

INTRODUCTION

Executive Order (E.O.) 14170, “Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service,” dated January 20, 2025, directs agencies to make recruitment and hiring processes more efficient and focused on service to the Nation. It emphasizes that hiring decisions should be based on merit, practical skills, and dedication to the Constitution.

A key priority of the E.O. is improving employment opportunities for military spouses. In support of this objective, the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) issued the memorandum, “Maximum Use of Military Spouse Employment Flexibilities,” dated April 1, 2026. The guidance outlines actions agencies should take to expand employment opportunities and promote economic security for military spouses. The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided to assist Department of War (DoW) Components as they develop their local procedures to ensure compliance with the memorandum.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Q1. Will there be a Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) Message issued?

A1. Yes, DCPAS Message 2026070 – Maximum Use of Military Spouse Employment Flexibilities was released April 14, 2026.

Q2. Will there be a regular forum for Components to discuss implementation challenges and share best practices?

A2. Yes. The newly established Office of Spouse Employment (OSE), under Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP), will be hosting regular meetings with military spouse employment stakeholders. These sessions will serve as the primary forum to share updates, discuss implementation, and exchange best practices.

Q3. Are Agency Talent Teams required to create “open continuous job announcements” (OCAs) for most occupations to highly encourage maximum use of the military spouse hiring authority at 5 U.S.C. § 3330d?

A3. Yes. The policy memorandum guides Agency Talent Teams to develop OCAs as a best practice for building a resume bank. This approach enables hiring managers to non-competitively select qualified military spouse candidates and quickly fill vacancies as they occur.

Q4. The memorandum states that these hiring flexibilities apply “absent extenuating circumstances.” Who determines what qualifies as an extenuating circumstance, and what is the process for documenting exemptions? For example:

- **Urgent or Critical Hiring Need:** The position must be filled immediately to prevent a significant negative impact on a critical mission, and the required military spouse candidate lists cannot be generated or reviewed within the critical timeframe. This should be a very high standard, requiring justification for why the normal process would cause mission failure.

- **Position with Highly Specialized or Unique Qualifications:** The position requires a rare combination of skills, certifications, or security clearances that are not likely to be found in the general military spouse population.
- **Internal Placement or Agency Reorganization:** The position is being filled as a directed reassignment, through a formal settlement agreement, or as part of a structured internal placement program (e.g., for employees returning from overseas assignments or developmental programs) that takes precedence.
- **Statutory or Regulatory Exception:** The position is part of a legislatively mandated fellowship, internship, or developmental program with its own specific hiring and eligibility requirements that legally supersede this policy.

A4. Determinations of “extenuating circumstances” are delegated to the Component level. Each Component is responsible for establishing a local policy and internal procedures to evaluate, approve, and formally document any specific circumstances that preclude the use of these military spouse hiring flexibilities for a given hiring action.

Q5. The memorandum discusses maximizing non-competitive appointments, but the standard Military Spouse Hiring Authority (Title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 3330d) applies to the competitive service. How does this apply to excepted service positions where a non-competitive appointment authority may not exist?

A5. The memorandum specifically directs agencies to identify military spouses who are eligible for appointment using “available direct hire and non-competitive appointment authorities.” Because the standard military spouse non-competitive authority is limited to the competitive service, implementation for excepted service positions will depend on the specific authorities available:

- Excepted Service with Existing Authorities (e.g., CES, DCIPS): If the Component operates under specific excepted service systems that have their own appointing authorities or applicable Direct Hire Authorities (DHAs), the use of those available authorities to source and hire military spouse candidates should be maximized.
- Excepted Service without Applicable Authorities (e.g., certain DoWEA positions): If a specific excepted service vacancy lacks an available non-competitive or DHA that can be leveraged, then the mandate to use such an authority cannot be executed.

In instances where no authority is available, Components should follow their standard excepted service hiring procedures. While military spouses cannot be non-competitively appointed in these specific cases, Components should still encourage military spouses to apply through their standard announcement procedures.

Please keep in mind there is a difference between an excepted service position or agency (e.g., CES, DCIPS) and an excepted service appointment (e.g. certain military spouse appointments).

Q6. DCPAS Message 2026070 states that OCAs will include military spouses, veterans, Priority Placement Program (PPP) applicants, and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) eligibles. What is the correct order of consideration, and how does this interact with veterans' preference and other hiring authorities like DHA?

