

Your Rights as a Service Member in Washington



**Washington State Attorney General's Office
Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance**



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Disclaimer: This guide provides general information about your rights and protections as a veteran in Washington. It is not legal advice or an official opinion of the Attorney General.

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Part 1: Introduction

What is the Attorney General's Office?

The Washington State Attorney General's Office gives legal advice to state agencies and protects Washington citizens. We defend people's rights and stand up for our shared values. We file lawsuits in court to support Washington residents and represent Washington agencies in court.

The Attorney General's Office is not allowed to represent or give advice to private individuals about their personal legal problems. **This means that, if you contact us, we can't tell you what to do about your case or legal problem. We will try to help you find other resources.**

What is the Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance (OMVLA)?

The Washington State Legislature created OMVLA in the Attorney General's Office in 2017. OMVLA helps low and middle-income Washington veterans, service members, and their families who need help with civil (*non-criminal*) legal problems. Civil legal problems include things like parenting plans, debt, or disagreements with a landlord. OMVLA connects people with free lawyers who can give legal advice. We also send people information about their legal rights and where to get help. To ask for help from OMVLA, submit a request to www.atg.wa.gov/civil-legal.

OMVLA also creates resources and trainings to help lawyers, social service groups, and members of the military and veteran community understand veteran and military legal problems. We also look for changes to law or government policy that might help veterans, service members, or their families.

Can this guide help me?

This guide is for service members and their families in Washington. It provides information about the most common state and federal laws, protections, and benefits for service members.

If you do not live in Washington, some of the information about federal benefits may help you. However, information in this resource about state laws will **not** apply to you.

This information is not legal advice. We encourage you to talk to a lawyer about your legal problems because everyone’s situation is different. There are thousands of federal laws and regulations that apply to service members. This guide includes information about some of those laws, but other laws may apply to your situation, too.

This is **not** a how-to guide about advocating for your rights under the SCRA, USERRA, or other state or federal laws or protections. The guide has many links to other resources.

This guide is about rights and benefits for service members. If you are looking for information about veterans benefits or protections, you may want to read our guide “[Your Rights as a Veteran in Washington](#).” It’s available on OMVLA’s website at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/veteran-and-military-resources> under “Legal Rights and Resources.”

We use everyday language in this guide. When we must use a legal term, we include a plain-language explanation the first time we use it in each part. The explanations are italicized and in parentheses. Here are a few commonly used terms:

- **Civil law**: Civil law means all non-criminal law. Civil legal problems include things like parenting plans, debt, or disagreements with a landlord. Usually, civil cases are disagreements between people, businesses, or both.
- **Plaintiff**: This is the person or party who brings a lawsuit in a civil case.
- **Defendant**: This is the person or party who is responding to a lawsuit in a civil case. In a **criminal** case, it is the person who the state says did the crime.
- **Terminate**: This means to cancel or end. You can terminate a contract (like a cell phone plan) or lease, for example. You usually must give notice ahead of time that you are terminating the contract or lease, but it depends.
- **Material effect**: This means that something will have a real, significant impact on an outcome, decision, or next step. For example, state law allows military service members to delay hearings in family law cases if they can show that their military service will materially impact their ability, or likely ability, to go to the court hearing. You can read more about this protection in Part 6: Family Law Protections.
- **Garnish or garnishment**: This means to take part of your paycheck or benefit to pay a debt.

If you aren’t sure what a legal term means, Merriam-Webster has a free, online legal dictionary that explains legal terms in plain language available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/legal>.

How can I get help with civil legal problems?

If you are a service member and need civil legal help in Washington, you can get help. **However, we always encourage you to try your [local military legal assistance office](#) first.**¹

If military legal assistance services can't help you, or you're not eligible for help from them, there are other options available. Some have income limits.

For general civil legal help:

- **[Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance \(OMVLA\) at the Washington State Attorney General's Office](#)**: OMVLA helps veterans, service members, and their families who have any non-criminal legal problem. OMVLA may help you find a free lawyer. **Not everyone will get a free lawyer.** If you do qualify for a free lawyer, the lawyer may give you up to an hour of free legal advice. The lawyer will *not* go to court with you or talk to the other party. OMVLA may also connect you with community groups or give you information about your legal rights. You can ask for help from OMVLA at www.atg.wa.gov/civil-legal.
- **[WashingtonLawHelp.org](https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/)**: Washington Law Help is Washington's online, free law library. It has information and tools to help you with many civil legal problems, including step-by-step guides to help you complete forms. You can access Washington Law Help at <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/>.
- **[Northwest Justice Project's CLEAR Hotline](https://nwjustice.org/clear-hotline)**: The CLEAR Hotline is a toll-free legal hotline. It helps people with low incomes. CLEAR provides legal education, advice, and referrals to other legal aid organizations in Washington. You can call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014 or visit <https://nwjustice.org/clear-hotline>.
- **[Stateside Legal](https://www.statesidelegal.org)**: This nationwide website connects veterans and service members with information and resources to understand and protect their legal rights. It includes self-help resources and a search tool for legal assistance and legal aid organizations in every state. You can learn more at <https://www.statesidelegal.org>.

For eviction, call the Eviction Defense Line at 1-855-657-8387. If you are a renter and are facing eviction in Washington, you can get free legal help. There's more info at <https://nwjustice.org/eviction-help>.

¹ You can find your local legal assistance office at <https://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>.

If you are facing discrimination, you have several options for help.

- You can file a complaint with the Washington State Human Rights Commission. You can learn more about the Commission at <https://www.hum.wa.gov/>.
 - The complaint form is available at https://wahum.my.site.com/FileaComplaintOnline/s/?language=en_US.
 - You can call 1-800-233-3248, option #4 to file a complaint by phone, or to learn about other ways to file a complaint.
- You can also file a complaint at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>.
- If you experienced a hate crime or bias incident, you can call the Attorney General's Hate Crimes & Bias Incidents Hotline at 1-855-225-1010 or report an incident online at www.atg.wa.gov/report-hate.
 - This is a non-emergency hotline to support victims. It supports people who have witnessed or been the target of hate crimes or bias incidents, refers people to help, and collects information about the problem.
 - If you are experiencing an active emergency or are in immediate danger, please call 911.

