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ASSISTANCE IN COLORADO LAW FOR THE ACTIVE MILITARY AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Active duty military service members (active military members), their spouses, and children often face challenges associated with transfers and deployments. Colorado lawmakers have enacted statutory provisions to accommodate some of the employment and education issues that arise from these challenges. This *issue brief* describes how Colorado law assists military families with employment and education.

Employment

Because states differ in how and what professions and occupations are regulated, licenses, registrations, and certifications are generally not reciprocal. As a result, regulated persons must apply, qualify, and pay fees to be regulated when they move to Colorado. Exceptions to regulatory requirements for active military members and military spouses are described below.

Exceptions for regulated professions and occupations. Under Colorado law, an active military member or spouse certified or licensed by another state as an emergency medical service provider, is exempt from certification in Colorado. Military spouses are authorized to practice in certain regulated professions or occupations for one year if the spouse is licensed, registered, or certified in good

standing to practice in another state, and agrees to be governed by Colorado law. This excludes real estate agents, engineers, surveyors, architects, physicians, physician assistants, optometrists, and people licensed to work with fireworks. If the military spouse wants to continue to practice in Colorado after one year, he or she must apply for authority from the appropriate licensing agency. The licensing agency for most professions and occupations is the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA).

The DORA allows all applicants, not just active military members and military spouses, coming from other states who are chiropractors, dentists, dental hygienists, optometrists, nursing home administrators, and physical therapists to demonstrate competency with criteria other than "time in the field." The governing boards of each profession set their own alternative criteria.

Licensing agencies provide a six-month exemption to regulated persons who are on active duty for more than 120 days from paying certification fees and completing continuing education requirements that become due during their period of active duty. Further, agencies can accept continuing education, training, or service completed in the military toward the educational qualifications required to renew the person's authority to practice.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) regulates education professions for school districts. A military spouse who is certified or licensed, or eligible for certification or licensure, as a teacher, special services provider, principal, or administrator in another state, can be authorized to work in a Colorado school district. The CDE can issue an authorization for up to one year and one renewal. Time worked under an interim authorization is applied to the three-year period of probationary status for teachers.

Unemployment insurance benefits. If a military spouse must quit his or her job to relocate because the active military member is transferred, the military spouse may qualify to receive unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment makes UI award determinations. These awards do not affect the UI premium charged to the former employer of the military spouse. Table 1 shows the number of military spouses who have taken advantage of this exception, and the benefit amounts awarded for the past three calendar years.

**Table 1
Individuals Awarded Unemployment
Insurance Benefits Under Military
Spouse Exception**

Calendar Year	Number of Individuals	Benefit Totals
2009	225	\$730,421
2010	347	\$1,266,332
2011	283	\$1,029,368

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Unemployment Insurance Program

Military veterans. For information about benefits for veterans, see the issue brief entitled "Benefits for Military Veterans in Colorado."

Education

Children of military families face challenges when they change schools due to relocations. Their parents may also need to find suitable child care. Colorado law addresses both of these issues.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. A majority of states, including Colorado, participate in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The goal of the compact is to standardize the policies affecting military students transferring between school districts to make transitions easier. The compact addresses important educational transition issues encountered by military families, including enrollment, attendance, and graduation. The compact provides children of both active military members or veterans with the following:

- processes through which educational records will be transferred in a timely manner;
- guidelines and requirements to assist in placing transferred students within the proper grade, courses, special education services, and extracurricular activities; and
- waivers of required courses and exit exams to facilitate the graduation of military children for cases in which the student has completed similar work at another school.

Department of Defense child care pilot program. House Bill 11-1027 created a pilot program in the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) for licensing child care facilities using DoD quality standards. These pilot facilities are to serve military families, and participating families are allowed to use their federal child care stipends to pay for off-base child care. The CDHS has rules in place for the pilot program and is working with the DoD to coordinate acceptance of the pilot program with at least one branch of the military. At this writing, no facilities are currently participating in the pilot program in Colorado.