



Advantage Florida

Military Benefits Guide 2024|25

A Summary of Sunshine State Laws, Policies, Programs and Benefits for Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers, Veterans, Retirees and Families



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Letter From the Governor
5	Protections
15	Licenses, Registrations, Fees and Other Benefits
23	Professional Licensure Portability
33	Tax and Financial Benefits
37	Unemployment Compensation and Employment Protection/Assistance
43	Education
51	Family Support
56	SPOTLIGHT Florida Virtual School

All Florida statutes referenced in this guide may be viewed at: www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes

s. 250.01(19), F.S.: “ ‘Servicemember’ means any person serving as a member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces.” NOTE: Statutes, benefits and programs apply to all categories: active duty, National Guard and Reserve unless designated/restricted to only components shown in parentheses.

NG = National Guard R = Reserve

Important note: The Florida Defense Support Commission has transitioned to a new website domain. To view the website version of this guide, please visit the FloridaCommerce website at www.floridajobs.org and select the “Office of Military and Defense” icon.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR



As a veteran myself, I am grateful to showcase Florida's longstanding support to our servicemembers, veterans, and their families. We prioritize our military families and veterans because we are thankful for the incredible sacrifices they have made for our state and our nation; second, because we know our military helps make Florida the outstanding place we know and love. Florida is home to nearly 65,000 active duty servicemembers and more than 1.4 million veterans. These men and women contribute

to a defense industry that supports over 860,000 jobs and generated \$102.6 billion in economic impact in one year.

The information in this Benefits Guide details the many laws, programs, and benefits that the state of Florida has implemented to support and assist our valued military servicemembers, veterans, and their families. While the list is extensive, our state organizations, such as FloridaCommerce, are working to make sure that Florida remains the most military and veteran-friendly state in the nation.

Please share this guide with your fellow servicemembers and families so that these services can reach as many eligible individuals as possible. Florida honors your service and appreciates the sacrifices you and your family have made to defend our freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron DeSantis'.

Governor Ron DeSantis

“

**WE SUPPORT OUR MILITARY
BECAUSE THEY SUPPORT US**

- Governor Ron DeSantis

”



For items in this section, you may also refer to the Office of the State Attorney General's Military Consumer Protection Guide 2021 at: www.myfloridalegal.com/consumer-protection

1. Protection Against Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices

Provides military servicemembers and their families members the same heightened protections afforded to senior citizens and persons with disabilities against deceptive or unfair trade practices and penalizes a person who willfully victimizes a military servicemember or family member.

(s. 501.2077, F.S.)

2. Protection Against Unfair Motor Vehicle Insurance Practices

Protects active military servicemembers and their covered dependents from unfair practices in motor vehicle insurance. These unfair practices include:

- An insurer charging an increased premium for a policy that was canceled or suspended by the insured solely for the reason of being transferred out of state due to active duty, National Guard, or Reserve service.
- An insurer charging an increased premium for a new policy if the applicant or their covered dependents were previously insured with a different insurer and canceled that policy solely for the reason of being transferred out of state due to active duty, National Guard, or Reserve service.

(s. 626.9541 (1)(cc), F.S.)

3. Protection Against Cancellation of Health Insurance

Any health insurance policy, certificate, or evidence of health coverage which provides coverage to a member of the Florida National Guard, or a member of any branch of the United States military reserves who is a resident of this state, called to active duty or state active duty, must continue all coverages that were in effect for the person, or the person's dependents covered by the same policy, at the premium in effect for all insured under the same contract, unless the employee or insured requests coverage changes that might alter the premium he or she was paying prior to such activation during the time he or she serves on active duty.

Additionally, it must reinstate the coverage for any such person who elects not to continue it while on active duty or state active duty, at the person's request upon return from active duty or state active duty, without a waiting period or disqualification for any condition that existed at the time he or she was called to active duty or state active duty. Such reinstatement must be requested within 30 days after returning to work with the same employer or within 60 days if the policy is an individual policy.

(s. 250.341, F.S.)



4. Protection for Termination of Rental Agreements

Under the following provisions, pursuant to **s. 250, F.S.** servicemembers who terminate residential leases due to military duty will be protected under the following specific provisions:

- **No Retaliation.** No landlord may sue or otherwise attempt to retaliate against a tenant who terminated a lease because of military duties.
- **No Discrimination.** Landlords may not discriminate against military personnel. Discrimination on the basis of military status creates a cause of action against the landlord for civil damages.

Criteria which allow a Servicemember to Terminate a Lease. Servicemembers may terminate their leases within the purview of the statute when the servicemember:

- Is required by military orders to move 35 or more miles from the rental premises.
- Is prematurely or involuntarily discharged or released from active duty or state active duty.
- Is released from active duty or state active duty after having leased the rental premises while on active duty or state active duty status and the rental premises is 35 miles or more from the servicemember's home of record prior to entering active duty or state active duty.
- Is required by military orders to move into government quarters or becomes eligible to live in government quarters and chooses to do so.
- Receives temporary military orders to an area 35 miles or more from the location of the rental premises for a period exceeding 60 days. (**s. 83.682, F.S.**)

5. Telecommunications Service Termination

Servicemembers may terminate their telecommunications (i.e., cell phone) service contracts by providing 30 days' notice to the service provider if any of the following occur:

- The servicemember moves, either permanently or on temporary duty for over 60 days, outside the area which the service provider provides telecommunications service.
- The servicemember is discharged or released from duty and either returns to an area not serviced by the telecommunications service provider or the servicemember's home of record is not serviced by the provider.
- The servicemember's orders require a move outside the continental United States.

Upon such termination the servicemember is only liable for the amount due under the contract for the period up to the effective date (which is the end of the 30-day notice period). (**s. 364.195, F.S.**)



6. **Protection for Termination of Retail Installment Contract for Leasing a Motor Vehicle by a Servicemember**

Servicemembers may terminate motor vehicle leases by providing 30 days written notice to the lessor if either the servicemember is required to move outside the continental United States or the servicemember receives orders for a period exceeding 60 days for duty outside the continental United States or for a temporary change of station. The servicemember is then liable for only the amount due under the contract to the end of the 30-day notice period. The lessee is not liable for any other fee due to the early termination of the contract. Further, the protection may not be waived or modified by the contract between the servicemember and the lessor under any circumstances. (s. 520.14, F.S.)

7. **Protection for Termination of Mobile Home and Vehicle Registration**

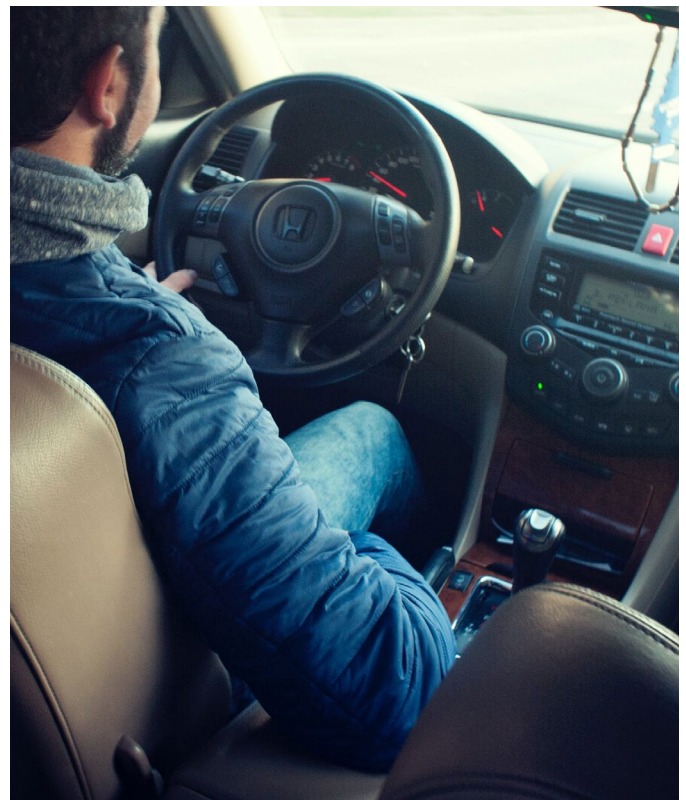
Any servicemember, whose mobile home registration expired while he or she was serving on active duty or state active duty, shall not be charged with a violation of Florida law if, at the time of the offense, the servicemember was serving on active duty or state active duty 35 miles or more from the mobile home. The servicemember must present to the department either a copy of the official military orders or a written verification signed by the servicemember's commanding officer to receive a waiver of charges. (s. 320.07, F.S.)

8. **Protection for Cancellation of Motor Vehicle Insurance**

An Insurer must refund 100% of the unearned premium if an insured servicemember cancels due to either a call to active duty or transfer to a location where the insurance is not required. Cancellation is without prejudice to any claim originating prior to the effective date of the cancellation. For purposes of this section, unearned premiums must be computed on a pro rata basis. (s. 627.7283, F.S.)

9. **Relief for Payment of Initial Binder – Motor Vehicle Insurance**

Servicemembers, former military personnel, and their dependents are not required to pay two month's premium on motor vehicle insurance normally required of citizens of Florida upon initial issuance of insurance. (s. 627.7295, F.S.)