Active and reserve members of the military (including the National Guard and armed forces reserves), as well as veterans, are a protected group under the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD), [RCW 49.60](#). WLAD protects many classes of people based on aspects of identity such as gender, disability, and religion. If you want more information about who the WLAD protects or when it applies, review this [brochure from the Washington State Human Rights Commission](#).²

How can I get help with other, non-legal problems?

Washington has a social service system that can help you connect with other supportive services. Federal resources are also available to support military service members and their families.

If you are in crisis and need help now, call the Veteran and Military Crisis Line at 988, Press 1 for Veterans. The website is <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>. You can also text 838255 or chat with the crisis line at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat/>.

Military OneSource is an excellent, free federal resource for support for military families. It has information about issues military families face and [personal](#)

² https://www.hum.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/publications/GeneralBrochure/GeneralBrochure_English_Current.pdf

[support available](#)³ to coach you through challenges like finding elder care, filing taxes as a service member, transitioning out of the military, becoming a parent while in the military, and other unique situations.

You can call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647 or visit <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/> for information about everything they offer. If you are OCONUS, the website has international calling instructions.

If you need mental health support, you can also [reach out to Military OneSource for short-term, confidential counseling](#).⁴ The counseling will not affect your or your spouse's career or security clearance. *Counseling from Military OneSource will not be reported to your chain of command or anyone else.* **There are some very narrow exceptions, like reporting illegal activities or situations where you or someone else is in danger.**

You call 800-342-9647 or learn more about the counseling services at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/confidential-counseling/>.

If you need help finding food, transportation, shelter, or healthcare in Washington, you can look at <https://search.wa211.org/> or call 211 for help in your area.

If you are a military spouse and need support, the Military Spouse Initiative through the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs has a [wide variety of resources available on its webpage](#), including resources to help with transitions, child care, and employment. You can learn more at <https://www.dva.wa.gov/militaryspouseinitiative>.

³ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/coaching-consultations/>

⁴ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/confidential-counseling/>

Part 2: The Federal Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)

This guide is largely meant to help service members and their families who live in Washington understand benefits and protections that apply *only* in Washington. However, the federal Servicemembers Civil Relief Act has lots of overlap with many state laws, and so it's important to know **what it is** and **where you can find more information about it**.

What is the SCRA?

The [SCRA](#)⁵ protects active-duty service members and members of the National Guard and reservists who are called to federal active duty for more than 30 days in a row. The SCRA has many protections. However, its main role is to make sure that your financial well-being is not at risk while you are serving on active duty.

The SCRA protects:

- Active-duty members of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Space Force.
- Members of the reserves and National Guard serving on active duty on Title 10 orders. Title 10 is when National Guard duty is federally controlled and federally funded.
- Members of the National Guard mobilized under Title 32 federal orders for more than 30 consecutive days. Title 32 military duty is when service is under the command and control of the state or territory governor, but it is federally funded and regulated.
- Holders of a power of attorney for the service members listed above.

In some cases, it also protects family members or dependents of the service members above, especially when dealing with terminating (*ending*) a lease. The SCRA also protects active-duty commissioned officers of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The next section has an overview of the primary protections provided by the SCRA. Generally, though, the SCRA protects you in three areas: consumer law, court appearances, and housing and property protections.

⁵ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/legal/servicemembers-civil-relief-act/>

If you think that your rights under the SCRA were violated, you have a few options:

1. **Submit a complaint to the Washington State Attorney General's Office**, if the violation happened in Washington. Send in a general consumer complaint at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>.
2. **Contact your local military legal assistance office**. You can find your local office at <https://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>
3. **Make a complaint directly to the Department of Justice**. You can submit a complaint at <https://civilrights.justice.gov/>. Click "start a report."

What protections does the SCRA provide me, generally?

The federal SCRA covers three big areas:

Consumer Law

The federal SCRA includes important consumer law protections, including:

- **Capping interest rates at 6% for loans you took out *before* you entered military service**. For Reservists and National Guard, this includes debts that you take on between periods of active-duty service. You can learn [more about the interest rate cap](#)⁶ on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau website.
- **Protecting you from garnishment and repossession**. The SCRA prohibits creditors from repossessing personal property (including vehicles) you bought or leased *before you entered active military service* while you are on active duty *unless* they have a court order. It also requires a towing operator (*company*) to get a court order before it sells a vehicle registered to an active-duty service member. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau [has more information](#)⁷ about the repossession protections offered by the SCRA.
- **Allowing you to terminate (*cancel*) a cell phone contract when you are moving due to your military service without having to pay an early termination charge**, so long as you meet the requirements. The law lets you keep your phone number. You can cancel a family plan if your family is moving with you. Stateside Legal, an online legal information and resource website for veterans and service members, has [more information about the requirements and how to tell the cell phone provider](#).⁸

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<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/im-in-the-military-are-there-limits-on-how-much-i-can-be-charged-for-a-loan-en-893/>

7

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/im-in-the-military-and-having-trouble-paying-my-auto-loan-what-should-i-know-about-auto-repossession-and-protections-under-the-servicemembers-civil-relief-act-scra-en-873/>

⁸ <https://www.statesidelegal.org/cell-phone-contracts-and-scra>

- **Allowing you to terminate an auto lease without having to pay early termination charges if you meet one of the requirements.** You can find out more about the [requirements for canceling an auto lease](#)⁹ from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

More information about additional consumer protections is available in Part 4 of this guide.

Court Appearances

If you are part of a civil (*non-criminal*) court case while on active-duty military service, the SCRA protects you by:

- **Preventing default judgments against you in civil court cases (including child custody cases).** A default judgment is when the defendant (*the responding party*) did not appear or defend against the lawsuit filed by the plaintiff (*the filing party*), so the court decides the case without holding a full hearing on its merits (whether or not you had a defense). Before any default judgments are granted in civil cases, the plaintiff must try to find out if the defendant is in the military. If it seems like a defendant is in the military, the court must appoint a lawyer to represent the service member defendant. If a default judgment is entered and a service member was on active duty, the SCRA lets them fix this with the court in some situations.
- **Allowing you to stay (pause) court proceedings if you can't participate because of your military service.** A court must enter a 90-day stay in a court case if you show the court that your ability to participate, as either the plaintiff or defendant, is actually affected by your military service. You can ask the court to add additional stays if your military service continues to prevent you from participating in the court process. If the court won't allow a stay, they must appoint a lawyer to represent you. Any active-duty legal assistance office can help you get a stay.

