

2024

Military Service Member and Military Spouse Licensing Report

DECEMBER 2024

Report Requirement

Senate Bill 5359, adopted during the 2017 regular legislative session, and 2SHB1009, adopted during the 2023 regular legislative session, charged the Department of Licensing (DOL) and the Department of Health to file a biennial report to the legislature. The Washington State Military Transition Council, beginning January 1, 2018, annually reports updates on our efforts to implement the requirements of chapter 18.340 RCW, chapter 23, Laws of 2011, and chapter 351, Laws of 2011.

This report contains background information and updates on progress efforts.

Background Information

The Department issues professional and business licenses for 34 non-health-related programs.

As of October 1, 2024, there are approximately 238,303 active professional licensees and about 30,649 active business licensees.

For professional licenses, the Department ensures individuals meet or exceed the minimum qualifications before being licensed. The Department reviews education and experience, administers examinations, reviews background checks, and ensures continuing education requirements are met.

Professional licenses regulated by the Department are as follows:

- Architects
- Auctioneers
- Bail Bond Agents and Bail Recovery Agents
- Tattooing, Body Art & Body Piercing
- Camping Resort Sales
- Combative Sports
- Cosmetologists
- Court Reporters
- Driver Training School Instructors
- Funeral Directors and Embalmers
- Geologists
- Home Inspectors
- Landscape Architects
- Notaries Public
- Private Investigators
- Real Estate Brokers
- Real Estate Appraisers
- Security Guards
- Timeshare Sales

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After license issuance, the Department's regulatory functions include conducting audits and inspections, and resolving complaints with or without administrative action. When warranted, the Department may take appropriate administrative action that includes fines, license denials, suspensions, and revocations.

The Department also provides information, educates licensees or the public, and conducts outreach efforts.

Many of the Department's licensee programs have a comity with other jurisdictions (reciprocity). This makes it easier for individuals from other states to transfer their licenses to Washington, to include military spouses. See the table below for a list of professions with reciprocity and the requirements applicants are subject to:

Program Type	Applicant Requirements
<i>Architects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay a fee • Have passed applicable national exams • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction • Submit a written summary of RCW's 18.08 and 18.235, and WAC 308-12-028(2)(g) • Complete an oral exam (may be requested by the board)
<i>Cosmetologists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Have passed applicable national written and practical exams • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction
<i>Court Reporters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Have passed applicable exams • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction
<i>Embalmers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Have passed applicable national exams • Pass the Washington State law exam • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction • For internships, provide verification of time served in another state per the requirements in RCW 18.39
<i>Funeral Directors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Have passed applicable national exams • Pass the Washington State law exam

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction • For internships, provide verification of time served in another state per the requirements in RCW 18.39
<i>Geologists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Have passed applicable national exams • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction
<i>Home Inspectors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Pass the Washington portion of the exam • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction with requirements that meet or exceed Washington State's
<i>Landscape Architects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Have passed applicable national exams • Hold a current license in another jurisdiction • Complete a Washington State law analysis
<i>Real Estate Appraisers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • There is no exam required and we have this agreement with 27 states*
<i>Real Estate Brokers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and pay fee • Depending on their out-of-state license history, the general portion of their exam can be waived, or education substituted

*Typically, DOL requires all professional license applicants to meet standards equivalent to Washington State's, and each application is evaluated individually. The Real Estate appraisers' program can offer agreements with other states without exam requirements as they have federal oversight and regular audits to ensure compliance with federal guidelines.

