



**Regulation Matters:  
a CLEAR conversation**

## **Episode 16: Update on Initiatives for Credentialing of Military Members** **May 14, 2019**

**Line Dempsey:** Welcome to our podcast, Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. I'm your host, Line Dempsey. For those that do not know me, I'm on the CLEAR board of directors as well as the current chair of the National Certified Investigator Training committee and vice chair of the annual conference program committee with CLEAR. As many of you may be aware, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, or CLEAR, is an association of individuals, agencies and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. Our podcast is a chance for you to hear about the latest and greatest in our community. Today I'm joined by Bill Brigman with Solutions for Information Design, Michael Behm with Stateside, and Sara Appel with the Multi-state Collaborative on Military Credit. We're glad to have you with us. Welcome.

**Guests:** Thank you. It's good to be here. Thanks.

**Line:** Thank you for joining me tonight. The topic that we'd like to talk about today is credentialing of military members and spouses. There's a lot going on in this area, and it would be good to get an update on the various programs, initiatives, and legislation. I know that we've certainly gone through this in North Carolina and dealt with it. But Bill, let's start with you if you would. What programs are in place to help service members earn credentials in planning for their civilian careers post-military service?

**Bill Brigman:** Sure, Line. Actually thanks to CLEAR for doing this. We've had a couple of opportunities to speak with the folks at CLEAR at the conferences. These are programs that are active in each of the services now. There's a program called Credentialing Opportunities Online, or COOL for short. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps - and soon even the United States Coast Guard are coming online. And it gives opportunities for service members--active duty, reserve and guardsmen--to be able to look at their military occupation specialty and find out, first of all, what are the civilian careers that align. And behind which civilian careers align with those occupations they've been trained in, there are opportunities for them to pursue the national credentials, mostly national certifications, that align with those. And the services help them pay for those certifications and help them to not only get ready for their next career when they leave the service, but it also helps them prepare. The services

invest in it because it gives them an opportunity to get a better force multiplier, helps them improve their skill sets for the military.

**Line:** Excellent, and so is there not a new executive order by President Trump for services?

**Bill:** Actually, there's been a lot of focus on the national level from Congress to the White House. Even in the previous administration, there was National Defense Authorization Act several years back, which stated the intent. The Congress asked the services to provide information to military members on exactly what certifications would be available to them and would relate. And so COOL sites were created and largely honor that request. The last administration, the Obama administration, had a program called Joining Forces, and President Obama even in one of his State of the Union addresses made mention of military credentialing and the importance of it. And that was coming out of the high unemployment that military members faced after the last Great Recession. But it's continued to be an emphasis, and even President Trump recently posted a part of his executive order continuing the emphasis on credentialing of military members. So, it can highlight what they've been trained and educated and experienced in to translate into the corporate world when they pursue civilian careers after their military time.

**Line:** Right, after their separation. So I guess looking at the COOL program, what types of credentials are available through that program?

**Bill:** There's, there's literally thousands of credentials. And what has shaped out with this, or shaken out with this, is the services through the Department Defense have a checklist of credentialing standards pretty much that they try to adhere to, to make sure that these are recognized, industry-approved and valued national certifications that the members can pursue.

One thing that they try to do is look at applicability to each career field, but you'll see things ranging from the automotive service excellence certification for mechanics, the Federal Aviation Administration's airframe and power plant certifications for aircraft maintenance which you find in many of the services. Things like that are available, but you also find things like emergency medical technicians. And that starts leading into getting a national certification they would apply to state license. That's one of the challenges that has been seen is obviously being able to translate these certifications they attain and their experience into state licensure in various professions and occupations. And that's kind of the area where the state licensing work and legislation that both Michael and Sarah have been working on has become so important as well. So those are examples of where service members pursue certifications with the assistance of the military helping them fund those programs through the COOL programs. But that's kind of a start or a baseline of where they're getting started with pursuing certifications.