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation has [more information about the protections provided by the SCRA in legal proceedings](#).¹⁰

Housing and Property Protections

The federal SCRA protects renters, homeowners, and property owners by:

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<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/i-am-in-the-military-and-have-an-auto-lease-if-i-am-ordered-to-move-overseas-or-deploy-can-i-cancel-or-terminate-my-auto-lease-without-paying-early-termination-charges-or-a-penalty-en-889/>

¹⁰ <https://www.moaa.org/Caregiver/Legal/ Servicemembers-Civil-Relief-Act/Legal-Proceedings/>

- **Letting you terminate your residential lease in some circumstances.** You must have entered into the lease *before* active duty if you are called to active duty for 180 days or more. If you entered into the lease during active duty, you must receive orders for a permanent change of station or a deployment for more than 90 days. You must give your landlord written notice with a copy of your military orders. You can [learn more about terminating a lease under the SCRA from Military OneSource.](#)¹¹
- **Requiring mortgage lenders to get a court order before they can foreclose on your home during your military service and for one year after.** This only applies to mortgages that you took out *before* you entered active duty. If a lender is trying to foreclose on your home, a court can stay the proceedings or adjust how much you owe if your military service is affecting your ability to pay your mortgage. The [Consumer Finance Protection Bureau has more information](#)¹² about mortgage rights and foreclosure protections under the SCRA.
- **Evictions:** The SCRA also provides limited protections against evictions for non-payment of rent. These protections *only apply* to leases that you signed before you joined active duty. You cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent without a court order. If you are facing eviction for non-payment of rent, a judge can postpone the eviction hearing for up to three months or longer. Your military service must have a material (*actual*) effect on your ability to pay rent. The Fort Bliss Legal Assistance Office published a [helpful article describing these eviction protections.](#)¹³ If you need help in Washington, you can find your local military legal assistance office at <https://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>.
 - You can still be evicted for lease violations that are unrelated to non-payment of rent.
- **Prohibiting foreclosure or enforcement of a lien on property you own during your active-duty military service or within 90 days after you get out.** This applies to property you have in storage, or property that you are having repaired, cleaned, or any other reason that someone else is holding your property. Businesses must get a court order to sell your things. The American Bar Association has [more information about property lien protections.](#)¹⁴

¹¹

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment/pre-deployment/military-clause-terminate-your-lease-due-to-deployment-or-pcs/>

¹²

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/as-a-servicemember-am-i-protected-from-foreclosure-en-306/>

¹³ <https://home.army.mil/bliss/about/news/eviction-protections-service-members>

¹⁴ https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_services/milvets/aba_home_front/information_center/servicemembers_civil_relief_act/benefits_and_protections/storage_liens/

There are other protections provided by the SCRA. Military OneSource has a list of [all the protections the SCRA provides](#).¹⁵

Does Washington have state protections for service members and their families?

Yes. Washington's Service Members' Civil Relief law (state SCRA, [RCW 38.42](#)) has many of the same protections as the federal SCRA (although not all).

However, the state SCRA also protects service members who were activated for state service (for example, if you were activated for a forest fire). The federal version protects federally-activated service members. If you only have state-activated service, the state SCRA will apply, but **not** the federal SCRA. However, if you have qualifying federal service (active duty or 30 or more consecutive days of federally-activated National Guard or reserve service), you are protected by **both** the federal and state laws.

The state SCRA, like the federal SCRA, includes broad protections for service members. Washington also has other state laws that protect service members. You can find more information in each section of this guide.

The Washington State Attorney General's Office enforces the SCRA in Washington. If you believe your SCRA rights have been violated, you can send in a general consumer complaint to the Attorney General's Office at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>.

¹⁵ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/legal/servicemembers-civil-relief-act/>

Part 3: Federal and State Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

What is the federal USERRA?

The federal USERRA establishes rights and responsibilities for uniformed service members and their civilian employers. It applies to all employers (public and private). There are several types of rights within USERRA:

Right to Be Reemployed

If you leave your job to perform military service, your civilian job must reemploy you if you meet **all** of these requirements:

1. You told your employer (verbally or in writing) that you were called to military service.
2. You have five years or less cumulative (*total*) military service while with *that* employer.
3. You return to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner after your military service is finished.
4. You received a qualifying characterization of service (*discharge*) from the military (Honorable or General under Honorable).

Your employer must reemploy you to the same, or similar job, and with the benefits you would have had if you hadn't been absent from work due to military service. In some circumstances, you can be placed into a comparable job.

Protection from Discrimination or Retaliation

Your employer can't retaliate or discriminate against you because of your military service (including past, present, or future service). This means that they cannot deny you:

- Initial employment because of your military service,
- Reemployment,
- Retention (*keeping your job*) in employment,
- Promotion, or
- Any other benefit of employment.

Your employer also cannot retaliate against anyone who assists in the enforcement of USERRA rights. For example, if someone speaks up for you to a supervisor about your

USERRA rights or testifies in court about a proceeding under USERRA, they can't be fired or demoted for it, even if they don't have any connection to military service themselves.

Health Insurance Protection

You have the right to keep your employer-provided health insurance for up to two years while in the military. If you decide not to keep health insurance, you have the right to re-join it as soon as you are reemployed, without any waiting periods or exclusions (except for coverage of service-connected illnesses or injuries).

You can read more about USERRA on the U.S. Department of Labor [USERRA webpage](#). The online [USERRA pocket guide](#)¹⁶ also includes a lot of helpful information.

What if I need help with USERRA?

You can get help with federal USERRA issues by contacting the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). They investigate and help resolve complaints when an employer violates USERRA. You can file a USERRA claim with VETS at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/userra/fileclaim>. If VETS can't resolve the problem, it can be referred to the U.S. Department of Justice.

The U.S. Department of Labor also developed a [USERRA Advisor tool](#)¹⁷ that provides an overview of USERRA and walks employees and employers through USERRA protections, obligations of employees and employers, and how to address issues.

The federal [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve](#)¹⁸ (ESGR) website is also an excellent resource for USERRA questions. This program educates service members and employers about USERRA rights, although it does not enforce USERRA. It *can* refer USERRA issues to a trained mediator. You can visit ESGR at <https://www.esgr.mil/>.