Most Department of Licensing professions are regulated under the authority of the Director. The following have regulatory boards:

- Architect Board
- Collection Agency Board
- Funeral and Cemetery Board
- Geologist Board
- Landscape Architects Board

Progress and future steps

Time to License:

Since the launch of DOL's new POLARIS licensing management system, the agency has obtained a more accurate assessment of the time it takes for military service members and their spouses to receive licenses in each profession DOL regulates. Below is a reference table that displays information on the time to license from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

Program Type	Average Time to License (days)	Number of Military Members	Number of Military Spouses	Total Military Applicants
<i>Appraisers</i>	112*	4	0	4
<i>Architects</i>	14	12	0	12
<i>Auctioneers and Auction</i>	2	2	0	2
<i>Bail Bonds</i>	29	9	0	9
<i>Body Art and Piercing</i>	16	33	13	46
<i>Cemeteries</i>	2	6	1	7
<i>Combative Sports</i>	64*	9	2	11
<i>Commercial Drivers License</i>	12	50	2	52
<i>Cosmetology</i>	32*	107	104	211
<i>Driver Training School</i>	3	39	0	39
<i>Funerals</i>	40*	6	0	6
<i>Geologists</i>	176*	5	0	5
<i>Home Inspector</i>	12	13	0	13

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Program Type	Average Time to License (days)	Number of Military Members	Number of Military Spouses	Total Military Applicants
<i>Motorcycle Safety</i>	2	15	0	15
<i>Notary Publics</i>	30	290	104	394
<i>Private Investigator</i>	63*	52	1	53
<i>Real Estate</i>	3	215	29	244
<i>Security Guards</i>	58*	762	49	811
<i>Timeshares</i>	3	6	1	7
Total	33 days (average)	1,635	306	1,941

*As shown in the table above, some professions took longer than 30 days to license. This is because some applications requiring additional information and DOL's request for information (RFI), took longer to complete. In this data set, DOL uses a rolling average to determine the average time to license, which means that if one or two applicants have an RFI, the overall average skews depending on how fast applicants respond to the agency's request.

Below is additional information about the specific professions that had an average time to license of over 30 days to illustrate the extenuating circumstances that can delay licensure:

Appraisers: Appraiser applicants are required to pass an examination before licensure. All applicants were issued licenses within 7 days of completing the examination requirement.

Combative Sports: Only two of the nine applicants exceeded the 30-day threshold for licensure. One applicant submitted an incomplete application early in 2023 and did not submit the required payment and physical examination until June 2024. The applicant was issued a license the following day. Another applicant shows a wait time of 39 days, but this is due to the applicant requesting his license fee come out of the prize purse. We backdated the licensure date to the day of the event.

Cosmetology: We had 40 applicants exceed the 30-day threshold because of unfulfilled requests for information (RFI) and/or request for payment (RFP).

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Funerals: We had two applications by the same applicant exceed the 30-day threshold. This was because of a testing requirement. The license was issued three days after the examination was successfully completed.

Geologists: Geologist licensure requires successful completion of an examination. The examination is offered twice each year. This requirement resulted in a longer time to license.

Private Investigators and Security Guards: These programs offer a 60-day temporary license while the applicants complete the necessary coursework and background checks for permanent licensure. So while they show a longer time to license, these applicants are working during the wait period for a permanent license.

As of October 1, 2024, there are approximately 8,201 self-identified active military members or spouse/partner licenses. The largest professions include:

- Real estate – 2,059 members, 172 spouses (2,231 total)
- Cosmetology – 1,562 members, 196 spouses (1,758 total)
- Notary publics – 2,290 members, 712 spouses (3,002 total)
- Security guards – 766 members, 53 spouses (819 total)

Additionally, through our licensing system, the Department of Licensing offers several additional features for military members and spouses, including:

- *Expedited Processing* – military members and spouses applying for initial or renewed licenses receive priority attention.
- *License portability* – Military members and spouses who are licensed in another state may transfer their license to WA under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).
- *Status Options* – while not in WA, licensed military members may place their license in 'military status', while spouses may place their license in 'inactive status'.

Conclusion:

The successful implementation of expedited applications for military members and their spouses has enhanced the efficiency and accessibility of meaningful employment for our military community. By streamlining the application process, we have not only reduced wait times but also demonstrated our commitment to supporting those who serve our country. Moving forward, it will be essential to maintain these improvements, gather ongoing feedback, and explore further innovations to continue meeting the unique needs of our armed forces customers. Through these efforts, we reaffirm our dedication to the well-being and readiness of our military community.