10. Protection for Termination to Purchase Real Property

Servicemembers may terminate agreements to purchase realty prior to closing if any of the following occur:

- The servicemember has a permanent change of station which is 35 or more miles from the location of the property.
- The servicemember is released from active duty and the property is more than 35 miles from the servicemember's home of record.
- The servicemember receives orders requiring him or her to move into government quarters or does, in fact, move into government quarters.
- The servicemember receives orders in excess of 90 days which involve a temporary change of station which is 35 miles or more from the property.

Upon termination of a contract under this protection, the seller, mortgagor and/or their agents must refund any funds provided by the servicemember within seven days. Further, no other fees may be assessed against the servicemember. These protections cannot be waived or modified. **(s. 689.27, F.S.)**

11. Protection for Sale, Foreclosure or Seizure of Property for Nonpayment

Servicemembers are protected against sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property for nonpayment of any sum due under any obligation, or for breach of the terms of such obligation. These are not valid if made during the period of state active duty or active duty or within 30 days thereafter, unless upon an order previously granted by the court and a return made to and approved by the court. This protection applies only to obligations secured by a mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage upon real or personal property owned by a person in state active duty or active duty at the commencement of the period of state active service and still owed by her or him, which obligation originated prior to such person's period of state active service. **(s. 250.5205, F.S.)**



12. Protection of Late Voting Registration

Provides for deployed servicemembers to be allowed late registration for voting. An individual or accompanying family member who has been discharged or separated from the uniformed services or the United States Merchant Marine, has returned from a military deployment or activation, or has separated from employment outside the territorial limits of the United States, after the book-closing date for an election pursuant to F.S. 97.055 and who is otherwise qualified may register to vote in such election until 5 p.m. on the Friday before that election. [\(s. 97.0555, F.S.\)](#)

13. Protection for Absentee Voting

Authorizes absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters to use the federal write-in absentee ballot in any state or local election and prohibits the supervisor of elections from canvassing federal write-in absentee ballots from overseas voters in certain elections until 10 days after the date of the election. If the elector's official vote-by-mail ballot is received by 7 p.m. on election day, or, for an overseas voter in a presidential preference primary or general election, no later than 10 days after the date of the election, the federal write-in absentee ballot is invalid and the official vote-by-mail ballot shall be canvassed. [\(s. 101.6952, F.S.\)](#)

14. Public Records/Department of Military Affairs

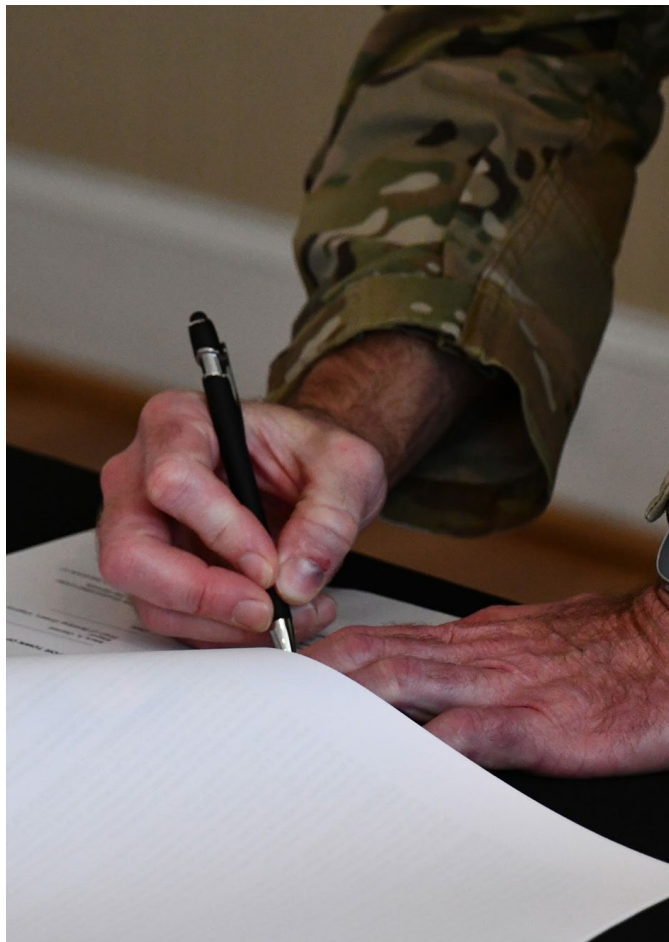
Provides exemption from public records requirements for information held by Department of Military Affairs stored in United States Department of Defense system of records, transmitted using United States Department of Defense network or communications device, or pertaining to United States Department of Defense. Additionally provides that certain information may be disclosed only in accordance with federal and state law. [\(s. 119.0712, F.S.\)](#)

15. Protection of Military Housing from Ad Valorem Taxation

Florida law provides an exemption from ad valorem taxation for property owned by the United States. This exemption specifically applies to leasehold interests in property owned by the United States government when the lessee serves or performs a governmental, municipal or public purpose or function and leaseholds and improvements constructed are used to provide housing pursuant to the federal Military Housing Privatization Initiative (Housing Initiative) on land owned by the federal government. Federal law also recognizes the immunity of property of the United States from ad valorem taxation. [\(s. 196.199, F.S.\)](#)

16. **Protection of Community Planning and Liaison Officers (CPLOs) and Representatives of Military Installations Serving on Local Planning or Zoning Boards**

Provides for open exchange of information between local governments and military installations. To facilitate this exchange, a representative of a military installation shall be included as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the local government's land planning or zoning board and is not required to file a statement of financial interest solely due to his/her service on board. (s. 163.3175, F.S.)



17. **Protection Against Predatory Lenders**

This law authorizes the Office of Financial Regulation to deny a license or take disciplinary action against a person who violates the federal Military Lending Act (MLA). The MLA provides greater consumer protections for servicemembers and their family members in connection with a broad range of consumer credit transactions including consumer finance loans, payday loans, title loans, overdraft lines of credit, smaller dollar loans and credit card accounts. (s. 516.07, F.S.)

18. **Protection to Expedite Processing of Rental Agreements**

Provides that a landlord, a condominium association, a cooperative association or a home owner's association is required to process a rental application from a military servicemember within seven days of submission, and the landlord must provide to the servicemember a response in writing of the approval or denial of their application and, if denied, the reason for denial must be issued within seven days of the application. Should the landlord not provide a timely denial of the rental application, the landlord must lease the rental unit to the servicemember if all other terms of the application and lease are met. (s. 83.683, F.S.)



19. Other General Protections

Unlawful Use of Uniforms, Medals, or Insignia:
It is considered fraudulent for any person to misrepresent themselves as a member or veteran of the United States Armed Services while soliciting for charitable contributions or for the purpose of material gain.

(s. 817.312, F.S.)

The Florida Veterans Protection Act and the White Collar Crime Victim Protection Act: Provides an enhanced sentence for any person who commits aggravated white collar crimes against a certain number of veterans by obtaining or attempting to obtain a specified amount of money.

(s. 775.0844, F.S.)

20. United States Space Force Recognition

With comprehensive changes made throughout Florida's statutory code, Florida has added "Space Force" to the list of military services in each law in which they are enumerated and added Space Force Guardians to the list of military servicemembers receiving protection or benefits in each law in which servicemembers and veterans are listed. Florida therefore explicitly extends each benefit and protection for servicemembers, veterans and their families listed in this guide to all Space Force Guardians, veterans and their family members.

(s. 205.01, F.S.)

21. Concealed Weapons or Firearms Licenses

Florida concealed weapon or firearm license applications submitted by active military members and veterans are expedited. Current servicemembers and honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces can be issued concealed weapon or firearm licenses even if they are not 21 years of age, the usual minimum age eligibility requirement, provided that they are otherwise eligible for licensure. (s. 790.062, F.S.)

Current servicemembers and military veterans can meet the firearms training/competency requirement for the issuance of a concealed weapon or firearm license if they include proper documentation with their applications reflecting active duty status or honorable discharge from military service. Additionally, servicemembers with concealed weapon or firearm licenses who are serving on military orders over 35 miles away from their residence are granted an extension of the normal expiration date of their licenses. In such circumstances, a servicemember's license will not expire, and late fees for renewals will be waived, for 180 days after the date upon which the servicemember returns from serving on military orders. (s. 790.06, F.S.)





22. Discounts at State Parks

The Florida Park Service offers the Annual Entrance Pass at a discount or free of charge to persons who present satisfactory written documentation which demonstrates their eligibility.

- 25% discount on annual entrance passes for active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard.
- Free lifetime military entrance passes for honorably discharged United States veterans who have service-connected disabilities.
- Free lifetime military entrance passes for surviving spouses and parents of deceased members of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard who have fallen in combat. ([s. 258.0145, F.S.](#))

For more information on discounts, visit: www.floridastateparks.org/fees

23. Discounts at County Parks

County parks and recreation departments provide partial or a full discount on park entrance fees to military members, veterans, and the spouse and parents of certain deceased military members. Discounts are also provided to, law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics. ([s. 125.029, F.S.](#))

24. Discounts at State Forests

The Florida Forest Service offers discounts on campground and lodging fees to active duty or honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Force, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard. Proof of identification, military status, and honorable discharge (for retired military and veterans) are required.

- \$10 discount on Annual Entrance Passes for active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard.
- Free Lifetime Military Entrance Passes for honorably discharged United States veterans who have service-connected disabilities.