**Line:** So that's really interesting. And I've been going through an EMT certification course this past semester just for fun. And the national registry which we have, North Carolina is not one of the states that is actually a member of that, but a lot of times they will at least do credentialing through that. So

it's interesting and it's a great avenue for especially service members that are coming out, that have these skills that can be put to work immediately because there is such a demand.

Well, let me, I guess, switch over to Michael. Can you talk to us a little bit about how service members are being aided by legislation in the state governments to improve their opportunities to use what they have in their military training and experience to gain these necessary credentials that are required for employment often?

**Michael:** Absolutely, Line. Hey, and thank you for including me in this podcast today. This is a really great opportunity to get this information out to a lot of people. I guess I'd say right now, and Bill and Sarah are gonna be familiar with this, is that in most states there exists a statutory base line of laws out there right now. And I would think that all 50 states and Puerto Rico have laws right now to assist veterans in obtaining a variety of occupational licenses. And these laws will direct a licensing board or an agency to recognize equivalent military training, education and experience towards the requirements for licensure or certification.

The challenge with that baseline is some of the ambiguity of it. And so, states have moved further to try to add detail and they rushed to do this primarily back in 2012 when the Licensure and Credentialing Task Force was created at DOD, and the White House helped to begin reaching out to the states. And you had a number of different efforts, starting first in the federal government and then reaching out to the states. And the states started moving forward on a variety of types of legislation: First, those laws that would just recognize the education, experience and training, and then you had state laws that were easing the access to licensure, maybe waiving or reducing the fees, providing some automatic reciprocity for certain types of licenses.

In fact, one of the really successful programs early on was with the commercial drivers licenses and essentially waiving the skills test for those service members that had at least, I believe it was, two years' experience operating a commercial grade motor vehicle or truck (their trucks and buses as part of their military job]). And so they were waiving basically the skills tests, bringing the vehicle to the testing facility, for somebody who could demonstrate that they had that experience in the military.

Now, some states right now, Illinois is one of them, are even doing a one-to-one exchange on licenses. So, if you served in the military, and you drove a truck or a bus, you could pick up the license and you wouldn't have to retake any tests.

Other examples of how the states are helping separating service members is with a variety of compacts and including separating service members in those compacts, as the Nurse Licensure Compact that allows folks who've served as corpsmen or military medics to use their state of legal residence as their home state for the privilege of practicing, providing they can satisfy nursing requirements. You have another compact right now that's moving to the states, the Interstate Compact for EMS. And this compact was originally designed to enable EMS professionals to cross state lines during the course of an emergency and perform the work that they perform. But what it also did

is, it simplifies endorsement requirements for transferring a license, and it also recognized the experience, education and training by corpsmen and medics. And so far, that interstate compact is passed in 16 states, the Nurse Licensure Compact is passed in 31 States, and there's also a Physical Therapy Licensure Compact that allows separating service members to designate a home state for their license and use the privileged practice provision in the compact to work in any of the other member states without having to go out and take the classes or secure license. That's passed in about 22 states.

Just one more note. Another very interesting program that states passed are the Pathways legislation, and Virginia was a state, one of the first states, to enable separated corpsmen and medics to practice their emergency medical skills or any other type of healthcare under the supervision of a doctor in Virginia, among six of the largest health care employers in the states and serve under that doctor (and now they can serve under a nurse) until they're able to secure the license or credential they need or the additional training they need. And Virginia has, it's called the Military Medic and Corpsmen Program. It was passed in 2016 and just this last year, it's been expanded from a pilot to a full-time program. Louisiana and Maine have also passed legislation that allows separating corpsmen and medics to do the same work. And I believe (and Line, you'll keep me honest here) but I believe in North Carolina by rule making, you enable medics and corpsmen to do the same thing. And in California, they have a similar program. So these have all been very successful, and they've been really great opportunities, maybe an alternative path to licensure, in these states that have passed them. And some other states we're watching pretty closely this year are considering similar legislation to help corpsmen and medics. But that only helps corpsmen and medics, and it doesn't grant them a license, so there's some more work to be done in that area.

