



Presented by



Hiring Our Heroes
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

The 4+1 Commitment: The Formula for Military Spouse Success

Military spouse unemployment and underemployment are long-standing concerns. The military spouse unemployment rate is five times higher than the national average. High unemployment among military families creates financial instability, threatening our national security and the ability to recruit and retain an all-volunteer force.

The Concept: Improve Military Spouse Employment Outcomes

Background

Research shows a **tight link between spouse unemployment and financial insecurity**,¹ but moving every two to three years makes it too difficult for many military spouses to find and keep a job.

Military spouses are **more educated than civilians**² and **eager to work**,³ but **incorporating them into existing Veteran employment initiatives hasn't worked**, and it's easy to understand why: military spouses are a unique population with different employment needs.

Spouse employment hardships undermine mental health,⁴ overall family financial readiness,⁵ military family food security,^{6,7} marital satisfaction,⁸ willingness to recommend military service,⁹ and retention.¹⁰

President Biden's EO 14100: *Advancing Economic Opportunity for Military and Veteran Spouses, Caregivers, and Survivors* was a groundbreaking step towards addressing unemployment root causes for the 16,000+ military, Veteran, and surviving spouses in the federal workforce.



Yet even increasing federal workforce participation and retention will not bring the ecosystem the change needed to sustainably reduce overall military spouse unemployment outcomes.

Solution: Do Your Part by adopting the 4+1 Commitment to support military spouses in the workplace



The 4+1 Commitment is a scalable, actionable, and effective way for companies to make a voluntary commitment to improve military spouse employment outcomes.

This voluntary commitment asks employers to adopt **at least one of the following** military spouse ready employment policies, plus consider joining an existing government program:

- ★ Facilitate job transferability
- ★ Offer remote or telework
- ★ Offer flexible work hours
- ★ Provide paid or permissive Permanent Change of Station (PCS) leave
- +1:** Consider joining existing government spouse employment programs

These elements are fully supported by Hiring Our Heroes' research and experience, as well as phase I of Blue Star Families' groundbreaking, three-year, success-based study of policies, practices, and conditions that effectively support long-term military spouse employment.¹¹

Both organizations have found companies to be receptive in being asked to help address this unemployment crisis. The 4+1 Commitment:

- Provides an accessible solution for companies
- Directly addresses problems military spouses have identified
- Is easily understood by military spouses and companies alike
- Simplifies tracking adoption

Theory

With military spouses moving every 2-3 years, on average, there is a continuous influx of military spouses becoming unemployed. These consistent breaks in employment also exacerbate underemployment, further **undermining military families' financial security and morale.**



Military spouses' **top solution** to unemployment and underemployment is "working with large corporations to design military spouse-friendly work options." (2018 MFLS)

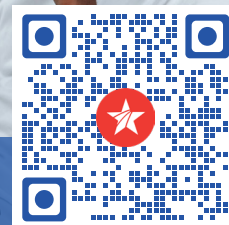
Blue Star Families and Hiring Our Heroes hypothesize that retaining military spouses through a military move will drastically and immediately alleviate chronic unemployment and underemployment. Efforts have focused on incorporating military spouses into Veteran employment initiatives. Because these initiatives often do not account for frequent moves, they do not have widespread impact.

Bringing employers together in this commitment provides the missing piece of the solution that the DoD, employment programs, and spouses themselves cannot provide, allowing **military spouses to build careers that support their families' wellbeing, with long-term financial benefits for military families and for the stability of the all-volunteer force.**

This is the preventative, upstream solution to military families' financial insecurity, hunger, housing insecurity, and retention that military families need to thrive in the military lifestyle.

Questions?

Sign on or learn more today!



The Numbers



The military spouse unemployment rate has not significantly changed since 2015.¹²



Active-duty spouse respondents want to work remotely if offered the opportunity in their field, in a position commensurate with their education and experience.¹³



Active-duty spouse respondents report “my service member’s daily work schedule is too unpredictable” as a top barrier to employment.