For more information visit:

[Fees on Florida Forest Service Managed Lands](#)



25. Specialty Motor Vehicle License Plates

Florida offers a variety of specialty motor vehicle license plates available for purchase to indicate an individual's association with a military service, honor, award, or specialty. These specialty motor vehicle license plates include identifications for Veterans of the United States Armed Forces; members of the National Guard; active or retired United States Armed Forces reservists; survivors of Pearl Harbor; former prisoners of war; Purple Heart medal recipients; recipients of the Bronze Star medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Combat Medical Badge, Combat Action Badge, Combat Action Ribbon, Air Force Combat Action Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross; Korean War Veterans; Vietnam War Veterans; Operation Desert Shield Veterans; Operation Desert Storm Veterans; Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans; Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans; Women Veterans; World War II Veterans; Navy Submariners; and Army of Occupation Veterans. These specialty license plate designs and other information on eligibility and fees for these specialty license plates and other military specialty license plates can be found through the [Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles \(www.flhsmv.gov\)](http://www.flhsmv.gov).

(s. 320, F.S.)

26. Military Residency for Recreational Fishing and Hunting Licenses

Any member of the United States Armed Forces who is stationed in the state and their family members residing with them are considered Florida residents for the purposes of purchasing recreational fishing and hunting licenses.

(s. 379.101(30)(b), F.S.)

27. Military Gold Sportsman's License

The Military Gold Sportsman's License is a low cost sportsman's license for active or retired members of the Armed Forces who are Florida residents. Any Florida resident who is an active or retired member of the United States Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, the Florida National Guard, the United States Coast Guard or the United States Coast Guard Reserve is eligible to purchase the Military Gold Sportsman's License at a reduced fee and with the same privileges as the standard Florida Gold Sportsman's License. Applicants must provide a current military identification card and military orders showing assigned duty station in Florida (active members) or a Florida Driver's License and a Retired U.S. Armed Forces ID card. The Military Gold Sportsman's License includes hunting, saltwater fishing and freshwater fishing licenses, and deer, wildlife management area, archery, muzzle-loading gun, crossbow, turkey and Florida waterfowl, snook and lobster permits. It does not include tarpon tags or the federal duck stamp. Military Gold Sportsman's Licenses can only be purchased at a County Tax Collector's Office.

(s. 379.354(4)(j), F.S.)

For more information visit: myfwc.com/license/recreational/military-gold/

Florida also offers a recreational hunting and fishing license exemption for any resident who is a member of the United States Armed Forces and not stationed in Florida, when home on leave for 30 days or less. (s. 379.353(2)(c), F.S.)

28. Operation Outdoor Freedom for Wounded Warriors

Operation Outdoor Freedom is an endeavor of the Florida Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that provides outdoor recreational opportunities to wounded veterans. Designated state and private forest and agricultural lands throughout Florida grant these veterans unique opportunities for recreation and rehabilitation. Participants must be a Florida resident and have a service-connected disability rating of 30% or greater, or be a Purple Heart recipient. For more information and to register for events, please visit:

[Operation Outdoor Freedom](#)

29. Use of Military ID in Public Lodging Establishments

Provides that a public lodging establishment classified as a hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast inn is required to waive any minimum age policy it may have that restricts accommodations for individuals who are currently on active duty as a member of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, Reserve Forces, or Coast Guard and who present a valid military identification card. [\(s. 509.095, F.S.\)](#)

30. Military ID Valid for Proof When Obtaining Florida Driver's License

This law provides for the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to accept a military personnel identification card as proof of a social security card number during the application process to acquire a driver license or identification card.

[\(s. 322.051, F.S.\)](#)

31. Motor Vehicle Driver's License Extensions

A member of the United States Armed Forces, his or her spouse, or a dependent residing with him or her, shall be granted an automatic extension for the expiration of his or her Class E license without reexamination while the member of the United States Armed Forces is serving on active duty outside this state. This extension is valid for 90 days after the member of the United States Armed Forces is either discharged or returns to this state to live. [\(s. 322.121\(5\), F.S.\)](#)



32. Motorcycle License Endorsement

The State of Florida will reciprocate any military motorcycle rider course to have the motorcycle endorsement added to a Florida driver's license. The state also offers various classes and challenge courses at in-state military bases.

[\(Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Rider Endorsements FAQ\)](#)

33. Military Commercial Driver's License

The State of Florida waives the requirement to pass the Commercial Driver License Skills Test for servicemembers and veterans if:

- The applicant has been honorably discharged from military service within one year of the application or the applicant is a veteran.
- The applicant is trained as an MOS 88M Army Motor Transport Operator or similar military job specialty.
- The applicant has received training to operate large trucks in compliance with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.
- The applicant has at least two years of experience in the military driving vehicles that would require a commercial driver license to operate.

Applicants must complete every other requirement for a CDL within one year of receiving a waiver under these provisions or the waiver is invalid.

[\(s. 322.57\(4\), F.S.\)](#)

34. Fishing and Hunting Events

Recreational fishing and hunting licenses are not required for permitted events which have the primary purpose of the rehabilitation or enjoyment of disabled veterans certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces to have a service-connected disability percentage rating of zero or higher or active duty or reserve duty servicemembers of any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the United States Coast Guard, military reserves, the Florida National Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve. A permit issued for an event pursuant to this paragraph shall exempt disabled veterans and active duty or reserve duty servicemembers, the immediate family of such disabled veterans and servicemembers, and one additional person designated to assist a disabled veteran, from possessing a hunting, freshwater fishing, or saltwater fishing license or permit for the duration of the event. The event organizer must apply for and receive an event permit from FWC.

[\(s. 379.353\(2\)\(q\), F.S.\)](#)



35. Exemption from Hunter Safety Skills Day

Military personnel are not exempt from the hunter education certification requirement. Gun safety is just one of the twelve subjects that are taught at the hunter safety courses. However, Florida residents in the U.S. Armed Service stationed outside of Florida are exempt from purchasing a license if they are home on leave for 30 days or less. Since they are exempt from purchasing a license, they are exempt from having to take the hunter safety course. When hunting, they need to carry their leave orders with them in case they are stopped by a law enforcement officer. However, once discharged or if they get stationed in Florida, they will have to take a hunter safety course in order to purchase a hunting license.

See specific Hunter Safety Certification requirements for military members at myfwc.com/license/recreational/hunter-safety-requirement/

36. Restricted Species (RS) Endorsement Exemptions – Disabled Military Veteran

Persons that qualify for the exemptions are not required to show the \$5,000 income requirement to be issued an RS Endorsement at the time of application. However, depending on exemption type you may have to re-qualify for the RS by using published qualification methods. If:

- You are a disabled resident military veteran who has been certified to be at least 10% service related disabled by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and who submits a copy of their discharge/disability documentation.**

- Re-qualifying sales must be valid sales to a licensed wholesale dealer in any 12 consecutive months in the previous 36 month period. Qualifying disabled resident veterans will only be required to document \$2,500 in qualifying landings or crew shares. **

See specific Restricted Species Endorsement requirements at: myfwc.com/license/commercial/saltwater/qualifying-for-rs/

37. Restricted Species (RS) Endorsement Exemptions – Honorably Discharged Military Veteran

Persons that qualify for the exemptions are not required to show the \$5,000 income requirement to be issued an RS Endorsement at the time of application. However, depending on exemption type, you may have to re-qualify for the RS by using published qualification methods. If:

- You are a resident veteran who has been honorably discharged from any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the Reserves, the Florida National Guard or the Coast Guard who submits a copy of their discharge documentation within 48 months of discharge. This exemption is allowed one time per military enlistment. **

See Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission requirements at myfwc.com/license/commercial/saltwater/qualifying-for-rs/

** Requires Requalification using one of the acceptable qualification methods and only applies to an Saltwater Products License issued to an individual.

38. Use Tax Exemption for Motor Vehicles Imported from a Foreign Country

Exempts an active servicemember, or spouse, from use tax on the registration or titling of a motor vehicle imported from a foreign country when the vehicle was purchased and used in a foreign country for six (6) months or longer before being imported into Florida and the vehicle is registered or titled in Florida for personal use by the active servicemember or their spouse.

(s. 212.08(7)(mmm), F.S.)





Florida Licensure Reciprocity

Florida is the nation's leader in providing licensure reciprocity for military spouses.

Professions

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation offers professional licensure to any individual that is currently serving, or has formerly served and received an honorable discharge, as an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, or a spouse or surviving spouse of such member; and currently holds a valid license for the corresponding profession in another state, the District of Columbia, any United States territory or possession, or a foreign jurisdiction. Applicants meeting these requirements will not be required to pass a Florida examination.

www2.myfloridalicense.com/military-services/veterans-services/

Education

The Florida Department of Education honors all valid and current standard or professional teaching certificates from other states and will issue a corresponding Florida certification.

www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/

FloridaCommerce is working to maximize the ease and efficiency of licensure portability for military spouses and family by creating a one-stop reference source, the Spousal Licensing Reciprocity Matrix. The reference is a searchable, alphabetical listing of more than 320 Florida licenses and certifications with contact information, reciprocity eligibility requirements, fee waivers and more.

www.floridajobs.org/office-directory/division-of-economic-development/office-of-military-and-defense

Health

The Department of Health offers the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response (VALOR) process, which provides expedited licensing for honorably discharged veterans and their spouses seeking licensure in all health care professions. Veterans and spouses who apply through the VALOR process receive a waiver of most licensing fees.

flhealthsource.gov/ovls/

Law

The Florida Bar allows active duty military spouses who are members of the bar of other states to practice law in Florida when they accompany a military member stationed in Florida.

