) positions with the DoD Dependents Schools System.

Military spouse preference also applies to certain positions in nonappropriated fund instrumentalities (NAFIs) and Army/Air Force Exchange System (AAFES). Contact the appropriate servicing Human Resources Offices for information concerning spouse preference in these employment systems.

6. How do I receive military spouse preference?

A LWOP or "reinstatement eligible" (previous career conditional or career employment) military spouse may apply for preference to positions at or below the highest permanent grade currently or previously held in the Federal service. If management wants to select from a competitive list of applicants, a spouse preference eligible ranked in the "best qualified" category, must be selected for the position, unless an exception is granted by the local commander.

If more than one spouse is rated in the "best qualified" category, management may select any one of the referred military spouses.

Management may select from other candidate sources. Spouse preference generally will not apply in cases where management chooses to select from a non-competitive source.

If you are not on LWOP or have never worked for the Federal government, you must submit a complete application package when the vacancy announcement is open to the family member category. Preference is exercised within that recruitment category; however, spouses with veteran's retain preference for initial employment over military spouses without veterans preference.

To claim preference all military spouses must submit a complete application on www.USAJobs.gov, to include a resume, a copy of the military sponsor's PCS orders, DD-214 (if applicable), and LWOP SF-50's verifying LWOP "status" (if applicable) in order to establish eligibility.

7. Does MSP apply to temporary positions of less than 1 year?

Yes, but a MSP may decline an unlimited number of temporary positions without loss of preference.

8. What's the difference between Military Spouse Preference and the new military spouse appointing authority?

The difference is that military spouse preference is a hiring priority and the new military spouse appointing authority is not. A military spouse *preference* applicant in the overseas area *receives priority consideration* for vacancies. Applicants are entitled to preference. The new military spouse appointing authority is *an eligibility not a preference* therefore, the applicant would be considered with other external eligibilities. The new military spouse appointing authority is not currently being used for USAFE or PACAF.

9. When does military spouse preference end?

Military spouse preference eligibility terminates upon placement into, or declination of a permanent part or full-time position at the current duty station,(including APF, AAFES, NAF, DECA or DoDDS). Military spouses seeking preference with less than six months remaining in the area will not receive preference and may be non-selected for permanent positions.

10. Does a military spouse preference eligible have a higher priority than a Veterans' Preference eligible?

No. Military spouse preference procedures will not be applied when doing so will violate existing statutes or regulations on veterans' preference. For example, in the family member recruitment category, there is a qualified military spouse without veteran's preference and a qualified civilian spouse with veteran's preference. The only candidate who will be referred is the civilian spouse with veteran's preference.