Does Washington have its own version of USERRA?

Yes. Washington's employment and reemployment statute ([RCW 73.16](#)) is very similar to the federal USERRA law. It protects *state-activated* service members (like members of the state National Guard). The federal USERRA protects *federally-activated* service members.

¹⁶ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/userra/userra-pocket-guide>

¹⁷ <https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/vets/userra/>

¹⁸ <https://www.esgr.mil/>

There are several types of protections under state law.

Employers Must Accommodate Your Military Service.

- You must be allowed to take unpaid leave (for up to five years) for deployment, training, or any other absence due to a military order.
- You usually must provide verbal or written notice ahead of time of your service. Written notice creates a record you can look at later. The law doesn't set out a minimum required notice period, but you should try to give as much notice as you can.
- Employers can't require you to use vacation or other paid time off for military-related absences. You also cannot be required to find a replacement or substitute for a military-related absence.

Employers Can't Discriminate Against You Because of Your Military Service

- Employers cannot refuse to hire you because you are in the military. They also cannot refuse to continue employing you because you are in the military.
- Employers cannot refuse to reemploy you because of your military service.
- You cannot be denied promotions or any other benefit of employment because of your military service.
- Employers can't use your past, present, or future membership in the uniformed services as their reason for an adverse employment action.
- Employers also cannot retaliate against anyone for protecting or enforcing these rights, even if they are not in the military themselves.

Employers Must Reemploy You If You Meet the Legal Requirements.

- An employer generally must reemploy you after your military service ends. However, there are a few requirements:
 - You gave your employer advance written or verbal notice of your military service.
 - You completed your military obligation with an Honorable or General under Honorable discharge.
 - You return to work or apply for reemployment in a "timely manner." This depends on the nature and length of your military service and is defined in [RCW 73.16.035\(c\)](#).
- There are limited exceptions to the reemployment requirement, identified in [RCW 73.16.033](#). They are:
 - The employer experienced a change in circumstances that makes reemployment "impossible or unreasonable,"
 - Reemployment imposes an undue hardship on the employer, and
 - The prior employment was temporary.

State law ([RCW 73.16.051](#)) says that military service should be considered a leave of absence. Generally, you do not lose seniority, insurance, vacation, or other benefits you earned before you entered the military. An employer's rules related to a furlough and leave of absence also apply to military service leaves of absence. This means that, for example, if an employee doesn't accrue leave during a leave of absence, they also likely will not accrue leave during the military service leave of absence.

The Washington State Attorney General's Office enforces state law employment and reemployment protections. You can send in a general consumer complaint to the Attorney General's Office at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>. You can also hire a private lawyer if you believe an employer violated your employment or reemployment rights.

Part 4: Consumer Protections

Does Washington have consumer protection laws to protect service members?

Yes. Washington has several laws to protect the consumer rights of service members and their families. They are in addition to federal consumer protection laws that **also** protect service members.

Payday Loans

State law protects military borrowers. If you take out a payday loan or “small loan,” you are covered by [RCW 31.45.210](#) in addition to the federal [Military Lending Act](#)¹⁹ (described in more detail below). Under state law, payday lenders cannot:

- Garnish (*take*) your military pay when trying to collect a delinquent (*late*) loan,
- Contact your chain of command to try to collect a delinquent loan,
- Continue collection activities on a loan while you are deployed to a combat or combat support posting, or
- Dishonor the terms of any repayment agreement they made with you (the borrower), military financial counselors, or a credit counselor you worked with.

If you think a payday lender violated one of these rules, you can file a complaint with either:

- The Washington State Department of Financial Institutions at <https://dfi.wa.gov/consumers/file-complaint>, or
- The Washington State Attorney General’s Office at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>. Select “General Consumer Complaint.”

Terminating (Canceling) Other Consumer Contracts

State law ([RCW 38.42.160](#)) allows Washington-based service members to cancel or suspend certain contracts if they receive permanent change of station (PCS) orders or if they are deploying for 30 or more days. State law covers a wider range of contracts than the federal SCRA. If you are deployed or transferred, you can cancel things like gym memberships without worrying about being charged or being sent to collections.

The law allows service members to suspend or terminate service contracts for:

- Subscription TV services (cable, satellite, etc.),

¹⁹

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/military-financial-lifecycle/military-lending-act-mla/>

- Internet services,
- Gym memberships and other fitness studio contracts, and
- Other telecommunication services (like a landline phone line).

To terminate a contract, you must:

1. Give written notice to the provider, **and**
2. Include a copy of your military orders.

The law says that the contract is canceled *the day* the provider receives proper written notice. You cannot be charged a fee, loss of deposit, or any additional costs for canceling your contract under this law.

Your service can be reinstated after you leave the military. If you served for 12 consecutive months or less, the service provider must reinstate the services with the same terms and conditions as when you canceled or suspended your contract. If you served for more than 12 consecutive months, the service provider must give you the lowest discounted or promotional rate that they've offered to a new customer in the last year.

Cancellation of a Spousal Employment Contract

If you are the spouse of a service member who has received PCS orders, you can cancel an employment contract in Washington without penalty. You must provide written notice (including by email) to your employer, including proof of the PCS orders. The termination of the contract is effective on the day you give notice, or a day that you and the employer both agree on. An employer cannot do anything to you (like take you to court for breach of contract or charge you fees) for canceling the contract. The law is available at [RCW 38.42.170](#).

Lemon Law

The Washington State Motor Vehicle "Lemon Law" ([RCW 19.118](#)) helps you if you buy a new car and it has ongoing problems. Your new car might be a "lemon" if:

1. It has at least one significant problem,
2. You've tried to get the problem diagnosed or fixed a "reasonable" number of times, **and**
3. The problem is covered under the manufacturer's warranty.

If your car is a lemon, you can ask for a free arbitration hearing within 30 months of the car's original retail delivery date through the Lemon Law Administration at the Washington State Attorney General's Office. If you are a service member assigned to

duty or living in Washington, you can use Washington's Lemon Law even if you did not buy the car in Washington, so long as the car meets the other requirements.

More information is available on the [Attorney General's Lemon Law webpage](#).²⁰

What federal consumer protection laws protect service members and their families?

Federal law has several other consumer protections for active-duty military service members *in addition* to the SCRA, which has several important consumer protections (discussed in section 2, above).