RRTFB Chapter 21: Military Spouse Authorization to Engage in the Practice of Law in Florida

39. Additional Professional License Benefits

- Professional licenses issued to any member of the Armed Forces shall not expire while the member is serving on federal active duty and are exempted from all license renewal requirements for the duration of the active duty time and a period of two years after discharge. (**s. 455.02(1), F.S.**)

- A spouse of a member of the Armed Forces who is married to a member during a period of active duty, or a surviving spouse of a member who at the time of death was serving on active duty shall be kept in good standing by their professional board or program in cases of their absence from the state because of their spouse's duties with the Armed Forces. The spouse must be in good standing with their applicable board or program to qualify. **(s. 455.02(2), F.S.)**
- The Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) will expedite all applications submitted by a spouse of an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States and shall issue a license within 7 days after receipt of a complete application that includes all required documentation. **(s. 455.02 (3)(d), F.S.)**
- The DBPR will waive the initial licensing fee, the initial application fee, and the initial unlicensed activity fee for spouses of active-duty personnel and military veterans who apply for a license within 60 months of honorable discharge. **(s. 455.213(13), F.S.)**

For further information on DBPR licensing and regulation visit www2.myfloridalicense.com/licensing-and-regulation

For further information on DBPR veterans' services visit www2.myfloridalicense.com/military-services/veterans-services

40. Agriculture and Consumer Services Licensing Waivers

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) waives first-time licensing application fees for veterans, their spouses, or a business entity in which the veteran or spouse has a majority ownership stake. Other fees may apply. See www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Moving-Companies/How-can-I-apply-for-a-military-waiver-of-an-initial-or-renewal-registration-fee for further information and to apply for a waiver.



41. Surveyor/Mapper Licensing Fee Waiver

Any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is now or in the future on active duty and who, at the time of becoming such a member of the Armed Forces, was in good standing with the board and entitled to practice or engage in surveying and mapping in the state shall be kept in good standing by the board, without registering, paying dues or fees, or performing any other act on his or her part to be performed, as long as he or she is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty and for a period of 2 years after discharge from active duty, provided that he or she is not engaged in the practice of surveying or mapping in the private sector for profit.

Spouses of members of the Armed Forces of the United States are exempt from licensure renewal provisions, but only in cases of absence from the state because of their spouses' duties with the Armed Forces. (s. 472.016, F.S.)

For more information, visit: www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Surveyors-and-Mappers/Surveyor-Mapper-Licensing

42. Engineer Licensure/Exam

Allows applicants for professional engineering examinations who are delayed in taking the examination due to reserve or active duty service in the U.S. Armed Forces an additional two attempts to take the examination before the board may require additional college-level education or review courses. (s. 471.013(1)(e), F.S.)



43. Practicing Law

Active duty military spouses who are members of the bar of other states may practice law in Florida when they accompany a military member stationed in Florida. Military spouse attorneys seeking admission under Chapter 21 of the Rules Regulating the Florida Bar: “Military Spouse Authorization to Engage in the Practice of Law in Florida” must meet the eligibility requirements set forth in the rule.

Once certified under the rule, the new Florida Bar member must complete a Basic Skills Course requirement set forth in subchapter 6-12 of the Rules Regulating the Florida Bar within six months of certification and complete 10 hours of continuing legal education, including 1 hour of technology and 2 hours of legal ethics, professionalism, bias elimination, substance abuse, or mental health and wellness, each year in the program. The new Florida Bar member must also be employed by, or in a mentorship relationship with, a member of the Florida Bar who is eligible to practice law in Florida. The Military Affairs Committee will establish a mentor network for this purpose.

A license issued under this rule is subject to annual renewal and fees equal to those paid by active members of the Florida Bar.

The certification to practice law under chapter 21 will terminate if:

- The servicemember is no longer an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces.
- The certified lawyer is no longer married to the servicemember.
- The servicemember receives a permanent transfer outside of Florida, except that the certified lawyer may continue to practice pursuant to this chapter if the servicemember has been assigned to an unaccompanied or remote assignment with no dependents authorized until the servicemember is assigned to a location with dependents authorized.
- The certified lawyer relocates outside of Florida for more than 6 continuous months.
- The certified lawyer requests that the certification be terminated.
- Five years have elapsed since the certified lawyer was certified.
- The certified lawyer becomes a member of The Florida Bar by meeting all admission requirements to The Florida Bar.

For more information, reference:

RRTFB Chapter 21: Military Spouse Authorization to Engage in the Practice of Law in Florida



44. Health Professional Licensure

The Florida Department of Health offers the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response process (VALOR), which provides expedited licensing for honorably discharged veterans and their spouses seeking licensure in most health care professions. Veterans and spouses who apply through the VALOR process receive a waiver of most licensing fees. For information on the program visit:

www.flhealthsource.gov/valor

Several programs and reciprocal licensure arrangements for healthcare professionals are covered under Florida law including:

- Health professional licenses issued to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States will be kept in good standing without registering, paying dues or fees, or performing any other act on his or her part so long as he or she is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty and for a period of six months after discharge. (s. 456.024, F.S.) (s. 401.271, F.S.) (s. 468.309, F.S.)
- A person who serves or has served as a health care practitioner in the U.S. Armed Forces is eligible for licensure in Florida. The applicable department will waive the application fee, licensure fee and unlicensed activity fee for these applicants. (s. 456.024(4)(a), F.S.)
- Florida exempts the spouse of member of the Armed Forces of the United States from licensure renewal provisions but only in cases of absence from the state because of their spouse's duties with the Armed Forces. (s. 456.024(3), F.S.)
- Florida's Department of Health issues a temporary medical license for qualifying military spouses. Applicants must be married to a member of the United States Armed Forces who is assigned to an active duty station in Florida, must hold an active, unencumbered license as a health care practitioner in a U.S. jurisdiction, must meet the requirements for full licensure in the profession for which they are seeking licensure, and must complete a required background check. Applicants may apply online at: www.flhealthsource.gov Visit www.floridahealth.gov/licensing-and-regulation/armed-forces/_documents/app-temp-lic-military-spouses.pdf to view further application instructions.
- Any member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty who, at the time he or she became a member, was in good standing with the department and was entitled to practice as an emergency medical technician or paramedic in the state remains in good standing without registering, paying dues or fees, or performing any other act, as long as he or she is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty and for a period of 6 months after his or her discharge from active duty as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. (s. 401.271, F.S.)
- Florida provides for transfer of nurse licensing for spouses of military members. An applicant for licensure by endorsement who is relocating to this state pursuant to his or her military-connected spouse's official military orders and who is licensed in another state that is a member of the Nurse Licensure Compact shall be issued a license by endorsement upon submission of the appropriate application and fees and completion of the criminal background check. (s. 464.009(3), F.S.)
- The Rear Admiral LeRoy Collins, Jr. Temporary Certificate for Practice in Areas of Critical Need provides that medical doctors may be issued a limited license to practice in Areas of Critical Need. For experienced military physicians who might not qualify for or are not interested in applying for a full Florida license to practice medicine, this law provides the opportunity to serve Florida patients in those areas where health care is most needed. The physician must have served as a physician in

the United States Armed Forces for at least 10 years and received an honorable discharge from military service. (s. 458.3151, F.S.)

- **Professional Counselors Licensure Compact:** This interstate compact, which Florida has joined, provides licensed professional counselors with recognition to practice through telehealth in member states and provides for the development of a data system, reporting procedures, and exchange of specified information between member states. Licensees practicing under the compact must adhere to the laws and rules of the remote state they are practicing in. Applications for Counseling Compact privileges to practice are expected to open in late 2024. (s. 491.017, F.S.)

For more information, visit counselingcompact.org/faq/

- **Psychology Inter jurisdictional Compact:** Florida's participation in this compact allows an eligible Florida licensed psychologist to provide services to out-of-state patients through either tele psychological or a temporary authorization to practice and exempts out-of-state licensed psychologists who practice under the compact from psychologist licensure requirements in this state. (s. 490.0075, F.S.)
- **Law of Florida 2023-161** established the Office of Veteran Licensure Services within the Department of Health to provide information, guidance, direction, and assistance with health care licensure processes for all veterans and their spouses. This eliminates current practice of veteran practitioners having to apply to one of the 22 boards and creates a single point of entry to assist veterans and their spouses. The law requires DOH to appoint a qualified military veteran to the position of executive director of the Office. The law also requires the Office to refer any veteran or spouse seeking training, education, or employment in health care professions to Veterans Florida. (s. 456.0242, F.S.)



45. Criminal Justice Officer Certification

Provides for an exemption from completing a full Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission approved law enforcement, correctional, or correctional probation officer basic recruit training program if an applicant has served at least one year as a full-time sworn officer in another state or for the federal government or has served for at least five years in the United States Armed Services special operations with no more than a four-year break from the applicant's special operations service and completion of their application. An applicant who is exempt from completing a Commission-approved basic recruit training program must demonstrate proficiency in the high-liability areas and pass the state officer certification examination.

(s. 943.131, F.S.)

