

## Executive Summary

Though military families often display high resilience and positive coping skills when a family member is deployed and reintegrated, they experience a number of issues as a result of deployment that may make them more vulnerable than the typical civilian family. Families and communities of these service members experience unique needs while their service members are deployed as well as when they return. All branches of the U.S. military provide various types of assistance at the federal level, but state governments can also assist military families by implementing policies and programs that support service members and their families during deployment and reintegration.

**Challenge: Military families move frequently.** Associated challenges include:

- Military spouses with a state-specific education credential or license.
  - ▶ *Policy Implication:* States could work together to enhance licensing recognition across state lines.
- Military family members enrolled at a higher education institution may not be eligible for in-state tuition because of a move in the middle of a term or they may not have lived in the state long enough to establish residency.
  - ▶ *Policy Implication:* States and the military could work together to offer in-state tuition at colleges and universities for military members, their spouses and other family members.

**Challenge: Finances.** As a result of frequent moves, a spouse being deployed, etc., military families are vulnerable to predatory lending practices.

- ▶ *Policy Implication:* Some states have passed legislation that eliminates individual rate impact on business unemployment insurance, which has allowed these states to cover military spouses under unemployment insurance. Other states have passed strong predatory lending legislation.

**Challenge: Access to Health Services.** This may be an issue when the family of a deployed service member does not live near a military facility.

- Often, those living in rural areas are unaware of available health-care services.
  - ▶ *Policy Implication:* Improve outreach in rural areas so that military families know about the services available to them.
- When Guard or Reserve service members are deployed, often their health and leave-time policies in their civilian job are impacted—either they change, are put on hold, etc.
  - ▶ *Policy Implication:* Develop policies on the state level that ensure that military families are not penalized while a member is deployed.

**Challenge: Families may feel disconnected or isolated from other affected military families.**

- ▶ *Policy Implication:* A regional or statewide directory of families who have experience with deployments could be created and made available for families who are new to military service.

**Challenge: Military families often rely on nonmilitary resources.** State policymakers could seek ways to improve awareness of, and support or partner with, local and community resources for families.

- ▶ *Policy Implication:* Create an online directory of state and local service organizations, including religious and faith-based organizations, to help facilitate families' ability to access services that already exist.

### Additional considerations for Georgia:

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Policy Academy has provided several states with the opportunity for training, networking with experts and with other states, and receipt of technical assistance to support the participating states in the development of strategic action plans for their states that would assist them in providing support to military service members and their families.

- ▶ *Policy Implication:* Georgia's *Paving the Way Home Initiative* has begun the development and implementation of a statewide action plan.