

# Advancing Military Spouse Employment:

## Moving Past Systemic Barriers

### Military life is defined by adaptability – military spouse careers should be, too

A new report from Blue Star Families and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), in partnership with Navy Federal Credit Union, PenFed Credit Union, and USAA, shares findings from a three-year longitudinal study on military spouse employment – and what it reveals about the real-world impact of policy, mobility, and support gaps on military families.

***Military spouse employment is a readiness issue. When spouses can't build stable careers, it affects family financial security, retention, and the strength of the All-Volunteer Force.***

#### Key Insights



##### No Two Military Spouse Career Journeys Look the Same

The study uncovered that throughout the seven distinct military life stages\*\*, each stage identified different employment barriers and support needs.



##### Military Spouse Careers Are Built to Break

Only 22% of participating military spouses maintained full-time employment across all three years of the study, underscoring how difficult career continuity can be in military life.



##### A Highly Skilled Workforce, Left Behind

43% of participating spouses held advanced education credentials, yet many still struggled to maintain stable career paths due to repeated relocations and career disruptions.



##### A Constant Cycle of Career Disruption

Many spouses moved in and out of the workforce repeatedly because of PCS moves, deployments, childcare challenges, and unpredictable military schedules.



##### Flexibility is the Key to Staying Employed

Flexible and remote jobs emerged as one of the strongest predictors of sustained employment, while rigid work structures often pushed spouses out of the workforce.



##### Childcare Challenges Are Driving Financial Instability

Childcare costs and unpredictable schedules were among the top reasons spouses left the workforce.

\*These findings are based on a sample of military spouse participants tracked over three years in this longitudinal study.

\*\*The seven distinct life stages include: entry into military life, stabilization and first assignments, family formation, mid-career service, reassessment and resilience, crisis points, and transition and retirement.