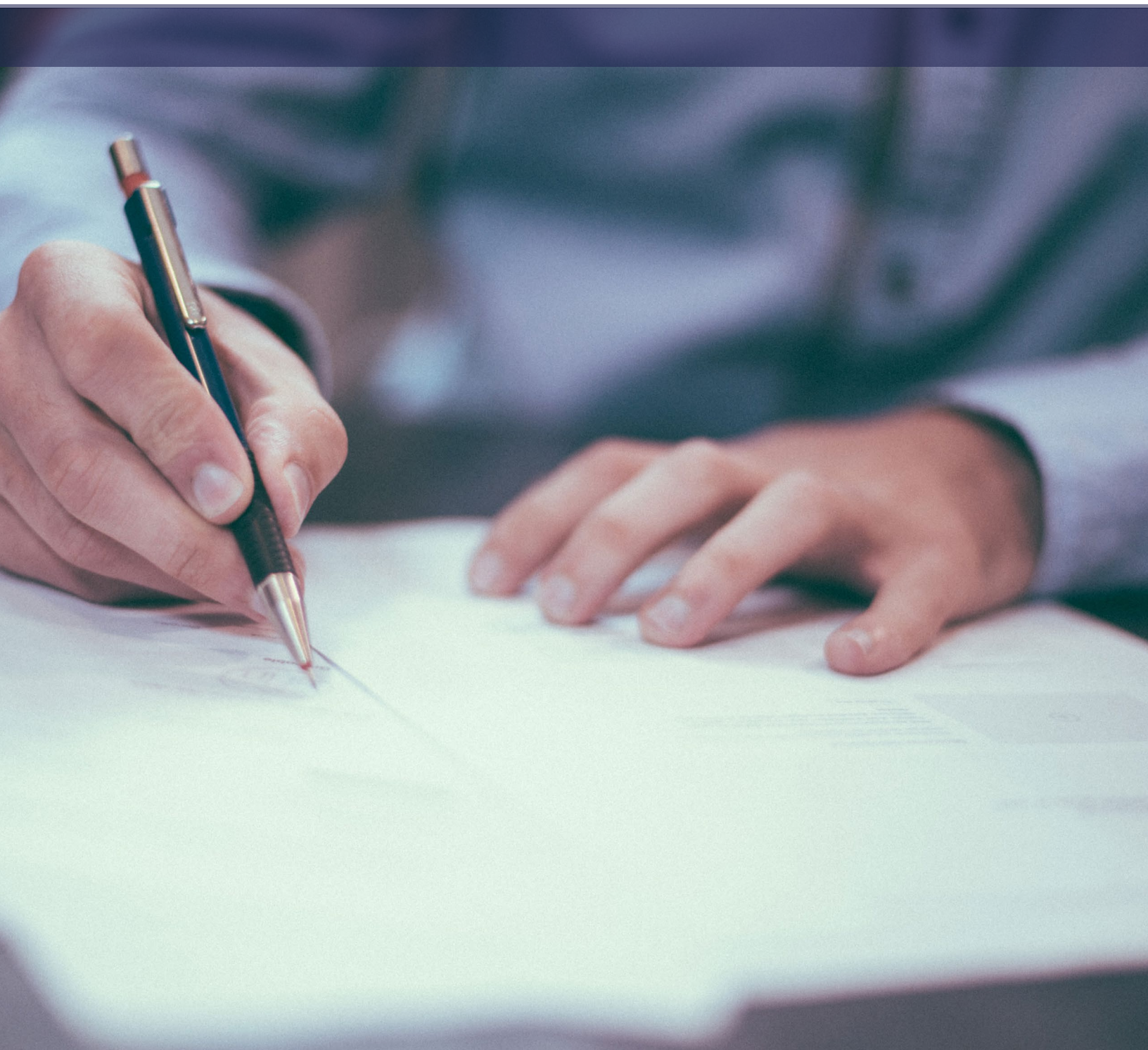
For more information, please visit www.fdle.state.fl.us/CJSTC/Officer-Requirements/Equivalency-of-Training.aspx

46. Military Firefighters Training Requirements

The Florida Department of Financial Services has established OPERATION DISPATCH to allow Florida's military veterans the opportunity to apply comparative experience-based training to fulfill certification requirements to continue protecting the safety and well-being of those in our communities. It is designed to attract military servicemembers and veterans to Florida. OPERATION DISPATCH cuts out redundant training so military-trained firefighters take 40 hours of training specific to Florida standards. OPERATION DISPATCH allows these dedicated men and women to continue meaningful and long-lasting careers in the Florida fire service industry. Through partnerships forged with the Florida Departments of Veterans' and Military Affairs, OPERATION DISPATCH reduces the costs associated with the Florida-specific training and testing to military firefighters. The program also allows participants to take the certification exam in a more timely fashion than the regularly-scheduled quarterly administrations, which upon successful completion helps newly-certified firefighters enter Florida's workforce faster. For more information, visit www.myfloridacfo.com/division/sfm/operationdispatch.htm







47. The Occupational Freedom and Opportunity Act

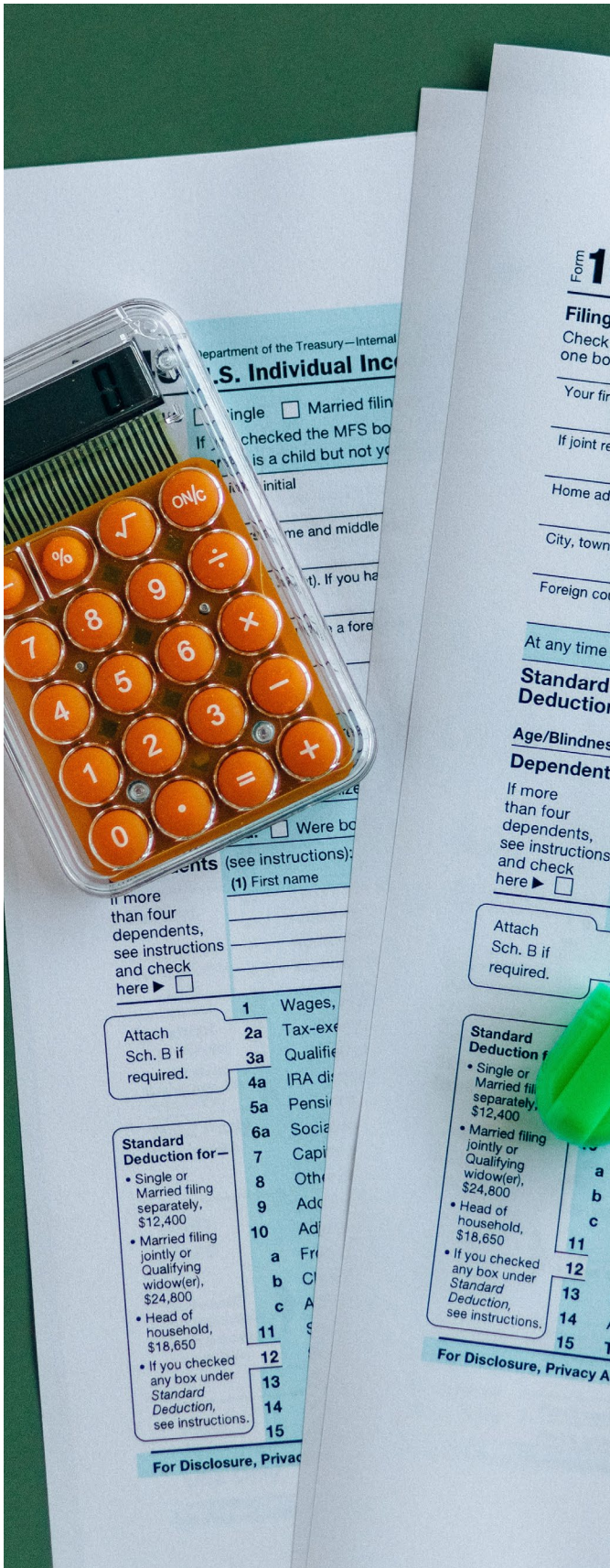
Among other provisions, this act amended [s. 322.57, F.S.](#) and requires the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to waive the CDL skills test for honorably discharged veterans whose Military Occupational Specialties were equivalent to a commercial vehicle driver and who have been discharged from the military within one year of the application. ([s. 322.57, F.S.](#))

48. Homestead Exemption on Property Taxes and Ad Valorem Tax Exemption

Authorizes veterans and servicemembers who are deployed in certain military operations to receive additional homestead exemptions as well as ad valorem tax exemptions. Provides that valid military orders transferring military servicemembers are sufficient to maintain permanent residence status of servicemember and spouse for purposes of such determination by property appraiser.



