










The Army Community Service’s (ACS) Employment Readiness Program (ERP) provides localized employment assistance (e.g., classes in resume writing, interviewing and the federal job search, career counseling services, employer networking, job fairs) at all garrisons. Historically, the ERP focused on helping Army spouses, who face employment challenges due to the frequent relocations, find employment opportunities at each duty station. A spouse’s ability to obtain meaningful employment may have downstream impacts on Service member retention, financial stability, and military family readiness. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State was commissioned by the DSC, G-9 to conduct an outcome evaluation to assess the ERP’s effectiveness with employment outcomes for all program participants, including Service members; Army Guard and Reserve members; DoD civilians; Army Survivors, retirees and retiree spouses. The evaluation had five aims: (1) examine whether the ERP improves employment related outcomes among program participants; (2) assess whether the ERP improves satisfaction with military life (e.g., readiness, retention, financial stability, and satisfaction); (3) gauge program user satisfaction with the ERP; (4) examine whether the ERP is more or less effective across different groups of participants (e.g., spouses, Service members, users of specific programs or services), and (5) recommendations for program improvement.

## Outcome Evaluation Procedures

The following efforts were conducted:




<p><b>1</b></p>  <p>A literature review on unemployment and underemployment within the military context was presented;</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>  <p>Data were collected with online surveys involving a retrospective sample (N=222) of past ERP participants. The sample included one wave of data collected and a prospective sample (N=54) of current ERP participants (including three waves), telephonic interviews with select respondents at ten participating garrisons, and</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>  <p>Site visits and in-depth telephonic interviews were conducted with program staff at four garrisons (CONUS and OCONUS).</p>
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Challenges that were noted:

 <p>Small sample size</p>	 <p>Lack of a comparison group</p>	 <p>Self-reported survey items</p>
 <p>Short window for data collection</p>	 <p>Impacted recruitment from budget cuts at three TRADOC garrisons</p>	 <p>Majority of survey responses from two garrisons</p>

**Overall, ACS ERP participants were highly satisfied with the services they received, and participation in the ACS ERP was associated with job attainment, job interview attainment, and job-search self-efficacy skills.**

## Summary of Findings

	<p><b>Satisfaction with ERP Services</b></p> <p>Over 90% of ERP participants were highly satisfied.</p>
	<p><b>Job Obtained Due to Program Use</b></p> <p>Approximately half of all the participants attributed obtainment of a job to the ERP.</p>
	<p><b>Job Outcome by Program User Type</b></p> <p>No differences in job outcomes were found between different types of users or different types of ERP services usage.</p>

	<p><b>Most Commonly Used Services</b></p> <p>The most used ERP service was resume writing, especially resume writing for federal jobs. Besides ERP, Military OneSource was the most commonly used military resource for employment.</p>
	<p><b>Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE)</b></p> <p>The average JSSE was high as a result of participating in the ERP and remained high across the three waves of the prospective study, which indicated that the program was effective at bolstering important job search skills.</p>

## Summary of Findings (cont.)



### Interviews Received Due to Program Use

Almost half of retrospective survey participants and over one third of prospective survey participants did not receive a job; however, they received a job interview.



### Job Satisfaction

58% (n=4) of prospective sample spouses at Wave 1 reported being “very satisfied” with the extent that their job utilized their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to only 25% (n=1) of Service members.



### Financial Condition

63% of retrospective survey participants and 49% of prospective survey participants at Wave 1 indicated that they were in good shape financially.

Over 90% of ERP participants experienced some level of financial worry. 34% of retrospective survey participants and 47% of prospective survey participants at Wave 1 rated their financial worry as high.



### Military Lifestyle Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the military lifestyle was high for both spouses and Service members. 66% of spouses participating in the retrospective survey favored their spouse staying in the military. For spouses participating in the prospective survey, preference for retention decreased over time; 61% to 50% favored staying in the military at Waves 1 and 3, respectively.

Approximately 80% (n=11) of prospective survey participant Service members at Wave 1 were satisfied with how the military supports their family, while only 53% (n=18) of spouses were satisfied.



### Financial Challenges

The most common financial challenges were trouble paying bills and debts, preparation for military transition, and non-military spouse employment challenges.

When accounting for transition preparation and non-military spouse employment challenges, less than half of all participants had experienced a financial or legal situation, which may suggest that these are important challenges for spouses and Service members.

## Recommendations for Program Improvement (Aim 5)

### Infrastructure

- Rec 1.1** Coordinate and leverage other military-affiliated employment services to efficiently address the needs of all participant types (e.g., collaborate with SFL-TAP to provide services tailored to Service members, coordinate with other military spouse-employment programs [e.g., MSEP, SECO]).

### Program Content

- Rec 2.1** Create a standardized decision-tree tool for determining the services needed by participants Army-wide.
- Rec 2.2** Utilize evidence-informed components of employment programs (e.g., deploy content and skill-based activities that teach job-seeking skills such as professional networking behavior, utilize a strength-based program framework that addresses the emotional and psychological needs of job seekers and military spouses).
- Rec 2.3** Develop and utilize effective online employment services tailored for military populations (e.g., online options for federal resume writing).
- Rec 2.4** Develop and maintain an Army-wide database of virtual and remote/telework job opportunities (e.g., collaborate with other spouse employment programs - MSEP, SECO).
- Rec 2.5** Increase resources to support entrepreneurship opportunities and address common challenges.
- Rec 2.6** Offer tailored services to address the unique needs of military spouses across the professional continuum (e.g., entry-level versus professional-level options), understand credentialing and licensure requirements and policies designed to help spouses.
- Rec 2.7** Examine current ERP content and determine how this content is delivered (e.g., consider hosting learning communities).

### Program Implementation

- Rec 3.1** Add “spouse to meet with ERP prior to moving” as a part of the PCS preparation checklist to expedite securing of employment (also provide referrals for child care resources in advance of a PCS).
- Rec 3.2** Establish follow-up protocols for ERP staff to provide consistent ongoing services and tailored support.
- Rec 3.3** Ensure that all ERP staff have the professional credentials required to perform the job (e.g., Certified Career Services Provider credential).
- Rec 3.4** Ensure adequate technological resources (e.g., computers with internet access, printers) are available and maintained for use among program participants.

### Program Reach

- Rec 4.1** Provide resources that break down barriers for employment while at OCONUS garrisons (e.g., offer intensive language classes, prioritize telework options available in SOFA countries, provide guidance on visa requirements, inform about tax implications of local employment).
- Rec 4.2** For face-to-face classes that target spouses/partners, utilize evidence-informed barrier reduction techniques (e.g., offer child care, meals, and sessions at night) and utilize multi-pronged marketing practices.

### Data Collection and Evaluation

- Rec 5.1** Implement an intake assessment tool for continuous identification and assessment of need to link participants to tailored programs and services.
- Rec 5.2** Develop an integrated information infrastructure that relies on regularly collected process and outcome data and analytical ability.