Key Partners

Starbucks | Starbucks is the first signer of the **4+1 Commitment: The Formula for Military Spouse Success** and a founding member of the Do Your Part coalition. In 2023, Starbucks bolstered support for military spouse employees by launching a transfer program to promote retention through a military move.

USAA, Navy Federal Credit Union, and PenFed Credit Union | These three financial institutions were concerned with the lack of progress on changing the military spouse employment rate. They teamed up to collaborate and invest in a new approach: identifying and scaling what works. Initial findings informed the development of this pledge, with more research to come.



Blue Star Families and Hiring Our Heroes, in partnership with the Department of Defense Military Spouse Employment Partnership, will provide a unique badge of distinction for 4+1 signatories.

4+1 Commitment Participants

Presenting Organizations



Government Partners

Department of Defense Military Spouse Employment Partnership

Non-Profit Partner



Original Signatories



Frequently Asked Questions

How do I sign on to the 4+1 Commitment: The Formula for Military Spouse Success?

Go to bluestarfam.org/4plus1 to sign up and learn more.

Do I have to be a corporation or large company to sign on to the 4+1 Commitment?

No. Companies of all sizes are encouraged to adopt this commitment and support their military spouse employees.

How will signing on to the 4+1 Commitment benefit my company?

Adopting these practices can help recruit and retain talented military spouse employees in your organization. Military spouses are educated, resourceful, adaptable and resilient employees — a great addition to any team. Establishing your organization as an authentic supporter of the community will positively impact brand loyalty for the 20 million+ members of the military and veteran community, and for all Americans who care for them. Signatories of the 4+1 Commitment will be authorized to utilize a special badge denoting they adhere to best practices supported by Hiring Our Heroes, Blue Star Families, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, American Corporate Partners, and several government partners. Your company will be acknowledged on the 4+1 Commitment website.

My company is already doing at least one of these items — Can we sign on to the 4+1 Commitment?

Yes. We would love to celebrate the great work your company has done and elevate it so that military spouses and your customers alike understand the steps you have taken to support military families.

My company is not already doing one of these items, but we want to. Can we sign on to the 4+1 Commitment?

Yes! We'll help support you and track your progress as you embark upon your journey to effectively support your military spouse employees.

Does your research reveal any additional best practices for employers who want to support military families?

Yes. Please check out Blue Star Families' Summer 2023 report outlining the insights from other employers in *Closing the Loop: An Eight-Step Guide to Building a Holistic Military Spouse Employment Program*, created thanks to the gracious support of sponsors USAA, Navy Federal Credit Union, and PenFed Credit Union. ★

References

- ¹ Blue Star Families. (2023). 2022 Military family lifestyle survey comprehensive report. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BSF_MFLS_Spring23_Finding8_Food_Insecurity.pdf
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- ⁶ Military Family Advisory Network. (2021). Food Insecurity. <https://www.mfan.org/research-reports/2021-military-family-support-programming-survey-results-2>
- ⁷ Asch, B. J., Rennane, S., Trail, T. E., Berdie, L., Ward, J. M., Troyanker, D., Gadwah-Meaden, C., & Kempf, J. (2023). Food insecurity among members of the armed forces and their dependents. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1230-1.html
- ⁸ Blue Star Families, 2022 MFLS, 24-27
- ⁹ Blue Star Families, 2022 MFLS, 38-44
- ¹⁰ Office of People Analytics, 2021 ADSS, 40-45
- ¹¹ Blue Star Families (2023). Closing the loop: An Eight-step guide to building a holistic military spouse employment program. [Unpublished as of August 7, 2023]
- ¹² Department of Defense (2022). 2021 DoD Survey of Active Duty Spouses: The Military Spouse at a Glance. Office of People Analytics. <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Presentations/2021-active-duty-spouse-overview-briefing.pdf>
- ¹³ Blue Star Families (2023). 2022 Military family lifestyle survey comprehensive report. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BSF_MFLS_Spring23_Full_Report_Digital.pdf