- The exemption is available to servicemembers who were deployed during the preceding calendar year on active duty outside the continental United States, Alaska, or Hawaii in support of any of several specified military operations. ([s. 196.173\(2\), F.S.](#))
- A 2020 amendment to this law allows veterans or their surviving spouses who are entitled to receive ad valorem exemptions on property taxes for one property, to receive a pro-rated reimbursement of taxes paid on any property they buy between January 1 and November 1 of any year (thus permitting an uninterrupted use of this benefit when selling one homestead to purchase a different one). ([s. 196.173, F.S.](#))
- Ad Valorem Tax Discount for Spouses of Certain Deceased Veterans Who Had Permanent, Combat-Related Disabilities: Authorizes the surviving spouse of a deceased combat-related disabled veteran to carry over certain discounts on ad valorem taxes on homestead property until the surviving spouse remarries or sells or otherwise disposes of the property. ([s. 196.082, F.S.](#))
- Transfer of Tax Exemption for Veterans: Veterans who were honorably discharged with a service-connected total and permanent disability or their surviving spouses are entitled to a refund, prorated as of the date of transfer, of the ad valorem taxes paid for the newly acquired property if they apply for and receive an exemption for the newly acquired property in the next tax year. ([s. 196.081, F.S.](#))



49. Local Business Tax Relief

This law provides an exemption to the local business tax, authorized in Florida Statutes Chapter 205, for active duty military servicemembers' spouses who relocate to the county or municipality pursuant to a permanent change of station order. (**s. 205.055, F.S.**)

50. Salute Our Soldiers Military Loan Program

This program offers military service personnel and veterans who are purchasing a primary residence and meet income and purchase price limits, a 30-year, fixed-rate first mortgage loan at a low rate and with several down payment assistance options. www.floridahousing.org/programs/homebuyer-overview-page/salute-our-soldiers-military-loan-program

51. Fees in Lieu of Security Deposits

This law authorizes, but does not require, a landlord to offer a tenant the option to pay a fee instead of a security deposit on a lease. If a landlord offers this option, the landlord must give the tenant written notice that the tenant has the option to pay a security deposit instead of the fee, the fee may not be increased during the rental agreement's term; and the fee in lieu of a security deposit may be a recurring monthly fee, payable on the same date that the rent is due under the lease, or payable upon another chosen schedule. (**s. 83.491, F.S.**)



52. Unemployment Compensation for Spouses of Members of the Military

Provides that a person is not disqualified for unemployment compensation benefits who voluntarily leaves employment to relocate as a result of his or her military-connected spouse's permanent change of station orders, activation orders, or unit deployment orders.

(s. 443.101, F.S.)



53. CareerSource Florida — Employment Advocacy and Assistance

CareerSource Florida administers an employment advocacy and assistance program targeting military spouses and dependents. This program delivers employment assistance services through military family employment advocates collocated within selected one-stop career centers. Persons eligible for assistance through this program include spouses and dependents of active duty military personnel, Florida National Guard members, and military reservists. Through this program, military family employment advocates are responsible for providing the following services and activities:

- a) Coordination of employment assistance services through military base family support centers, Florida's one-stop career centers, and veteran support organizations.
- b) Training to one-stop career center managers and staff on the unique employment needs and skills of military family members.
- c) Promoting and marketing the benefits of employing military family members to prospective employers.
- d) Assisting employment-seeking military family members through job counseling, job search and placement services, the dissemination of information on educational and training programs, and the availability of support services.
- e) Other employment assistance services CareerSource deems necessary.

(s. 445.055, F.S.)

54. National Guard Employment Protection

National Guard servicemembers are protected and will not be penalized by employers and postsecondary institutions when ordered into state active duty. A private or public employer, or an employing or appointing authority of this state, its counties, school districts, municipalities, political subdivisions, career centers, community colleges, or universities, may not discharge, reprimand, or in any other way penalize such member because of his or her absence by reason of state active duty. Employers are prohibited from discharging reemployed servicemembers, for a period of one year, except for cause. ([s. 250.482, F.S.](#))

55. Leave and Pay to State Employees for National Guard or Reserve Service

All officials of the state, the counties of the state, and the municipalities or political subdivisions of the state, including district school and community college officers, which are also servicemembers in the National Guard or a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, shall be granted leave of absence from their respective offices and duties to perform active military service, the first 30 days of any such leave of absence to be with full pay.

([s. 115.09, F.S.](#))

Additionally, after the first 30 days of full pay, public employers may supplement the military pay of its employees who are reservists in federal active duty in an amount necessary to bring their total salary, inclusive of their base military pay, to the level earned at the time they were called to active military duty. ([s. 115.14, F.S.](#))



56. Additional Leave for State Employees on National Guard Duty

Allows granting of up to 240 working hours of annual leave of absence in any one annual period to officers and employees of the state, counties, municipalities, and political subdivisions of the state who are commissioned reserve officers or reserve enlisted personnel in the U.S. military or naval service or who are members of the National Guard. (s. 115.07, F.S.)

57. Temporary Employment or Appointment of Officers

Florida provides an exemption from basic law enforcement recruit training for an applicant who has served in the special operations forces of the U.S. military for at least five years, provided there is no more than a four-year break from the applicant's special operations forces experience at the time of application. The Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission may require an exempt applicant to complete additional training as it deems appropriate, based on the applicant's prior training and experience. (s. 943.131(2)(b), F.S.)

58. Educational Opportunities Leading to Employment

A student who is serving as an active duty member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces is not required to be assessed for readiness for college-level work in communication and computation and is not required to enroll in developmental education instruction in a Florida College System institution. (s. 1008.30, F.S.)

59. Florida Is For Veterans, Inc

Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. serves as the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program to facilitate administration of SkillBridge program. The DoD's SkillBridge program is an opportunity for servicemembers to gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships, or internships during their last 180 days of service. (s. 295.21(3)(g), F.S.)

For additional information on the DoD SkillBridge program, visit skillbridge.osd.mil









Servicemembers

60. In-State Tuition Rates for Servicemembers

Certain military and family members receive in state tuition rates for Florida colleges and universities. The determination of resident status for tuition purposes is established at the time of acceptance (rather than enrollment) for the active duty servicemember, their spouses, dependent children, and active drilling members of the Florida National Guard. (s. 1009.21(10), F.S.)

The following persons are classified as Florida residents for tuition purposes:

- Active duty members of the Armed Services of the United States residing or stationed in this state at the time of acceptance to a Florida College System institution or state university, and active drilling members of the Florida National Guard.
- Active duty members of the Armed Services of the United States attending a Florida College System institution or state university within 50 miles of the military establishment where they are stationed at the time of acceptance to the Florida College System institution or state university, if such military establishment is within a county contiguous to Florida.

Additionally, the Congressman C.W. “Bill” Young Veteran Tuition Waiver Program allows for Florida educational institutions to waive out-of-state fees for honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces, the United States Reserve Forces, or the National Guard who physically reside in this state while enrolled in the institution or those entitled to and using educational assistance provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for a quarter, semester, or term who physically reside in this state while enrolled in the institution. (s. 1009.26(13)(a), F.S.)

61. Tuition Waivers for Military Combat Decorations

Requires state universities and community colleges to waive undergraduate tuition for a recipient of a Purple Heart or other combat decoration superior in precedence who is enrolled as a full-time, part-time, or summer-school student in a program that terminates in an associate or a baccalaureate degree, a college credit certificate, or a career certificate and is currently, or was at the time of the military action that resulted in the awarding of the decoration, a resident of this state.

(s. 1009.26(8), F.S.)

62. Postsecondary Fee Waivers

Florida College System institutions are authorized to waive any portion of specified fees that are not covered under the DoD Military Tuition Assistance (MTA) program including:

- Student activity and service fees.
- Financial aid fees.
- Technology fees.
- Capital improvement fees.
- Any other authorized in s. 1009.23, F.S.

(s. 1009.26(15), F.S.)

63. In-State Tuition Waivers for Military Members Enrolled in Online Courses

Through the State University Free Seat Program, veterans, active duty members of the United States Armed Forces, active drilling members of the Florida National Guard, and nontraditional students can receive tuition and fee waivers if they are residents for tuition purposes, have not previously earned a bachelor’s degree, and are enrolled in an online baccalaureate degree program. Further eligibility requirements may apply.

(s. 1009.26(9), F.S.)

64. Postsecondary Education for Military Training and Education

Members of the United States Armed Forces can earn college credit for college-level training and education acquired in the military. The Board of Governors and State Board of Education maintains a uniform set of rules to award academic credit for college degrees and technical training certification based on servicemembers' and veterans' prior military training and experience. The legislation helps veterans and members on active duty to achieve their degrees quicker and without having to take unnecessary course requirements.

(s. 1004.096, F.S.)

For more information on specific college credits, visit www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5421/urlt/University-Military-Credit-chart-3.pdf

65. Course Withdrawal for Military Service

Any student enrolled in a postsecondary course or courses at a career center, a Florida college System institution, or a state university shall not incur academic or financial penalties by virtue of performing military service. Students performing active military service shall be permitted the option of either completing the course or courses at a later date without penalty or withdrawing from the course or courses with a full refund of fees paid. If the student chooses to withdraw, the student's record shall reflect that the withdrawal is due to active military service.

(s. 1004.07, F.S.)

66. National Guard Educational Dollars for Duty Program

The Florida National Guard Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) program is a State of Florida, legislatively directed and funded, education tuition assistance resource that is exclusively available to qualified Florida Army and Air National Guard Servicemembers to complete authorized postsecondary education opportunities that include vocational/technical, industry certification, continuing education and academic (i.e., certificate, associate, bachelor, and master) degree programs and support success completion of authorized professional license and industry certification exams. EDD may also reimburse approved book and instructional material costs. The EDD program is a State of Florida privilege, not entitlement that is always dependent on Servicemember qualification, available state appropriation and program law/directive as established by appropriate authority.

(s. 250.10(7), F.S.)