A6. The OCA is designed to build a broad candidate pool, but the legal and regulatory order of consideration must be followed. The new policy does not supersede statutory law or mandatory placement programs. The order of consideration is: 1) PPP/ICTAP, 2) Military Spouse Non-Competitive consideration, 3) all other candidates, veterans' preference should be appropriately applied for the hiring authority being used.

For additional resources regarding the correct order of consideration, please review references G, K, and L. Additionally, please review the guidance regarding mandatory placement obligations and additional recruitment information in references B, F, H, and I to ensure compliance.

Q7. Can a Component exclude military spouses from job announcements if the position requires a mobility agreement?

A7. No. Components cannot categorically exclude military spouses from applying for positions based on an assumption that their sponsor's military service will prevent them from fulfilling a mobility agreement. Mobility agreements are a condition of employment tied to the position itself, not a demographic filter for the applicant pool. Military spouses must be given the opportunity to apply, be considered, and determine for themselves whether their unique personal circumstances allow them to commit to those conditions. If a military spouse is selected for the position, they will be required to sign the mobility agreement and adhere to its terms, the same as any other selected candidate.

Q8. The policy directs "Agency Talent Teams" to build resume banks. How can smaller Components or Activities without dedicated "Talent Teams" or significant resources meet this requirement?

A8. The policy requirements apply to all DoW Components and Activities, regardless of size or specific Human Resources (HR) organizational structure. Currently, there is no centralized DoW or Fourth Estate service planned to build or manage local Component-specific resume banks on behalf of smaller agencies.

While smaller activities may face unique resource constraints, Components have full flexibility to determine how to execute these requirements in a way that aligns with their operational realities, staffing, and hiring volume. To reduce administrative burden, Components are highly encouraged to leverage the centralized Military Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (MySECO) candidate inventory. Because MySECO is an enterprise-wide tool, it serves as a built-in, centralized resume bank. Utilizing this existing resource provides immediate access to a robust pool of eligible military spouse candidates without requiring smaller agencies to expend significant resources to build and maintain local, standalone resume banks.

Q9. Regarding the authorization of alternate worksites, does the term "assignment" refer exclusively to a Permanent Change of Station (PCS), or can it include long-term Temporary Duty (TDY)?

A9. The primary intent of this flexibility is to support spouses affected by a military sponsor's PCS. While the term "assignment" is not explicitly defined in the memorandum, it is most commonly associated with a PCS, unless otherwise identified on the orders. For situations involving a sponsor's long-term TDY, Components should refer to their existing local remote and telework policies, which can often be used to provide flexibility.

Q10. The policy appears similar to the Department of State's (DoS) Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) program. Is there a plan for the DoS to streamline the DETO process for military spouses?

A10. At this time, there is no formal DoW-wide agreement with the DoS. Components must continue to follow the established DETO application and approval process until further guidance is issued.

Q11. The memorandum states that hiring managers must "consider" qualified military spouses. Is the intent simply to "consider," or does this establish a new form of hiring preference?

A11. The memorandum establishes a procedural priority, not a new hiring preference in the same manner as veterans' preference. It mandates that hiring managers must review and consider the pool of qualified military spouses sourced from OCAs or MySECO *before* they consider other candidates from non-preference pools. This consideration is a required step in the hiring process.

Q12. What is the definition of a "qualified military spouse" under this policy?

A12. A "qualified military spouse" is a candidate who meets the minimum qualification standards (including any education and experience requirements) as defined in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualification standards and the specific job announcement.

MYSECO

Q1. How do HR professionals and hiring managers get access to the MySECO candidate inventory?

A1. To get an account, personnel may contact the Spouse Employment Team Mailbox: osd.mc-alex.ousd-p-r.mbx.spouse-employment-team@mail.mil to request a Talent Managers Intake Form. The completed form should be submitted to the Spouse Employment Team Mailbox.

The request can be for any agency employees requiring an account (to include all HR professionals and hiring managers involved in hiring). After the form is submitted, the MySECO Help Desk will contact the individual to confirm the account and provide instructions for setup and virtual training sessions.

Q2. Are there limits on the number of MySECO users per Agency?

A2. No, there are no limits on the number of users per Agency. Any HR professional or hiring manager actively involved in hiring actions is authorized and encouraged to have a MySECO account to access the candidate inventory.

