

Employment Transportation for Military Spouses

Part of the *Transportation for Our Military Series*

This brief, which is part of a series focusing on the transportation needs of veterans, active military, and their families, looks at the transportation needs of military spouses. Also included are suggested strategies that veterans service organizations and other human service organizations serving veterans' families can implement in partnership with Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative grantees to help spouses access employment, training, and other quality of life destinations.

In recent years, much focus has been placed on ensuring that military veterans and transitioning service members receive the transportation support they need to access civilian employment and training opportunities. But let's not forget about military spouses who want or need to work. Many are working to support their families, some while their partners recover from service-related injuries. Others may continue working while their spouses transition from military to civilian life. Still others may need to supplement their income when their spouses in the National Guard or military reserve forces are called to active duty.

Whether they live on or off base, military spouses need affordable transportation options to work, training, and other locations. However, frequent relocations, family responsibilities that may include caring for an injured spouse, and unfamiliarity with local transportation services significantly impact opportunities to access employment and training. A number of transportation options –ranging from ridesharing to travel orientation –are available to help spouses access the quality-of-life destinations they need to reach.

About Military Spouses

Understanding the general characteristics of military spouses will assist in identifying the transportation options that best meet their needs.

- Spouses include those married to active duty members, National Guard members, reservists, and military personnel who have left service because of retirement or an injury.
- The vast majority of military spouses (95 percent) are women. Eighty-five percent want or need to work,¹ and most worked during their partner's most recent deployment.²
- Most spouses and their families reside off base.³

- Most female military spouses are under the age of 35 and are likely to have small children.⁴

Exploring Spousal Transportation Needs

Military spouses may work flexible schedules to accommodate family needs. Those with young children may need to factor in trips to child care facilities as part of their daily commute. Spouses of injured veterans may be working to help support their families and may need to schedule work hours that accommodate caregiving responsibilities. If their injured partner is recovering at a rehabilitation facility in their home community, they may need to incorporate travel to that location along with travel to work. In each instance, knowledge about and access to flexible transportation alternatives can facilitate their mobility within their community.

Because of frequent relocations, military spouses may be unfamiliar with local public transit and rideshare opportunities. When they do travel via public transit, spouses are unable to take advantage of reduced transit fares and other benefits available to uniformed service members. Moreover, spouses residing on base may not be able to connect to existing public transit services because security constraints prohibit public transit vehicles carrying civilian riders from entering the base.

Spouses in one-car families are often left without available transportation when service members use the vehicle for commuting. This can be particularly challenging in rural communities where public transportation access is limited.

¹ National Military Family Association. <http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/spouse-employment/> (accessed 10/2/12)

² National Military Family Association. <http://www.militaryfamily.org/> (accessed 10/2/12)

³ According to Military.com, 65 percent of military personnel live off base. www.military.com (accessed 9/24/12)

⁴ Military Spouse Help. <http://www.militaryspousehelp.com> (accessed 10/2/12)

Transportation Assistance for Spouses Living on Base

Most military bases around the country offer Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO)/Employment Readiness (ER) support services. These services are similar to those offered by the Department of Labor's One-Stop Career Center system. SECO/ER staff can assist spouses in need of transportation to work or training by

- Talking with spouses to identify when and where they need to travel
- Posting information about local public transportation and rideshare opportunities
- Encouraging spouses to consider carpooling as a flexible way to get to education, training, and work locations off base⁵
- Partnering with area social service agencies to direct eligible spouses to car ownership programs. Generally, program applicants must be transitioning from welfare to work. However, some programs are more flexible, requiring that applicants demonstrate the ability to make small monthly loan payments as a prerequisite for receiving a loan. Qualified applicants may be encouraged to organize carpools to help transport other spouses.⁶
- Encouraging spouses to use shuttles, when feasible, to travel from the base to and from local transit stations
- Encouraging spouses with access to a vehicle to organize carpools or vanpools to transport other spouses

Transportation Options for Spouses Living Off Base

- Spouses residing off base may benefit from travel orientation provided by local transit agencies. Travel orientation provides new groups of riders with information about and hands-on experience in navigating that agency's system. The American Public Transit Association website includes links to transit agencies in U.S. communities.
- Military spouses can consider ridesharing when traveling to work or training. Local vanpool providers, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations (entities responsible for planning transportation programs for urbanized areas), and transportation management associations (associations of public and private entities that develop shared transportation alternatives to and from a given business district) can provide assistance in starting or joining a carpool or vanpool. They can also help with recruiting riders, approving and training vanpool drivers, determining routes, and collecting monthly fares.⁷
- Another option may be commercial car sharing programs, which allow registered members to rent vehicles on a short-term basis (by the day, hour, or minute) only when they need them, offering a savings over the cost of car ownership per annum. Usage fees cover insurance, maintenance, and fuel costs. Vehicles are generally located at easily accessed

destinations, such as airports, transit hubs, central business districts, shopping areas, universities, etc. Car sharing can assist military spouses with traveling to interviews, accessing after-hours training, completing a trip between a job or training campus and the nearest transit stop, and making emergency trips when no other option is available. Personal car sharing programs are also gaining in popularity. These programs allow private vehicle owners to rent their idle vehicles to others, and are equally conducive for short time or distance travel.⁸

For more information

Did you know? Across the nation, transportation providers and organizations serving veterans are working together to improve access to transportation for veterans and their families. To learn more about these state and local Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiatives and get involved, visit www.fta.dot.gov/veterans.

Read more about Joblinks' resources to support local partnerships in helping veterans, active duty service members, and their families access employment and other destinations through transit and ridesharing strategies. Share your stories with us; the perspective of veterans and active duty service members is especially welcome. Visit <http://bit.ly/JoblinksVeterans>.

Military OneSource (MOS) www.militaryonesource.mil provides information on community supports, including career, education, and employment counseling assistance. MOS also supports a 24-hour information line (800-342-9647).

The Joblinks Employment Transportation Center connects communities with transportation-to-work solutions. Visit us at www.solutionstogether.org.

This publication was prepared pursuant to a grant from the Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the federal government. 2013



⁵ Visit <http://bit.ly/JoblinksVeterans> to review "Ridesharing Options to Work and School for Returning Veterans and Military Families" for additional information.

⁶ For a listing of car ownership programs, visit http://web1.ctaa.org/web-modules/webarticles/articlefiles/CarOwnership_Listing.pdf.

⁷ For a directory of online national and regional rideshare sites, visit <http://www.rideshare-directory.com/>. A listing of transportation management associations is available at <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=1467&z=5>. A directory of metropolitan planning organizations is available at: <http://www.ampo.org/directory/index.php>.

⁸ Determine if there is a local carsharing organization in your community at <http://www.carsharing.net>.