Educational Dollars for Duty

Family Members

67. Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)

Florida is a member of the original states that signed on to the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) in 2006. It is the purpose of this compact to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents by:

- 1) Facilitating the timely enrollment of children of military families and ensuring that they are not placed at a disadvantage due to difficulty in the transfer of education records from the previous school district or variations in entrance or age requirements.
- 2) Facilitating the student placement process through which children of military families are not disadvantaged by variations in attendance requirements, scheduling, sequencing, grading, course content, or assessment.
- 3) Facilitating the qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and participation in extracurricular academic, athletic, and social activities.
- 4) Facilitating the on-time graduation of children of military families.
- 5) Providing for the adoption and enforcement of administrative rules implementing this compact.
- 6) Providing for the uniform collection and sharing of information between and among member states, schools, and military families under this compact.
- 7) Promoting coordination between this compact and other compacts affecting military children.
- 8) Promoting flexibility and cooperation between the educational system, parents, and the student in order to achieve educational success for the student.

(s. 1000.36, F.S.)



68. Accommodation in Schools for the Transitioning Children of Military Families

Florida public schools must accept military permanent change of station (PCS) orders that relocate a military family to any military installation within the state as proof of residency for all public school authorized programs at the school. This allows registration of a student once orders are received rather than after the servicemember arrives and secures housing. This law also provides priority placement in gifted, special needs and voucher programs for the children of military members and provides for smooth transition for children of military families coming into Florida by improving timely transfer of records, establishing procedures to lessen the impact of moves, providing services for transferring students, and giving them first preference in special academic programs. The Department of Education assists in the transition by promoting practices which foster access to extracurricular programs, establishing procedures to lessen the adverse impact of moves from the end of the junior year as well as before and during the senior year, encouraging or continuing partnerships between the military base and the school system, providing services for transitioning students when applying to and finding funding for postsecondary study, and providing other assistance as identified by department, school, and military personnel. **(s. 1003.05, F.S.)**

Additionally, Florida offers more virtual options for their students than any other state. Florida students at all grade levels have both full-time (virtual school) and part-time (virtual course) options. The options include virtual schools and courses offered by Florida Virtual School (FLVS) and by all 67 school districts. All of Florida's virtual education options are designated by law as school choice options for Florida students. Specifically:

- Virtual instruction programs and Florida Virtual School are educational choice options.
(s. 1002.20(6), F.S.)
- Requires school boards to provide students with access to virtual instruction programs, including Florida Virtual School and other approved providers, and to award credit for successful completion of such courses.
(s. 1001.42(23), F.S.)
- School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through Florida Virtual School.
(s. 1002.37(3)(c), F.S.)
- Requires school districts to provide all enrolled public-school students within its boundaries the option of participating in part-time and full-time virtual instruction programs.
(s. 1002.45(1)(b), F.S.)

69. Exit Exam Graduation Requirements for High School Seniors of Military Families

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, Florida follows the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children which states:

- Local education agency administrative officials shall waive specific courses required for graduation if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another local education agency or shall provide reasonable justification for denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the local education agency must provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.
- Florida shall accept exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from sending states; national norm-referenced achievement tests; or alternative testing, in lieu of testing requirements for graduation.
- If a military student transfers at the beginning of or during his or her senior year and is not eligible to graduate from a Florida education agency after all alternatives have been considered, the sending and receiving local education agencies must ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending local education agency, if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending local education agency. If one of the states in question is not a member of this compact, Florida official shall use their best efforts to facilitate the on-time graduation of the student.

(s. 1000.36, F.S.)

70. In-State College Tuition Rates for Military Family Members

The following persons are classified as residents of Florida for tuition purposes:

- Spouses and dependent children of active duty members of the Armed Services of the United States residing or station in Florida at the time of acceptance to a Florida College System institution or state university.
- Spouses and dependents of active duty members of the Armed Services of the United States attending a Florida College System institution or state university within 50 miles of the military establishment where they are stationed at the time of acceptance to the Florida College System institution or state university, if such military establishment is within a county contiguous to Florida.

(s. 1009.21(10), F.S.)

71. Preferential Treatment for Military Children

A parent whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension order may seek enrollment in and transport his or her child to any public school in the state, including a charter school, which has not reached capacity. The school district or charter school shall accept and report the student for purposes of funding through the Florida Education Finance Program. The school district or charter school may provide student transportation at their discretion. The statute requires the capacity determinations of each school district and charter school to be current and identified on their respective school website. In determining capacity, a district school board must incorporate specifications, plans, elements, and commitments contained in the district's educational facilities plan and required long-term work programs. Each charter school governing board must determine capacity based upon its charter contract. Each school must provide preferential treatment in its controlled open enrollment process to dependent children of active duty military personnel who moved as a result of military orders. (s. 1002.31(2)(c)(1), F.S.)

72. School Choice

Members of the United States Armed Forces living in Florida are empowered to maximize school choice options for their children. Through the Florida Department of Education, military dependents are exempt from limitations of wait lists and income qualifications for participating private schools. Additionally, dependent children of active duty military personnel are given first preference for admission to special academic programs. For more information visit www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/other-school-choice-options/military-families/

73. Purple Star Campuses

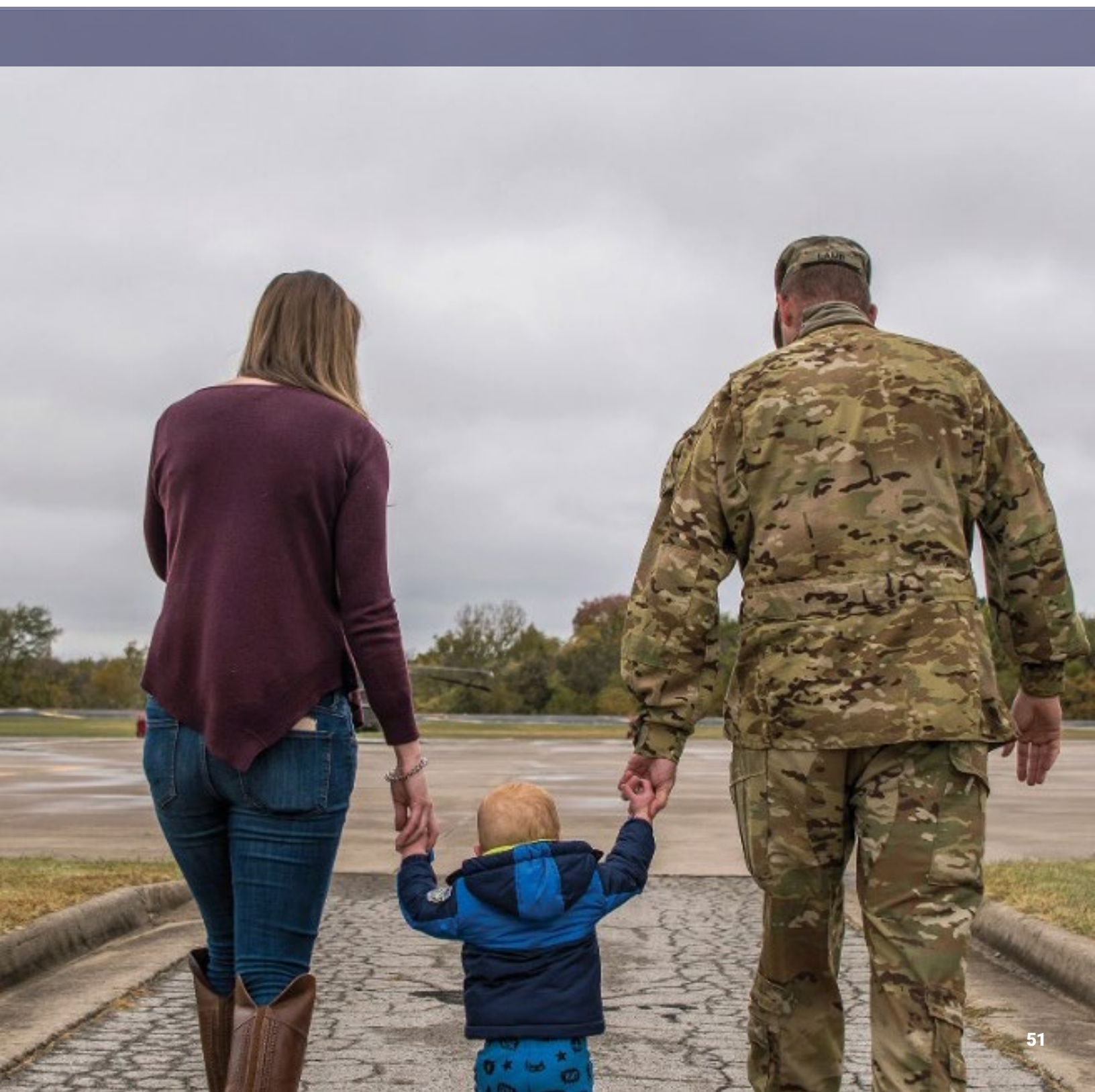
Schools participating in Florida's Purple Star Campus program help military-connected students navigate critical challenges and provide resources for military-connected students when transitioning to a new school environment. As of 2024, the program has approximately 200 schools representing 15 school districts. (s. 1003.051, F.S.) For additional information, see www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/parental-involvement/purple-star.stml

74. Educational Opportunities for Disabled Veterans

Disabled veterans receiving certain federal educational assistance benefits are eligible to receive waiver for tuition and fees at certain Florida institutions. The waiver amount is equal to the difference between the portion of tuition and fees paid in accordance with federal law and the full amount of tuition and fees at the institution attended. The amount awarded by the state is not to be determined until after the application of federal benefits under 38 U.S.C. s. 3313. (s. 295.011, F.S.)