Q3. Does the MySECO inventory replace the need for Agencies to maintain their own separate candidate lists?

A3. The MySECO inventory is a comprehensive, centralized resource and can be used as the sole candidate list to reduce administrative burden. However, Components are welcome to utilize local resources and maintain local lists in addition to the MySECO inventory to effectively support the specific communities they serve. The ultimate goal is to maximize military spouse hiring opportunities using the most effective tools available.

Q4. Have the military spouse resumes in the MySECO inventory already been vetted for qualifications?

A4. No. The MySECO inventory is a resume bank of interested job seekers, not a pre-vetted list of "qualified" candidates. It is the responsibility of the hiring agency's HR professionals to review the resumes in the inventory to determine whether a candidate meets the minimum qualifications for a specific vacancy.

Q5. Are resumes in the MySECO inventory limited to the federal two-page standard?

A5. No. The MySECO system does not enforce a strict two-page limit on resume submissions.

Q6. Is there a specific or distinct hiring authority used to process the appointment of a military spouse sourced from the MySECO candidate inventory?

A6. No. The MySECO candidate inventory is a sourcing tool to help hiring managers identify qualified military spouses; it is not a distinct hiring authority itself. There are no new legal authority or Nature of Action (NOA) code associated with MySECO. When a military spouse is selected from the MySECO resume bank, the appointment is processed using an existing hiring authority for which the candidate is already eligible. Depending on the candidate's status, standard procedures and existing implementation guidance for authorities such as existing DHAs and the Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Military Spouses can be used.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Q1. What are the monthly reporting requirements for military spouse hiring, and how should this data be submitted?

A1. DoW Component heads are required to submit monthly reports to the DCPAS no later than the 15th of each month beginning May 15th. To ensure consistency across the Department, a standardized reporting template was provided along with DCPAS Message 2026070 released on April 14, 2026. Components must use the template provided in the message to report the five required data points and submit the completed report via email to dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.list.ec-policy@mail.mil.

The five required data points are:

1. The total number of recruit/fill requests.
2. The number of requests for which military spouse candidates were identified (and how they were identified).
3. The number of requests for which military spouses were selected.
4. The top three reasons that a military spouse was not selected.
5. Any recommendations for improving military spouse hiring opportunities.

Q2. How should Components report the "top three reasons a military spouse was not selected" since current systems (USA Staffing (USAS) and Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS)) do not currently have drop-downs or functionality to capture this data?

A2. We recognize that current HR systems, including USAS and DCPDS, currently lack the automated functionality (such as specific drop-down menus) to capture specific reasons for non-selection. This is a known technical limitation across the Department. Until a system-wide update or alternative technical solution is provided, Components should use the standardized reporting template to manually capture and report these reasons to the best of their ability, based on direct feedback and coordination with hiring managers.

Q3. Is there a recommended process for how HR should capture management's review and their specific reasons for not selecting a military spouse candidate?

A3. Components are encouraged to establish local procedures to capture required data. HR professionals should work collaboratively with hiring managers to implement a tracking method that documents the reasons for non-selection for each relevant hiring action. Components should aggregate the collected data to report the “top three reasons” required for the standardized monthly DCPAS report.

Q4. For reporting purposes, how should Components identify and report the method used to find military spouse candidates?

A4. Both the monthly narrative report and official personnel action coding of the Standard Form-50 (SF-50) should be used to identify and document military spouse hiring.

- Monthly Report: Stating that candidates were sourced from OCAs or the MySECO inventory is sufficient to satisfy the narrative “how” portion of the monthly reporting requirement.
- SF-50s: To ensure accurate tracking across the Department, the code “ZSK” should be used as the second Legal Authority Code (LAC), along with the appropriate citation, when processing a hiring action that utilizes Military Spouse Preference (MSP) to select an eligible candidate. In cases where “ZSK” cannot be used (e.g., interagency transfers), please use “ZLM” as the second LAC, along with the appropriate citation. Regardless of the LAC used, ensure the remark “ZMS” is used to identify all military spouse employment, as outlined in DCPAS Message 2025085.

Q5. For reporting requirement #2 which requires tracking of “the number of requests for which military spouse candidates were identified (and how),” could you clarify what ‘identified’ means?

