

The school that is right for you varies depending on the career you are pursuing. To help you meet your career goals, find out which schools in your state offer the license or credential you need. Asking the right questions early can ensure the time and work you put into your education pays off.

Q:

What is your career goal?

Check out [My Next Move](#) — an interactive resource for military spouses who are exploring their career options.

A:

I don't have one.

Check out the [Career Exploration](#) resources on MySECO.

- ▶ Try some of the free [self-assessments](#) on MySECO to explore your skills or interests.
- ▶ Call 800-342-9647 to talk to a certified Career Counselor for one-on-one guidance.

A:

I know what I want.

▶ Great! Before you select the school:

- Revisit your short-term and long-term goals.
- Consider how your professional or personal experience can support your goal.

Q:

Do you know what type of education you need to reach your goal?

A:

I'm not sure.

▶ Take some time to research the education requirement by occupation using the following:

- [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- [O*Net Interest Profiler](#)
- [My Next Move](#)
- [Research Occupations Tool](#)

A:

Yes, I do.

▶ Fantastic. Make sure you keep up to date on your occupation requirements by using the resources above.

Q:

What type of program are you interested in pursuing?

A:

Certification or Certificate

A certification or certificate acknowledges you meet a recognized standard that commonly includes education, experience and an exam of knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the job. Certifications can increase job opportunities, result in higher salaries or garner recognition.

▶ [Certification Finder](#)

A:

Licensure

Licensure is the process by which a federal, state or local governmental agency grants you permission to practice in a particular occupation or profession that is subject to regulation under government authority. Examples of professions requiring licensure: nursing, teaching and engineering.

▶ [Advantages of Licensure](#)
▶ [State Licensure Directory](#)
▶ [USA4 Military Families](#)

A:

Associate degree with specific concentration

A degree recognizes academic completion at a school or university. Common degrees awarded include associate degree, bachelor's degree and master's degree.

▶ [Going Back to School When You're A Military Spouse](#)
▶ [Choosing a School](#)
▶ [Highly Portable Degrees for Military Spouses](#)

Q:

Will this program help you reach your goal?

A:

I'm not sure.

▶ We want you to be successful with your search. Call 800-342-9647 to request a specialty consultation with a certified Career Counselor for additional career exploration and school and program search resources.

A:

I think so.

▶ OK. Take some extra time to think through the details of the specific program and use the resources and questions below to help with that.

Benefits and Resources

Select an accredited school.

- ▶ To ease the transfer of credits to another accredited school
- ▶ To have greater access to loans and scholarships
- ▶ To know your school meets nationally accepted standards

- ▶ What is the school's accreditation status with the Department of Education?
- ▶ Will your school's accreditation meet your career goals? Sometimes regional versus national accreditation makes a difference.
- ▶ What is the impact of attending a school that is not accredited?
- ▶ If the school is not accredited, will the program of study prepare you for a specific certification?
- ▶ Have you inquired as to the percentage of students enrolled at the school who achieve passing scores on the associated certification exam?

➔ Accreditation Resources on MySECO

[Understanding Online Schools](#), [Accreditation Search](#), [The Importance of Accreditation](#), [College Scorecard](#)

Consider portability and transferability.

- ▶ To ensure you can transfer your credits, experience and licenses should you move
- ▶ To shorten the time to rejoin the workforce when you relocate

- ▶ Will you be able to complete your degree or program of study at your current institution? If not, what are the school's transfer policies?
 - If you are completing an associate degree at a local community college, what sort of articulation agreement have been set up with four-year universities?
 - An articulation agreement is a legal document produced when two or more academic institutions form a partnership to provide a formalized pathway for student transfers.
- ▶ If you are pursuing an online training program for a profession that requires hands-on experience, what resources are you taking to ensure you obtain the appropriate experience?
- ▶ Have you inquired as to whether you may be able to receive credit for life or volunteer experience through Prior Adult Learning ([LearningCounts™/CAEL](#))?

➔ Portability and Transferability Resources on MySECO

[American Association of Community Colleges Finder](#), [Going Back to School When You're A Military Spouse](#), [Highly Portable Degrees for Military Spouses](#), [Excel as a Nontraditional Student](#)

Weigh the total cost and financial assistance.

- ▶ To help you identify and budget your expenses — tuition, books, fees, etc.
- ▶ To identify resources to cover costs — scholarships, grants, loans
- ▶ To explore the value of your education against possible job opportunities

- ▶ What is a reasonable amount to pay for your degree?
- ▶ What is the projected salary for students who graduate with your particular degree? Will you make enough money to repay your student loan debt if you have it?
- ▶ What is the total cost of attending your school?
- ▶ What financial aid options are available to you?
- ▶ Have you created a budget that includes your education expenses?
- ▶ If you are using loans to help finance your education, are you aware of the default rate among other students attending the program?
- ▶ Have you looked into the [My Career Advancement Account Scholarship](#) and the \$4,000 of tuition assistance available to eligible military spouses?

➔ Total Cost and Financial Assistance Resources on MySECO

[Being an Informed Education Consumer](#), [Federal Student Aid](#), [Know Before You Owe](#), [Qualifying for In-State Tuition](#), [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#), [College Cost Calculator](#), [Budgeting for Education](#), [My Career Advancement Account Scholarship Fact Sheet](#), [SECO Financial Assistance Resources](#)

Next step

Using the information and insights gained here, search for a school or program that meets your needs and goals.

➔ If eligible, search the "Where can I go" section of the [My Career Advancement Account Scholarship](#) website.

➔ All spouses can use the Department of Education's [College Navigator](#).

Remember, you can always call a certified Career Counselor at 800-342-9647 with any questions about:

- ▶ Exploring careers
- ▶ Starting your job search
- ▶ Selecting a school
- ▶ Connecting to thousands of available jobs through the [Military Spouse Employment Partnership Career Portal](#)
- ▶ Funding your education and the [My Career Advancement Account Scholarship](#)