Credit Reports

As a service member, you have special protections for credit reports and credit monitoring. Credit reports have information about where you live, how you pay your bills, and your financial history. Businesses use the information to decide whether they should loan you money, offer you a job, or rent you a home.

There are several credit report protections available to service members in particular:

- **Active-Duty Alert:** If you are deploying, you can place a free active-duty alert on your credit report to reduce the risk of identity theft while you are deployed. Businesses must take more steps before issuing credit in your name. The alert is good for one year and can be renewed to match the length of your deployment. Military OneSource has [more information about active-duty alerts](#).²¹
- **Free electronic credit monitoring:** Active-duty service members and members of the National Guard are eligible for free electronic credit monitoring services from each of the three credit reporting companies. The National Military Family Association has [more information about free credit monitoring for service members](#),²² including links to each of the credit bureaus' military webpages.

Military Lending Act

The federal [Military Lending Act](#)²³ (MLA) protects you when you borrow money while in the military. It covers active-duty service members, members of the reserves on active duty, members of the National Guard mobilized on federal orders for more than 30 days

²⁰ <https://www.atg.wa.gov/general-lemon-law>

²¹ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/gov/active-duty-alert/>

²² <https://www.militaryfamily.org/credit-monitoring-services-for-military-families/>

²³

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/military-financial-lifecycle/military-lending-act-mla/>

in a row, spouses of the service members listed, and sometimes, dependents of the service members listed.

The MLA applies to most loans and credit products, including:

- Credit cards,
- Payday loans and other advance loans,
- Overdraft lines of credit (but *not* overdraft charges),
- Installment loans *except* auto loans, and
- Some student loans.

The MLA does *not* apply to residential mortgages, other home loans (like mortgage refinancing or home equity loans), or auto or personal property loans where the lender can repossess the property you purchase.

Under the MLA, lenders cannot:

- Charge you more than a 36% annual interest rate.
- Charge you extra if you pay off your loan early (a prepayment penalty).
- Require you to give up your legal rights to settle disagreements about the loan. The lender can't require arbitration instead of court, for example.
- Make you set up a regular payment towards the loan (allotment) out of your military pay.

Lenders can refuse to lend to you if they know that their loans do not meet the MLA requirements.

The Department of Defense Office of Financial Readiness has a helpful [fact sheet about the MLA](#).²⁴ If a lender violates the MLA, file a complaint with the Washington State Attorney General's Office. You can file a general consumer complaint at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>. You can also currently submit a complaint to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint/>.

²⁴ <https://finred.usalearning.gov/assets/downloads/FINRED-MLA-ES.pdf>

Part 5: Housing Law Protections for Service Members

Can I terminate (*end*) my lease early if I get orders to move?

Yes. State law ([RCW 59.18.220](#)) protects service members who must end their lease early due to military orders. Some leases have early termination penalties, which means that if you cancel the lease before it's done, the landlord can charge you extra fees unless you are covered by an exception. One of those exceptions is for service members who must move due to their military service, including National Guard and reserves.

You must still provide 20 days written notice to the landlord that you are moving, unless you receive PCS or deployment orders that do not allow you to provide a 20-day written notice ([RCW 59.18.200](#)). Your spouse and dependents are also covered.

You must give the landlord a copy of your official military orders or a signed letter from your commanding officer that confirms that you meet **one** of the law's requirements:

1. You must permanently move 35 miles or more from your rental location.
2. You were released early or involuntarily from active duty or received retirement orders.
3. You were released from active duty after entering the lease, and rental location is 35 miles or more from your home of record prior to entering active duty.
4. After entering into a rental agreement, your commanding officer required you to move into government-provided housing.
5. You received temporary duty orders (TDY), temporary change of station orders, or state active-duty orders to an area 35 miles or more from the location of the rental, so long as the orders are for a period of 90 days or more.
6. You leased the property, but before you took possession, you received change of station orders to an area that is 35 miles or more from the rental location.

Washington Law Help, Washington's online law library, has [general information about ending a lease](#)²⁵ that has helpful information about other things to consider when you are moving out of a rental.

²⁵ <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/tenants-rights-moving-out>

The SCRA also allows you to end a lease. It has slightly different protections than Washington Law. You can read more about [SCRA lease termination on Military OneSource](#).²⁶

I own a mobile home but rent the lot. Can I terminate my lot rental early if I get orders?

Yes. If you own a manufactured or mobile home but rent your lot space, you are covered by Washington's Manufactured/Mobile Home Landlord-Tenant Act (MHLTA). Like the Residential Landlord Tenant Act, the MHLTA has special protections for active-duty service members. Your spouse and dependents are also covered by these protections.

Generally, you must give one month's written notice to end your tenancy. However, if you are an active-duty service member or are in the National Guard or reserves, state law ([RCW 59.20.090\(4\)\(b\)](#)) allows you (or your spouse or dependents) to move out with less notice if you receive orders without enough time to provide the one-month notice.

You must provide your landlord a copy of your official military orders or a letter from your commanding officer confirming that you meet **one** of the law's requirements:

1. You must permanently move 35 miles or more from your rental location.
2. You were released early or involuntarily from active duty.
3. You were released from active duty after entering the lease, and rental location is 35 miles or more from your home of record prior to entering active duty.
4. After entering into a rental agreement, your commanding officer required you to move into government-provided housing.
5. You received TDY orders, temporary change of station orders, or state active-duty orders to an area 35 miles or more from the location of the rental, so long as the orders are for a period of 90 days or more, or
6. You leased the property, but before you took possession, you received change of station orders to an area that is 35 miles or more from the rental location.

The Washington State Attorney General's Office has a [Manufactured Housing Dispute Resolution Program](#) you can contact if you have issues with your landlord. You can learn more at <https://www.atg.wa.gov/manufactured-housing-dispute-resolution-program>. Washington Law Help also has [information about your rights under the MHLTA](#).²⁷

²⁶

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/deployment/pre-deployment/military-clause-terminate-your-lease-due-to-deployment-or-pcs/>

²⁷ <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/tenants-rights-manufactured-mobile-home-landlord-tenant-act>

Is there government assistance available to help me buy a home?

Yes. Both the state and federal government have programs available to help active duty, National Guard, and reserve service members purchase homes.

