

The Department of Defense (DOD) Priority Placement Program (PPP), the most effective Federal civilian career transition assistance program, is an automated registration and referral system that matches eligible participants with DOD job vacancies. Originally designed for employees being separated by reduction-in-force, the PPP also provides placement assistance to other transitioning civilians, including military spouses who are relocating with their sponsors.

Public Law 99-145, enacted in 1986 and codified at 10 USC 1784, requires the Secretary of Defense to prescribe regulations that provide employment preference for spouses of active duty military members. Soon after the law was signed, it became apparent that the Department needed a reliable and systematic process for spouses to exercise this preference. This led to implementation of the Military Spouse Preference Program (Program S) sub-program of the PPP in 1989.

WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTERING IN PROGRAM S?

The most fundamental requirement is marriage to an active duty member of the U.S. armed forces. In addition:

- The marriage must have occurred prior to your sponsor's reporting date to her/his new permanent duty station (PDS)¹;
- You must accompany your sponsor on a permanent change of station (PCS) move to the new PDS;
- You must provide a copy of your sponsor's orders and other documentation required by the registering human resources office (HRO); and
- You must meet all pre-employment criteria and be eligible for immediate noncompetitive appointment to a position in the competitive service.

HOW DO I EXERCISE PREFERENCE THROUGH PROGRAM S?

When you register in Program S and are referred for a job vacancy, your preference applies if you are rated among the "best-qualified" candidates for the position according to the recruiting agency's established competitive criteria. This means that a preference eligible military spouse who is rated best-qualified blocks the selection of other competitive candidates. However, in cases where veterans preference applies, candidates with veterans preference cannot be passed over to select best-qualified military spouses. Since spouse preference is not applicable to positions that are being filled through non-competitive procedures, Program S is also not applicable in those situations.

Spouse preference may be used only once for each PCS move and it only applies to positions in the commuting area of your sponsor's PDS. Spouse preference and Program S eligibility terminate for the area of your sponsor's current PDS if you:

- Accept or decline permanent Federal² employment with a fixed full-time or part-time³ work schedule in the commuting area of your sponsor's PDS;

¹ If you are claiming appointment eligibility under Executive Order 13473, which is codified at part 315.612 of title 5 Code of Federal Regulations, the marriage must have occurred before the date of your sponsor's orders.

² Employment in non-appropriated fund positions and positions in the military exchange services is considered Federal employment for the purpose of military spouse preference.

³ When you register in Program S, you will have the option to eliminate yourself from consideration for part-time employment.

- Lose your spousal status due to divorce, death of your sponsor, or your sponsor's retirement or separation from active duty; or
- No longer meet the requirements for noncompetitive appointment eligibility.

DOES PROGRAM S APPLY TO ALL DOD JOB VACANCIES?

No. Even though military spouse preference itself applies to most DOD positions worldwide, the one-stop registration and referral system known as Program S only applies to competitive service positions in the U.S. and its territories and possessions. It does not apply to foreign areas, to non-appropriated fund (NAF) organizations, or to positions in the excepted service. Even some of the competitive service positions in the U.S. are exempt, including:

- Positions filled through competitive examining by the Office of Personnel Management, or under competitive hiring authority delegated to the Department of Defense; and
- Positions filled through career programs of a DOD Component (e.g., Air Force, Army, etc.).

In these cases, you must submit applications for individual job vacancies and be rated among the best-qualified candidates.

WHAT TYPES OF POSITIONS CAN I REGISTER FOR?

A human resources specialist will guide you through the registration process and help you make that decision. The following guidelines will govern your registration choices:

- You must meet all established Federal & DOD qualification requirements.
- You may include any or all DOD installations/organizations within the commuting area of your sponsor's new PDS.
- You may register for the highest grade for which you are determined to be basically qualified. However, if you've held a civilian position in a Federal agency, you may be limited to the highest grade you've held on a permanent basis. All eligible spouses have the option to register for positions down to the lowest grade they are willing to accept.
- You may register for time-limited employment, as well as permanent employment with less than a full-time work schedule (i.e., intermittent, seasonal or NAF "flexible" schedules). However, acceptance or declination of these types of job offers does not terminate your eligibility.

AM I REQUIRED TO REGISTER AT THE CIVILIAN HRO AT MY SPONSOR'S PDS?

No, you may register at any full-service DOD HRO in the commuting area of your sponsor's PDS.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

In most cases when you are referred for positions through Program S, you will be instructed by an HRO to submit an application, which usually takes the form of an assessment questionnaire. This process is necessary in order for the HRO to determine if you rank among the best-qualified candidates for the position. The evaluation factors used to rank you are the same factors that apply to all of the competitive candidates. If you do not submit an application, you will not be considered for the position.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

The PPP is too complex to adequately explain in such an abbreviated format. This fact sheet only provides an overview of the program's basic policies and procedures. For more details, contact your supporting HRO. You can also find detailed information on the DCPAS Public website at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/Subpage/Library/> or the CAC-enabled DODHRInfo website at <https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Staffing-and-Civilian-Transition-Programs/Priority-Placement-Program/Pages/Home1.aspx>.