



# PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

## NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 2020

Report No. 2020-01

## Opportunities Exist to Further Ease Burdens on Military-Trained Applicants and Military Spouses in Obtaining Occupational Licensure

### Highlights

**IN BRIEF:** Military veterans and their spouses face unique challenges in obtaining occupational licensure. The provisions of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 93B-15.1 are intended to ease these burdens. Use of the statute has increased since implementation, yet opportunities exist to further assist members of the military community as they transition to civilian life or undertake relocation. Specifically, North Carolina could begin providing expedited licensure for military spouses and boards could better disseminate information on military licensure provisions. Other potential legislative actions include directing licensing boards to collect and report information on military-trained applicants and military spouse applicants.

**BACKGROUND:** Occupational licensing regulations can be difficult to navigate for military service members transitioning to the civilian workforce. Service members on active duty often receive extensive training that is approximately equivalent to the credentials required to secure civilian employment, yet lengthy licensure processes can place undue burdens on military applicants. For military spouses, frequent moves between states often mean reapplying for licensure every few years. Session Law 2019-201 directed the North Carolina General Assembly's Program Evaluation Division, in consultation with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, to study the extent to which the provisions of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 93B-15.1 have improved the ability of military-trained applicants and military spouses to become licensed by occupational licensing boards in the state.

**North Carolina has implemented two of three recommended best practices for military spouse licensure.** In 2012, the United States Department of the Treasury and Department of Defense laid out three best practice recommendations to ease the burdens of occupational licensure transfer faced by military spouses: licensure by endorsement, temporary or provisional licensure, and an expedited licensure application process.

The General Assembly has enacted legislation related to the first two of these three best practices, requiring occupational licensing boards to implement licensure by endorsement and to provide temporary or provisional licensure for military spouses. North Carolina is one of nine states to implement these two provisions but not offer an expedited licensure application process. Rather than wait for a temporary license to be processed, an expedited process would allow military spouses to begin working immediately.

## Highlights

**Recommendation:**

The General Assembly should require occupational licensing boards to implement an expedited application process for military spouses.

**There is no requirement for occupational licensing boards to promote N.C. Gen. Stat. § 93B-15.1.** Occupational licensing boards are not required to make veterans and military spouses aware of the opportunities and benefits provided by the statute such as the waiver of application fees. Although the number of military-trained applicants and military spouses seeking licensure using the statutory provisions has increased since implementation, several military advocacy groups reported being unaware of this legislation in interviews with the Program Evaluation Division.

**Recommendation:**

The General Assembly should require occupational licensing boards to promote military licensure provisions so that military-trained applicants and military spouses are aware of the opportunities the legislation provides.

**Stakeholders in the military community feel the application of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 93B-15.1 is important and should be tracked.** PED interviewed five military advocacy groups during this review and each group indicated it was in favor of establishing a reporting requirement to track the number of military-trained applicants and military spouse applicants.

Boards do not generally support introducing a requirement that they report on the number of military-trained applicants or military spouses who apply for licensure or are denied licensure under the military-specific provisions. However, tracking this information would allow the General Assembly to better monitor use of the statute.

**Recommendation:**

The General Assembly should require occupational licensing boards to annually report on (i) the number of military-trained applicants and military spouses who were licensed pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 93B-15.1 and (ii) the number of military-trained applicants and military spouses who were denied licensure.