Washington State Downpayment Assistance Program

The Washington State Housing Finance Commission has a downpayment assistance program for first-time homebuyers ([RCW 43.180.250](#)).

- You may be eligible if you are a member or former member of the Washington National Guard or reserve.
- You may also be eligible if you meet the state's definition of veteran.
- The program is also available for never-remarried spouses and dependent children of deceased veterans who met the state definition of veteran.
- There are income limits that may be different depending on the county you are in.

The program works with other programs provided by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. More information about the Downpayment Assistance Program is available from the [Washington State Housing Finance Commission](#).²⁸

Federal VA Home Loan

The federal VA home loan program can help you buy, fix, build, or refinance a home. The [VA Home Loan website](#)²⁹ has lots of information.

- The program does not require a downpayment or Private Mortgage Insurance.
- It has low interest rates and closing costs.
- You can use the VA home loan program multiple times.
- Active-duty service members who receive a Purple Heart or who have a proposed or memorandum pre-discharge rating for VA disability compensation are exempt from paying the funding fee. Certain veterans are also exempt.

The VA home loan is available for active-duty service members with at least 90 continuous days on active duty. It is also available for National Guard and reserve members who meet eligibility requirements, which vary depending on when and how

²⁸ <https://heretohome.org/downpayment-assistance/>

²⁹ <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/>

long you served. You can look at your length of service requirements and other eligibility criteria on the [VA's Home Loan eligibility webpage](#).³⁰

³⁰ <http://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/eligibility>

Part 6: Family Law Protections

If you are involved in a family law case (like setting a parenting plan or child custody) and are serving in the military, you have special protections.

I'm involved in a family law case. Are there any special protections in Washington law?

Yes. Under Washington law, members of the military have special protections in family law cases. These protections are in two areas: changing hearing dates to fit better with your military service and making sure that modifications of parenting plans consider the effects of military service.

Hearings

When your military service will interfere with a scheduled family law hearing, under Washington state law ([RCW 26.09.010](#)) you can request:

1. An expedited (*faster*) hearing.
2. Electronic testimony and presentation of evidence (by phone, teleconference, or video conferencing).

Courts usually require you to show that your military duties materially (*actually*) affect your ability, or likely ability, to appear in person at a hearing.

Parenting Plan Protections

Washington law ([RCW 26.09.260](#)) also has special protections for modifications of parenting plans when a parent is serving in the military.

- Permanent changes to parenting plans may only occur when there is a substantial change in the circumstances of the child **or** the parent who did *not* ask for the modification (the non-moving party). Courts may *not* consider military service, by itself, a “substantial change of circumstances” that would justify permanently changing a parenting plan.
- If the non-primary parent chooses to not use their residential time with their child for one year or longer, the court can change the parenting plan. However, the court *may not* count any periods during which a parent’s military duties may have impacted their ability to carry out parenting functions.
- If you are the primary parent in a parenting plan and your military orders require you to move far away or would otherwise affect your ability to exercise parenting functions, you may ask the court to delegate some or all of your residential time

or visitation rights to a family member, including a stepparent or someone else who is close to your child for the period you are away.

- If you are the primary parent in a parenting plan and you must move far away temporarily due to your military service or otherwise can't carry out your parenting responsibilities due to military service, any temporary custody orders entered must end no later than 10 days after you give notice to the temporary custodian. There are narrow exceptions to this in the law. The court cannot consider this temporary change in circumstances when considering a motion to transfer residential placement.

Although not specific to Washington, Military OneSource has information about [considerations for custody \(parenting plans\) for military families](https://www.militaryonesource.com/relationships/separation-divorce/child-custody-considerations-for-military-families/).³¹

³¹

<https://www.militaryonesource.com/relationships/separation-divorce/child-custody-considerations-for-military-families/>

Part 7: Higher Education Benefits and Protections

Can I, or one of my family members, get in-state tuition while I'm serving in the military in Washington?

Yes. Washington offers in-state tuition to service members and their dependents, including children and spouses. The law is available at [RCW 28B.15.012](#).

In-state (*resident*) tuition is available for service members who are:

- Active-duty service members stationed in Washington.
- Members of the Washington National Guard.
- Active-duty service members or members of the Washington National Guard who entered service as a Washington resident **and** maintain a Washington domicile (*legal residency*), but are stationed out-of-state.
- Active-duty service members stationed out of state who were admitted to a Washington institution of higher education (like a college, university, or community college) and remain continuously enrolled at the institution.
- Active-duty service members who are stationed out of state after being stationed in Washington and enroll at a Washington institution within 3 years of their military reassignment.
- Active-duty service members who live in Washington but are stationed in an Oregon county that borders Washington.

In-state tuition is also available for spouses, state registered domestic partners, and military dependents (broadly defined by 10 USC 1072(2)) of:

- Active-duty members stationed in Washington or National Guard members, regardless of duty status.
 - The student does not have to live in Washington to receive in-state tuition.
 - If the service member is stationed out-of-state, the student is eligible for in-state tuition so long as they enrolled in a Washington institution before the service member was reassigned out of state and stay continuously enrolled or enroll in a Washington institution within three years of the date of the reassignment out-of-state.
- Active-duty service members or Washington National Guard members stationed out-of-state who entered service as a Washington resident and maintain their Washington domicile. The student does not need to live in Washington.

- The spouse or dependent of a service member who lives in Washington but is stationed in an Oregon county that borders Washington.

The Washington State Achievement Council has more information about [student residency requirements in Washington](#).³²

Can I get a tuition waiver while serving in the military? What about my family members?

Possibly. Washington state allows community colleges, colleges, and universities to waive all, or some, tuition and fees for eligible service members, as well as veterans. There is also a waiver program for eligible dependents. Your eligibility will depend on your service or your family member's service.

If you have already separated from the military: Veteran tuition waivers are discussed in detail in our guide [Your Rights as a Veteran in Washington](#) in Part 7.

Service Member Waiver

Schools (including state and regional universities, Evergreen State College, and community and technical colleges) can waive all or some tuition and fees for an “eligible” service member or veteran domiciled in Washington. You can read the law at [RCW 28B.15.621](#).

You must also meet **both** criteria:

- You served as an active or reserve member of the U.S. military, or as a National Guard member called to active duty who served in active federal service under either Title 10 or Title 32, and
- You served in a war or conflict on foreign soil or in international waters *or* somewhere else supporting those who did.
 - Schools *may*, but don't have to, waive tuition and fees for National Guard members and veterans who don't meet this requirement.

