

## Understanding Noncompetitive Hiring Authority for Military Spouses



Military spouses face many challenges, from having to manage family finances and child-rearing duties alone for extended periods of time, to frequent moves to new places. A servicemember typically receives permanent change of station (PCS) orders every two to four years. And while a servicemember is consistently employed by the military regardless of where they are stationed, a military spouse may not get so lucky with their career.

If a spouse cannot work remotely, they may have to find a new job with every change of station – and this can be made even harder depending on their career choice. Nurses, lawyers, and teachers, for example, may only be licensed to practice in specific states, meaning that a PCS move could make it impossible for them to continue in the same field. When a servicemember is stationed abroad, it may be even more difficult for a spouse to find a new position. As a result, the unemployment rate for military spouses is often much higher than their civilian counterparts.

Fortunately, the federal government recognizes the difficulty that military spouses have in finding and maintaining their employment. Executive orders have been introduced to help these spouses by providing enhanced opportunities for them to be considered for federal service positions.

Executive Order 13473, originally issued in 2008 by President George W. Bush, allows federal agencies to make noncompetitive appointments of certain military spouses – giving the agencies “noncompetitive hiring authority.” This means military spouses can be appointed without having to undergo any of the competitive examining procedures that are traditionally required for the position. These procedures may consist of a written exam, evaluation of an applicant’s experience and/or education, or other evaluations intended to determine whether an applicant is capable of performing the position.

Under Executive Order 13473, eligible spouses included:

- Spouses of military members who were relocating as a result of PCS orders



- Spouses of military members with a 100% disability rating as a result of their active duty service
- Spouses of military members who were killed on active duty, provided they had not remarried

In 2018, President Donald Trump expanded on Executive Order 13473 with Executive Order 13832, which directed agencies to further support the hiring of military spouses by directly advertising to and promoting their ability to hire military spouses and, when possible, considering qualified military spouse candidates in addition to those who are otherwise eligible when hiring for open full time, temporary, and term positions.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 removed the caveat that spouses of active duty servicemembers must be relocating due to PCS orders, making all active duty military spouses eligible to take advantage of noncompetitive hiring authority.

As it stands now, federal agencies are being held accountable for increasing their use of noncompetitive hiring authority for military spouses. Veterans, many current and former federal employees, and returning Peace Corps volunteers are also eligible for noncompetitive positions. Fortunately, the opportunities are many. There are [over 2.8 million civilian federal employees](#) nationwide, not including those who work for the U.S. Postal Service.

To take advantage of noncompetitive hiring, military spouses can search for an eligible position on [USAJOBS.gov](#). These positions are designated as open to military spouses and marked with a green symbol showing two interlocking wedding rings.

Spouses will have to provide proof of their eligibility for noncompetitive hiring. These documents may include:

- A document verifying their marriage to a servicemember or veteran
- A copy of the servicemember's active military orders
- The servicemember's DD-214
- Form DD 1300 (Report of Casualty)

Outside of the federal government, many companies are committed to hiring military spouses. The [Military Spouse Employment Partnership](#) connects military spouses with companies throughout the country that are actively interested in recruiting and hiring them. These open jobs are in a variety of sectors, including finance, sales, healthcare, and customer service. [Military Spouse](#) also maintains an annual list of employers who are committed to supporting military families. [Hiring Our Heroes](#) provides resources specific to military spouses, including the [Military Spouse Fellowship Program](#), and connects spouses to businesses and employers through hiring events. State-specific resources may also exist.

Military spouses are devoted to their families and our country, and they have been for centuries. While the job market can be tough for those who aren't able to bring their career with them no matter the location, there are programs in place and resources available to support military spouses through times of transition. Veterans and spouses of deceased servicemembers may also be eligible for benefits from the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs. If you're interested in learning more, you can contact our Education and Veterans Services department [here](#).