

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 27-10
	DATE March 15, 2011

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DIRECTORS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS
STATE ONE-STOP CENTER SYSTEM LEADS

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of Employment and Training Administration (ETA)
Occasional Paper: *The Implementation Evaluation of the Military Spouse
Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration (Final Report)*

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of ETA Occasional Paper: *The Implementation Evaluation of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration.*

2. Background. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) began a joint initiative to support the spouses of military personnel in their pursuit of portable postsecondary degrees or industry-recognized credentials. Through the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (CAA) Demonstration, eligible spouses could obtain an account to pay for career-related education and training. Demonstration goals were to: (1) help military spouses with careers, and (2) encourage the retention of service members by increasing families' satisfaction with military life. Eight states received demonstration grants, which were used in substate areas where participating military bases and One-Stop Career Centers were located. DOL and DoD established demonstration guidelines about the local partnerships to be formed; which military spouses were eligible for CAAs; the types of training, education, and credentials that could be funded; the funding amount available to each spouse; and the extent of counseling that demonstration staff could give to spouses.

3. Publication Description. This report presents findings from the implementation evaluation of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account Demonstration. *Part I: Early Implementation of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration*, provides an overview of the demonstration and key findings about the demonstration's partnerships, early implementation experiences, marketing efforts, and other topics. *Part II: Additional Findings from the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration Study: Implementation Progress and Participants' Characteristics and Plans*, supplements the earlier part of the report by providing additional information on implementation issues and quantitative information about the characteristics of participants, as well as participants' plans on using the CAAs for education and training programs and the attainment of credentials, licenses, or certifications to support careers in high-wage, high-growth occupations.

Findings from *Part I: Early Implementation of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration*, include the following:

- **Strong partnerships built on each partner’s skills and experiences.** Using their prior experiences working with military families, military partners conducted marketing efforts and also cultivated word-of-mouth marketing, approaches that participants also mentioned when asked how they learned about the demonstration. The workforce partner brought experience with providing training services to customers through Individual Training Accounts, a familiar system for some of the main education providers. The workforce partner also brought linkages to employers and experiences with job search assistance and placement.
- **The demonstration expanded the number and types of education institutions partnering with workforce agencies.** With eligible training institutions defined so broadly, participants could select from a wide range of institutions. One result of the broad definition was that sites, particularly the workforce partners, expanded the educational institutions with which they had relationships to include those with online and distance learning programs available through military bases.
- **Even with account self-management, intensive staff time was required.** Staff at sites found that the demonstration required significant time to fulfill the stated expectations, including marketing, assisting potential participants in selecting a career field or training program and opening accounts, and ongoing account management.
- **Managing CAAs posed new accounting challenges for workforce partners.** Most significantly, sites had to track the funds promised and provided to CAA participants. Two separate categories required monitoring—obligations and actual spending—and sites often developed multiple systems in their attempt to track this information.

Findings from *Part II: Additional Findings from the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration Study: Implementation Progress and Participants’ Characteristics and Plans*, include the following:

- **Tracking funds continued to be a complicated process for sites.** As the demonstration progressed, sites developed processes for tracking and reconciling differences between obligated and expended grant funds, sometimes relying on more than one database. Some sites used one system for recording obligated funding for each participant, while another system tracked expended funds.
- **More than 5,000 CAAs were awarded.** By May 2009, 5,366 CAAs were awarded. Monthly enrollments peaked in May 2008 at 543 CAAs, and remained high that summer. Enrollments tapered down to about 100 to 200 per month by spring 2009.
- **Typical recipients were female with an average age of 29.** Prior education ranged from high school diploma/GED (39%) to bachelor’s degree (12%), with the rest in between. A

slim majority were white, non-Hispanic. Many had children under age 13; these spouses averaged 2 children. Most, but not all, had some work experience.

- **Education and training programs varied.** Among recipients for whom data was available, 98 percent planned to receive education/training and credentials, 46 percent were working on an occupational skills credential, 40 percent were working towards an associate's degree, and 14 percent towards a bachelor's degree. Among those planning to receive education and training, 26 percent chose distance (Internet) learning. The average education and training program length was 17 months; and more than half of the CAAs were for training in the health care field. Community colleges were the most common providers.

4. Availability. To view an abstract of this publication, as well as to download the executive summary and full report, visit the ETA Occasional Paper Series Web site at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.