Every school has its own process to apply for the tuition waiver, so you will have to reach out separately. The school's veteran student center or financial aid office is often the best place to start.

Dependent Tuition Waiver

³² <https://wsac.wa.gov/student-residency>

Washington requires schools to waive tuition for eligible undergraduate dependents of National Guard members and veterans. You can read the law at [RCW 28B.15.621](#).

- Dependents include children, spouses or domestic partners, surviving spouses or domestic partners, and surviving children of a deceased National Guard member or veteran.
- The state encourages, but doesn't require, tuition waivers for graduate students.
- The waiver covers up to 200 quarter credits or the equivalent semester credits.

You are eligible if you are a dependent of a National Guard member or veteran and live in Washington, and the veteran or service member:

- Became totally disabled due to their active, federal military or naval service, or
- Is missing in action or is a prisoner of war, or
- Died due to serving in active federal military or naval service.

The law has other requirements. If you want more information about the state tuition waiver for service members **or** dependents, visit the [WDVA's Tuition Waiver webpage](#).³³

What happens if I am ordered to active duty while I'm attending school?

You are protected under state law ([RCW 28B.10.270](#)) if you are in the National Guard or another reserve component and are a student at an institute of higher education. If you are ordered to active duty for more than 30 days, you can:

1. Withdraw from one or more courses without a negative mark on your record. Your tuition and fees will be credited to your account.
2. Receive an "incomplete" and complete the course after you complete active-duty service.
3. Complete the course for full credit. Your absences due to military service will be counted as excused. They can't negatively affect your grade or class standing.

If you are ordered to active duty for less than 30 days, you can make up any class, test, exam, lab, or any other event that an evaluation or grade is based on. The makeup opportunity must be scheduled after you return, and you must have a "reasonable" time to prepare.

33

<https://www.dva.wa.gov/veterans-their-families/veterans-benefits/education-and-training/washington-tuition-waiver>

Part 8: Spouse and Family Benefits and Protections

I am a military spouse and have an occupational license from another state. Can I practice in Washington?

Probably, but there are requirements you must meet. Transferring licenses between states can be complicated because of how many licenses are available, and the many different Washington state agencies that oversee licensing. You should contact the state agency that oversees your occupational license for direction. [CareerOneStop](#)³⁴ has a [list of all of the occupations in Washington and the agency that oversees licensing](#).³⁵ You may be able to get reimbursed for costs of relicensing and recertification by your spouse's branch.

There are a few ways you can transfer or use a license from another state in Washington.

- **SCRA License Portability:** The SCRA allows you to transfer out of state business and professional licenses to the state you are moving to (including Washington) when you or a spouse are relocating due to military orders. This is known as license portability.
 - There are requirements that you must meet, like that you have used your license in the last two years and that the license is in good standing.
 - Military OneSource's Spouse Education and Career Opportunities site has [lots of information about federal license portability](#).³⁶
- **Interstate Compacts:** Interstate compacts are agreements between states that allow anyone with a license to work in the states that participate in the agreement.
 - If your profession has an interstate compact, the SCRA requires that to be used instead of portability under the SCRA.
 - Military OneSource has a lot of information about [license portability and interstate compacts](#).³⁷

³⁴ <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

³⁵ <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-licenses.aspx?&location=WA>

³⁶ <https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil/portal/article/federal-license-portability-provision>

³⁷ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/transferring-your-professional-license/>

Worksource has a [list of the different Washington state agencies and their license and credentialing webpages](#).³⁸ Most of these webpages have specific information about license portability, interstate compacts, and contact information for questions.

Can I take leave from my job to spend time with my family member in the military?

Probably, although there are legal requirements you must meet. Military families have special leave protections under both federal and state law. Both have legal requirements that you must meet, so not everyone is eligible.

Federal

The federal [Family and Medical Leave Act](#)³⁹ (FMLA) includes two types of leave for military families: qualifying exigency leave, and military caregiver leave.

To qualify for FMLA leave, you must **work for a covered employer and be an eligible employee.**

Covered Employer Covered employers include:

- Private-sector employers who employ 50 or more employees in 20 or more workweeks in this calendar year or the last calendar year.
- Public agencies (federal state, or local government employers), no matter how many employees the agency has.
- Local educational agencies (public school boards, public elementary and secondary schools, and private elementary and secondary schools), no matter how many employees the educational agency has.

Eligible Employee To be eligible, you must:

1. Have worked for your employer for at least 12 months;
2. Have at least 1,250 hours of service with your employer in the 12 months before you take leave; and
3. Work at a location where your employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of your worksite.

There are two types of FMLA leave for military family members:

³⁸

<https://www.worksourcewa.com/microsite/Content.aspx?appid=MGSWAVET&pageType=simple&seo=credentiallicenses>

³⁹ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla>

Qualifying Exigency Leave

If your spouse, parent, or child of any age is a military service member who is deployed or has been notified of an upcoming deployment to a foreign country, you may be able to take up to 12 weeks of “qualifying exigency leave.”

- If your family member is in the National Guard or reserves, they may also be under a call to order to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

You can take qualifying exigency leave to handle many different aspects of a deployment. These may include:

- Making different daycare or schooling arrangements for the service member’s child or providing childcare on an immediate, urgent basis while finding other options.
- Arranging care for the service member’s parent who the service member is caring for, transferring the parent to a new nursing home or other care facility, or attending meetings with staff at the care facility.
- Making or updating financial or legal arrangements to address the military member’s absence. For example, you may make or update new powers of attorney documents, obtain military ID cards, or ensure you have access to accounts you will need while the service member is deployed.
- Spending time with the service member while they are on rest and recuperation (R&R) leave during deployment. You can take up to 15 days of leave for this reason.
- Post-deployment activities, like arrival ceremonies, briefings, or other programs. You may also take qualifying exigency leave to make arrangements if the service member passes away while serving.

The U.S. Department of Labor has a [detailed fact sheet about Qualifying Exigency Leave](#).⁴⁰ It includes details about what information you must provide to your employer while you are taking this leave.