75. Education of Dependents of Deceased or Disabled Servicemembers, Prisoners of War, and Persons Missing in Action

The children of any resident Florida servicemember who died as a result of service-connected injuries, disease or disability sustained while on active duty service, or are 100% disabled, or a prisoner of war or person missing in action, are eligible for Florida educational benefits as long as those children qualify as Florida residents themselves. Spouses of these servicemembers also qualify for these educational benefits provided they meet certain criteria. (s. 295.01, F.S.)



76. Support to Family Members Codified in Florida Law

Florida extends the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to include early termination of auto leases, cell phone agreements and other commonly leased or contracted items. Florida Law incorporates, by reference, both the SCRA and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). The SCRA is a federal law which addresses many of the same issues as Florida Law. ([s. 250.82, F.S.](#)) USERRA is the federal law which affords employment protections and rights to servicemembers. ([s. 115.15, F.S.](#))

77. Live Local Act

Among other changes, this act provides up to \$150 million annually in incentives to build additional housing near military installations. This act also expands the Florida Hometown Heroes Program (previously known as the Salute Our Soldiers Program). The Florida Hometown Heroes Housing Program makes homeownership affordable for eligible community workforce. This program provides down payment and closing cost assistance to first-time, income-qualified homebuyers so they can purchase a primary residence in the community in which they work and serve. The Florida Hometown Heroes Loan Program also offers a competitive first mortgage interest rate and additional special benefits to veterans and active duty service members. ([s. 420.5096, 420.50871\(1\)\(d\), F.S.](#))

For more information, visit floridahousing.org/live-local-act

78. Assistance for National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers on active duty

Establishes the Family Readiness Program which provides need-based financial assistance to eligible servicemembers of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces, including the Coast Guard Reserves, who are on active duty serving in the global war on terrorism and who are federally deployed or participating in state operations for homeland defense, and eligible families of such servicemembers. Program funds may be used in emergency situations to purchase critically needed services, including, but not limited to, reasonable living expenses, housing, vehicles, equipment or renovations necessary to meet disability needs, and health care. Additionally, provides that eligibility for the Family Readiness Program continues for a specified period following the termination of the servicemember's orders and his/her return home. ([s. 250.5206, F.S.](#))

79. National Guard Soldier and Airman Assistance Program

Provides financial assistance and services to eligible servicemembers of the Florida National Guard and eligible members of their families. The program is administered by the Department of Military Affairs. The program provides assistance for housing, living expenses, vehicle repair and rental, health care, and other reasonable services. ([s. 250.116, F.S.](#))

80. Drivers Licenses

If a member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty in Florida, his or her spouse or a dependent residing with him or her, possess a valid military identification card and a valid driver license or learner's permit issued by another state, or a valid military driving permit, he or she shall not be required to obtain a Florida driver's license solely because he or she enters his or her children to be educated in the Florida public schools.

(s. 322.031, F.S.)

81. Persons with Developmental Disabilities–Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waivers

Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) provides individuals who meet eligibility requirements to receive home and community-based services in Florida if the individual's parent or legal guardian is an active duty military servicemember and, at the time of the servicemember's transfer to Florida, the individual was receiving home and community-based services in another state. (s. 393.065(6), F.S.)

APD may also provide waivers for care to avoid deficits that impede the provision of services to individuals who are on the waiting list for enrollment in the program based on individual budgets.

(s. 393.0662, F.S.)

Additional information can be found at:

apd.myflorida.com



82. Military and Veterans Assistance Program

The Military and Veterans Assistance Program (MVAP) is an initiative within the Florida Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division that seeks to serve the unique needs of Florida's military servicemembers, reservists, and veterans. The program was established to help educate servicemembers and veterans on the types of scams that target their communities and to address concerns of military servicemembers and veterans across the state. Members of the MVAP team work directly with military servicemembers and veterans who have been targeted, or their representatives, in an effort to resolve their consumer protection-related issues or facilitate contact with other legal assistance if needed and as appropriate.

Military servicemembers, reservists, dependents, base representatives, veterans, veteran services representatives, and state or federal agencies can file a complaint at:

**CALL 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226),
E-MAIL MVAP@MYFLORIDALEGAL.COM
OR VISIT: www.myfloridalegal.com/consumer-protection/mvap**



83. Governor DeSantis' GI LAW Initiative to Assist Florida's Military

The Governor's Initiative on Lawyers Assisting Warriors (GI LAW) draws from the talent of Florida's leading law firms to provide pro bono legal services for military members. This program allows our state's men and women in uniform to receive local counsel in a variety of civil matters, including actions in local courts. Participating attorneys will dedicate time and expertise to ensure a prompt and fair resolution of legal matters. Those interested in obtaining pro bono legal services should go to the website at: selectflorida.org/military-defense/governors-gi-law/ to fill out a Legal Assistance Request Form and submit it through their appropriate Judge Advocate General or civilian military attorney's office.



84. Deployed Parent Custody and Visitation

This law creates the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act which complies with and mirrors federal law of the same name. This provides protections for deployed servicemembers in regard to custody of children. It requires parents to communicate about custody and visitation issues as soon as possible after a servicemember learns of deployment and establishes procedures for parents who agree to a custody arrangement during deployment to resolve these issues by an out-of-court agreement. Further, it allows a deployed parent to grant care-taking authority to a non-parent with whom the child has a close positive relationship of substantial duration and depth. In the absence of an agreement, the bill allows for expedited resolution of a custody arrangement in court with a temporary custody order. The bill prohibits the entry of a permanent custody order before or during deployment without the servicemember's consent.

The bill provides for termination of the temporary custody arrangement following the servicemember's return from deployment. The bill also repeals the section of law that currently addresses temporary time-sharing modification and child support modification due to military service. A 2020 amendment to the law added the provision that the absence of a servicemember due to a deployment or anticipated deployment may not be considered as abandonment or used as a factor in making such a determination.

(s. 61.703-61.773, F.S.) (s. 39.01(1), F.S.)

85. Veterans Treatment Courts

The T. Patt Maney Veterans' Treatment Act authorizes a veterans court with the purpose of addressing the substance abuse and mental health needs of veterans – including active duty servicemembers – within the criminal justice system. Veterans court, modeled after drug court, serves justice-involved veterans with a military-related substance use and/or mental health disorder including traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Veterans court requires the participant to appear regularly before the court, attend mandatory treatment sessions, and submit to frequent testing for substance use. An essential part of these veterans courts is the addition of volunteer veteran mentors to assist their fellow veterans with a wide array of support. More information on Veterans courts can be found in the Veterans Resource Guide at www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/266/urlt/VETERANS_RESOURCE_GUIDE.pdf **(s. 394.47891, F.S.)**

86. Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program

To best serve the state's veterans, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs has established a pilot program to train claims examiners and veteran service officers to identify indicators of elevated suicide risk and provide emergency crisis referrals for veterans expressing or exhibiting symptoms of emotional or psychological distress. **(s. 292.115, F.S.)**

SPOTLIGHT

Florida Virtual School

The Florida Legislature passed groundbreaking legislation in 1997 establishing Florida Virtual School (FLVS) as a grant-based pilot project, pioneering Florida's first Internet-based, public high school. Today, as a fully accredited, statewide public school district, FLVS offers more than 190 online courses to Kindergarten-12 students, and certified teachers use a variety of personalized instructional programs to create individualized educational plans for every student. Since 1997, FLVS students have successfully completed more than 4.6 million semester enrollments. FLVS also provides its courseware and expertise to online and blended learning programs across the nation. As a not-for-profit, FLVS reinvests funds into the development of new educational technologies and the creation of the highest-quality courses, benefiting students in Florida and beyond.

FLVS Flex - Students in FLVS Flex can take one or more online courses while simultaneously enrolled in a brick-and-mortar school, or they may take up to a full course load when enrolled as a homeschool student. Available to public, private, charter and homeschool students, FLVS Flex offers year-round enrollment, and students have the flexibility to start and finish a course at any time. FLVS Flex students have the ability to follow a more flexible schedule, allowing them to personalize their learning experience around their daily lives and extracurricular activities.

FLVS Full Time - As an accredited Kindergarten-12 online public school, students in FLVS Full Time take a standard course load of six courses per semester, participate in state testing, and follow a 180-day traditional school calendar with a fixed semester schedule from August to May. Students who meet district graduation requirements are able to receive a Florida diploma from FLVS Full Time. As the student's school of record, FLVS Full Time issues official report cards and manages transcripts, and professional school counselors provide academic advising and college and career planning. FLVS Full Time offers fall and spring enrollment periods. School districts and virtual charter schools may also contract with FLVS to provide the FLVS Full Time program to district public school students.

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) Contact Information:

www.flvs.net

Main: 800-374-1430

Elementary: 407-513-3604





For More Information, Contact:

Ray Collins

E-Mail: Ray.Collins@Commerce.fl.gov

Phone: 850.717.8994

This guide can also be accessed online at
www.SelectFlorida.org/Military-Defense