A5. This metric tracks the number of *hiring actions (recruit/fill requests)* in which military spouses were part of the candidate pool, not the total number of individual spouses found. “Identified” means that for a specific vacancy, HR successfully sourced at least one eligible military spouse candidate (e.g., from an Open Continuous Announcement or the MySECO inventory) to be considered for the position.

PILOT PROGRAM ON ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Q1. Under the new guidance, when can a military spouse who is PCSing Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) start applying and be considered for employment in the new location (outside their current commuting area)?

A1. Under the new guidance and the associated pilot program, a military spouse can begin applying and be considered for positions at the new OCONUS location as soon as their active-duty sponsor receives their official PCS orders.

Spouses no longer need to wait until they physically arrive at the new duty station to apply. They may submit a copy of the sponsor's official PCS orders with their application package as documentation of their upcoming relocation to that commuting area. Hiring managers and HR professionals are encouraged to consider these candidates for vacancies that align with the sponsor's reporting timeframe.

Q2. With military spouses able to apply earlier in the PCS process under the pilot program, are hiring managers required to hold positions open and wait for the spouse to physically arrive at the new duty station?

A2. While the pilot program allows military spouses to apply as soon as they receive PCS orders, entry on duty dates ultimately remain driven by the Component's mission requirements. HR professionals and hiring managers are encouraged to work collaboratively with the candidate to establish a mutually agreeable start date that aligns with the sponsor's relocation timeline.

Q3. Is there a plan to extend the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Section 625, "Pilot Program on Direct Hire Authority for Spouses of Members of the Uniformed Services at Locations Outside the United States" to December 31, 2028, and to expand its scope to include non-foreign OCONUS areas like Alaska and Hawaii?

A3. The potential extension of the DHA pilot, including expansion to non-foreign OCONUS locations, is currently under review. Any approved changes or extensions will be communicated to the Components.

Q4. If a military spouse is hired for an OCONUS position *before* their sponsor's PCS move, is the military spouse selectee entitled to a separate, fully funded PCS move from the gaining agency?

A4. The application of benefits depends entirely on whether the civilian job announcement explicitly authorized PCS. Additionally, agency officials must determine if paying PCS costs is in the government's best interest even in instances where the position was announced with the possibility of reimbursement, as a determination is made on a case-by-case basis.

Coordination of benefits must be done in close consultation with both the military and civilian servicing travel and finance offices before the move to ensure all regulations are met.

Q5. If a military spouse is hired for an OCONUS position *before* their sponsor's PCS move, is the military spouse selectee automatically eligible for Living Quarters Allowance (LQA)?

A5. LQA is a discretionary recruitment allowance, not a statutory entitlement. The intent of the new military spouse employment policy is to maximize hiring opportunities; it does not create an LQA entitlement for spouses. The statutory and regulatory language governing LQA are permissive and give agency heads discretion in determining whether to grant LQA to agency employees (*Wesley L. Goecker*, 58 Comp. Gen. 738 (1979)).

For additional guidance on LQA, please review the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) LQA Main Page at: <https://allowances.state.gov/content.asp> and DSSR 130 - <https://allowances.state.gov/content.asp>

Q6. Is a military spouse that has been selected for a civilian position and traveling on their active-duty sponsor's orders required to sign a transportation agreement?

A6. No. If the civilian employee is traveling as a dependent on their active-duty sponsor's orders, they are not receiving civilian relocation allowances for that move. Pursuant to the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) paragraph 053701, a civilian employee is only required to sign a service (transportation) agreement when they are authorized to receive civilian relocation allowances.

Q7. Does the pilot program grant military spouses priority consideration for every position they apply for during the 18-month period?

A7. The pilot program suspends the time limitations on when a spouse can use their MSP. For its 18-month duration, this means their eligibility is not tied to the 30-day pre-reporting date window. They may use their eligibility for any appropriate position they apply for during this period.

Q8. The PPP Handbook does not currently apply to foreign areas. As the pilot's findings will inform changes to the handbook, what is the anticipated approach for integrating foreign area military spouse hiring policies?

A8. The data and outcomes from this 18-month pilot program will be used to inform future policy development, including potential revisions or additions to the PPP Handbook to better address military spouse hiring in foreign areas. Any updates or revisions to the PPP Handbook regarding MSP will require USW(P&R) approval.

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