Military Caregiver Leave

If you are the spouse, parent, child of any age, or next-of kin of a covered service member, you may be entitled to military caregiver leave. Military caregiver leave allows up to a total of **26 workweeks of unpaid leave during a single 12-month period** to take care of your covered service member or veteran who has a qualifying serious injury or illness.

Covered service members are current service members who are:

⁴⁰

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/28mc-fmla-exigency-leave#:~:text=QUALIFYING%20EXIGENCY%20LEAVE%20ENTITLEMENTS,order%20to%20covered%20active%20duty>

1. Receiving medical treatment, recuperation, therapy, or
2. In outpatient status, or
3. On the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness.

Covered veterans are those who:

1. Are undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a serious injury or illness, and
2. Were discharged from the military within the five-year period before you begin using FMLA military leave, and
3. Have a discharge or release under conditions other than dishonorable.

The U.S. Department of Labor has a [fact sheet about Military Caregiver Leave](#)⁴¹ with more information, including information about proof you will need to provide to your employer to take this leave.

Leave taken under FMLA is protected under the law. Employers cannot interfere with, restrain you from using, or deny you your FMLA rights. The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division is responsible for administering and enforcing the FMLA for most employees.

The Wage and Hour Division [FMLA webpage](#)⁴² has lots of information, as well as forms and guides for employers and employees. If you believe your FMLA rights are violated, you can make a complaint to the U.S. Department of Labor at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/contact/complaints>.

State

Washington provides several additional leave options for military families.

Military Family Leave Act

Washington's Military Family Leave Act ([RCW 49.77](#)) is different from federal military family leave. It supports military families and ensures they can spend time together before deployment and during a service member's leave from deployment.

If you are the spouse of a military service member, you can take up to 15 days of unpaid leave from work when your spouse is deployed or called up to active duty during a period of military conflict. You can split up the 15 days, but you must use the leave before the deployment starts or when your spouse is on leave during the deployment.

⁴¹ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/28ma-fmla-servicemember-caregiver>

⁴² <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla>

You must tell your employer within five business days of receiving official notice that your spouse will be deployed, go on active duty, or is on leave from deployment. You must also work, on average, 20 or more hours per week to be eligible for leave under the law. If you are taking both federal and state leave, employers can count both leave concurrently (at the same time). This means you can only take 15 days total.

The Washington Department of Labor and Industries has [more information about military family leave on its website](#).⁴³ If you believe your employer has violated your Military Family Leave Act rights, you can file a complaint at <https://lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/workplace-complaints/protected-leave-complaints>.

Paid Family & Medical Leave

You may also be eligible to take Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML). PFML is a state program managed by the Employment Security Department (ESD) that replaces up to 90% of your weekly income so that you can take leave when you need to.

The PFML program allows you to spend time with a family member who is about to deploy or who is returning from a deployment. You can take leave for the same reasons as qualifying exigency leave under the FMLA. You can also take PFML leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition (including a service member).

The ESD has a [helpful infographic describing the benefits of the PFML program for military families](#).⁴⁴ The [PFML website](#)⁴⁵ has lots of helpful information about the program generally, including the requirements under the law. You can read the full PFML law at [RCW 50A](#).

Military Leave for Public Employees

Washington law ([RCW 38.40.060](#)) also provides up to 21 days of paid leave during a one-year period for public employees to report to required military duty, training, or drills. The leave is for any member of the Washington National Guard, reservists, and active military service members.

- If a shift starts on one calendar day and ends on the next calendar day, it is only counted as one day of leave.
- The one-year period aligns with the federal fiscal year (from October 1st to the following September 30th).

⁴³ <https://lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/leave/leave-for-military-spouses-and-certain-emergency-personnel>

⁴⁴ <https://paidleave.wa.gov/app/uploads/2021/01/PFML-Military-infographic-flyer-250523-revised.pdf>

⁴⁵ <https://paidleave.wa.gov/>

What educational rights or protections are in place to support military children (dependents)?

Recognizing the challenges that frequent moves and deployment can cause, Washington tries hard to support the educational success of military children. The Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) has [information about how schools support military connected students](#),⁴⁶ including:

- Participating in the [Interstate Compact for Military Children](#)⁴⁷ (the full compact is available at [RCW 28a.705.010](#)). This compact makes it easier for kids to change schools between states and covers things like how educational records will be handled, placement and enrollment in courses and grade levels, and graduation exit exams.
- Resources for parents and students, like how to [contact the Military OneSource educational consultants](#)⁴⁸ and services and information provided or funded by nonprofits, the Department of Defense, and military branches.
- Resources for parents of students with special needs, like information about the [DoD Exceptional Family Member Program](#)⁴⁹ and [Special Needs Consultants through Military OneSource](#).⁵⁰ OSPI also has [more information about special education in Washington](#)⁵¹ on their website.

Washington also has the [HearMeWA](#) program, a free youth-centered crisis-response program that meets youth safety and well-being needs by linking them to existing support systems. This program is available statewide and provides support to youth 24/7/365. It offers an app, text, chat, website, and phone line, and serves youth up to the age of 25, including military dependents. More information is available at [HearMeWA.org](#).

Will my Washington driver license expire while I'm serving in the military? What about my spouse's license?

⁴⁶ [information about how schools support military connected students](#)

⁴⁷

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/military-connected-students/interstate-compact-military-children>

⁴⁸ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/education-consultation/>

⁴⁹

<https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/?looking-for-a=program/program-service=16/focus=program>

⁵⁰ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/special-needs-consultations/>

⁵¹ <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/special-education>

No. State law says that driver licenses of active-duty military service members and their dependents stay valid throughout the term of military active-duty service. However, you will need to get a Department of Licensing authorization card. This is evidence that your license is valid through your term of military service and 90 days after discharge. This card is available to:

- Armed forces members on active duty,
- National Guard and reservists called to active duty for 180 days or more, and
- Spouse, domestic partner, and dependents who have the same residence as the person on active duty.

It's important to carry your license, the DOL authorization card (*especially* if your license says that it's expired), as well as your military ID (or military dependent ID).

This does *not* apply to commercial driver licenses (CDL). **If your CDL is expired, you must renew it.**

The [Department of Licensing has more information](#),⁵² including information about how to add a motorcycle endorsement to your license and how to get replacement licenses while out of state.

⁵²

<https://dol.wa.gov/license-and-registration-rules-military-personnel-and-veterans/driver-license-designations-military-personnel-and-veterans>