

Military Spouse Preference (MSP) is a Department of Defense (DoD) program derived from title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.) 1784. Public Law 99-145, enacted in 1986 and codified at 10 U.S.C. 1784, requires the Secretary of Defense to prescribe regulations that provide employment preference to spouses of active duty military members of the United States (U.S.) Armed Forces (including the Coast Guard), who relocate to accompany their sponsor on a permanent change of station (PCS) move.

This program is intended to lessen the career interruption of spouses who relocate with their military sponsors. Since 1989, military spouses have been required to register in Program S of the Priority Placement Program (PPP) which uses automated referral procedures to exercise MSP for competitive service vacancies in the U.S.

The good news is registration in the PPP is no longer required for spouses. Additionally, under Section 573 of the FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act enacted on August 13, 2018, a temporary expansion of the noncompetitive appointing authority for military spouses includes all spouses of active duty military members, even in the absence of a PCS move. Essentially, this change amends Section 3330d of title 5, USC, by affording noncompetitive appointment eligibility to a non-relocating spouse of a member of the Armed Forces using Executive Order 13473. This temporary authority expires on August 13, 2023. See “How do I exercise MSP and Priority Status as a Military Spouse” below for more details.

## **WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES?**

The most fundamental requirement is marriage to an active duty member of the U.S. Armed Forces. In addition:

- You must reside within the commuting area of your sponsor’s permanent duty station (PDS);
- You must provide proof of marriage to the active duty sponsor, proof of military member’s active duty status, and other documentation required by the vacancy announcement to which you are applying; and
- You must meet all pre-employment criteria and be eligible for immediate noncompetitive appointment to a position in the competitive service.

## **HOW DO I EXERCISE MSP AND PRIORITY STATUS AS A MILITARY SPOUSE?**

Program stakeholders for MSP should be aware that the hiring process for MSP eligibles has been restructured to enable military spouses to take charge and be the driver of their own careers. Stakeholders should also note that the hiring process has been simplified by changing it from registration and referral to application based. This change replaces the automated process and

eliminates the mandatory requirement to register in the PPP. It allows military spouses to independently exercise their preference for a greater variety of positions without contacting a Human Resources Office (HRO) or waiting to be notified about Job Opportunity Announcements (JOAs).

To receive MSP and exercise priority status through the application process, you must:

- Create a login.gov account to sign in to USAJOBS (first time users). Login.gov is a service that offers secure and private online access to government programs, such as Federal benefits, services, and applications.
- Use the same email address for login.gov and USAJOBS.
- Create a new password.
- Have a working phone number (mobile or landline); login.gov will send a unique security code each time you sign into your account.
- Create a USAJOBS profile using the same email address for login.gov.
- Create a new password for USAJOBS (first time users).
- Build or post a resume to the USAJOBS profile and upload essential documents, including a copy of your sponsor's PCS orders and the Military Spouse PPP Self-Certification Checklist which must be included with each job application.
- Apply to the JOA for which interested and available.
- MSP and priority status for permanent positions may be used only once for each PCS move and it only applies to positions in the commuting area of your sponsor's PDS. MSP and priority placement eligibility terminates if you:
  - Accept or decline permanent Federal<sup>1</sup> employment in the commuting area of your sponsor's PDS;
  - Lose your spousal status due to divorce, death of your sponsor, or your sponsor's retirement or separation from active duty; or
  - No longer meet the requirements for noncompetitive appointment eligibility.

## **DOES MSP AND PRIORITY PLACEMENT APPLY TO ALL DOD JOB VACANCIES?**

No. MSP and priority placement do not apply to positions covered by a mandatory mobility agreement; positions in the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS) and those in organizations that have as a primary function intelligence, counterintelligence, or national security; and positions filled through noncompetitive procedures.

## WHAT TYPES OF POSITIONS CAN I APPLY FOR?

The following guidelines will govern your JOA choices:

- You must meet all established Federal and DoD qualifications requirements.
- You may include any or all DoD installations/organizations within the commuting area of your sponsor's new PDS.
- You may apply for permanent as well as temporary/term positions (i.e., intermittent, seasonal or NAF "flexible" schedules). There is no limit to the number of times you can exercise your MSP and priority placement for temporary and term positions.

## WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

In all cases when you apply for DoD positions as an MSP eligible, you must follow all instructions as required by the JOA. This process is necessary in order for the HRO to determine if you rank among the best-qualified candidates for the position. The evaluation factors used to rank you are the same factors that apply to all of the competitive candidates. If you do not submit an application, you will not be considered for the position.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

The MSP Program is too complex to adequately explain in such an abbreviated format. This fact sheet only provides an overview of the program's basic policies and procedures. For more details, you can find information on:

<https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/EC/Advise>

<https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/shams/>

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/veterans-authorities/#url=Appointment-of-Military-Spouses>

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos/spouse>

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/education-employment/for-spouses/managing-your-career/military-spouse-preference-in-employment?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feducation-employment>

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<sup>1</sup> Employment in NAF positions and positions in the military exchange services are considered Federal employment for the purpose of MSP.