Press Release

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Local effort makes teaching certification transfer easier for military spouses in New York state

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Nov. 4, 2020) -- A new state mandate went into effect today, allowing military spouses with out-of-state teaching certification to transfer their credentials to New York state.

The New York State Education Department Board of Regents created a Transitional J certificate, valid for one year, to give military spouses time to pass required tests for state certification. The certificate can be renewed for an additional two years if the candidate is on pace with the additional requirements.

In 2016, lawmakers amended Section 6501 of NY state law to afford an expedited review of licensure applications for military spouses. The law provided accommodations for a variety of licenses, to include dental hygiene, mental health counseling, occupational therapy and cosmetology.

Until now, the transfer of teaching certification was not included in that law.

“This presented potential retention issues for Soldiers who are deciding to come to Fort Drum,” said Sonja Draught, director of Fort Drum Plans, Analysis and Integration Office. “Additionally, there may be concerns in the area of financial readiness if the opportunity for dual-income families is not possible because the spouse is a teacher.”

Steve Todd, superintendent of the Jefferson-Lewis Board of Cooperative Educational Services, said that he believes the exclusion of those with teaching certification was not the intent of the authors of the original legislation.

“But when the legislation was put into effect, regulators noticed that it spoke only of the New York State Office of Professions (which governs all licenses and certificates other than teaching certificates), and was silent with regard to the Office of Teaching Initiatives (which governs teaching certificates),” he said.

Four years later, Draught said that it took a collaborative effort to give those with teaching certificates the same level of license reciprocity as other professional military spouses.

“This has been a long road with many people working tirelessly for years to see this come into fruition, particularly Advocate Drum (formerly Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization) and Steve Todd,” she said.

“The leadership of FDRLO / Advocate Drum identified this issue as a top priority and kept their focus on it throughout the last few years,” Todd said. “The FDRLO's Education Committee, which I chair, was tasked with crafting proposals that could remedy this issue, and then with leading the charge in terms of legislative and regulatory advocacy on the issue.”

Todd said that the committee’s final proposal was practically identical to the approved Transitional J Certificate. Then, FDRLO and the Educational Committee focused the next several months on advocacy efforts, meeting with leadership in the state and assembly education committees, and other education officials throughout the state.

Finally, the solution was determined to be a regulatory adjustment that required no further action by the senate, assembly or governor.

“This really was a team effort, and a community effort,” said Todd. “And it will be good for military families, area schools, and our whole community.”

Draught said that eligible military spouses can find more information at the NYS Education Department website at http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/news/newsitem102020\_Transitional-J-military-spouses.html.

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