**Line:** Right. No, I understand that completely. Well, looking at it at a different way, let me pose this question to both Bill and Michael. Are there instances where military spouses also have these opportunities? I know with licensure for us in North Carolina, we do grant that, but how exactly does that work for you guys, looking both at the COOL program and then through state legislation?

**Bill:** Well, right now, for the COOL programs, those are primarily military member-focused, so it's not opportunities that are granted to the spouses at this time. So, the way that both the legislation and the DOD intent, Department of Defense intent, has been focused on military members and optimizing their training opportunities. So spouses, certainly aren't forgotten about, but this opportunity right now is for the military members. There are other programs for transitioning family members that are helpful through the family support centers and readiness centers, but the COOL programs right now are military-focused.

**Michael:** And in terms of the military spouses in the states, that's been a big effort by one of the programs within the Department of Defense called the DSLO, the State Liaison Office is what it is. And they work to advocate on behalf of the Department of Defense and military families about mostly quality of life issues, but spousal employment has been a really big effort primarily because there's just so many, there's so many military spouses that are following whether their husbands or wives

around the country, and so many of them -- and I think the number (Bill, you'll know that this is accurate) but I think the last number I had was that 72% of military spouses are faced with a requirement to re-apply for a professional license in an occupation or profession in which they already work when they move. And it was a big problem early on; a number of states are out trying to address it, and they're addressing it in several ways. By efforts passing legislation that would enable licensure by endorsement. And I think it's North Carolina that requires its occupational licensing boards to issue a license to a military spouse, that they can satisfy the conditions of holding a current license in another state and they can demonstrate competency in the occupation through some education credits or recent experience that they can show.

And North Carolina has also reduced the fees. That's a big issue too, for military spouses, is either fee waivers legislation or reducing fees. They can be deterred from securing licenses or certification just by the high cost of the license. And it's a big deal on an enlisted family, especially if they're raising kids and since many of these families are moving once every three or four years, it can get expensive.

And so, they've also... States have also expanded the temporary licensure, that is allowing military spouses to receive a temporary license on relocating or allowing them again to go through an expedited application review to secure the license as well. They can also take advantage of some of these compacts that I mentioned just a few minutes ago. And there was an effort, there was a federal effort under the Obama Administration, Joining Forces, that was led by Dr. Jill Biden. I think that has largely gone away, but I know that the vice president's wife, Karen Pence, has a similar effort under way right now that looks to aid military spouses with some expedited application review encouragement to the states. But also there was money I believe in the last NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act) that would help cover the costs of licensure that they had to secure after a move.

**Line:** Gotcha, well that's great. Well, let me actually move now to Sara. If you could maybe tell us a little bit about the Multi-state Collaborative on Military Credit within the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. I guess, what states are participating; what are their goals?

**Sara:** Sure, and thanks again for the invitation to contribute to today's conversation. I'm learning a lot, so I appreciate that. The mission of the Multi-state Collaborative on Military Credit, lovingly known as MCMC, is to facilitate an inter-state partnership of 13 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. And their main purpose is to translate competencies acquired by military-connected students through their military training and experiences and applying those toward meaningful college credits. States exchange information and share best practices in the areas of articulation of credit, certification and licensure, communication, and data and technology. So please check out our free resources, at [MHEC.org/MCMC](http://MHEC.org/MCMC). And the MHEC YouTube channel has over 20 of the MCMC webinars archived for your viewing pleasure.

All of the MCMC states focus on the following three goals. Assisting with critical life transitions from the military to post-secondary education, and then from post-secondary education to civilian

employment - that's our top goal. And then we have number two, increasing post-secondary education completion rates by creating models for the consistent, and also importantly the transparent, and effective awarding of credit for military training and experience that can be scaled regionally and nationally, thereby lowering the cost of education and reducing the time to completion. And then the last one is establishing a strong network of support and communication, documentation, and data collection among institutions and organizations for those purposes of promoting shared interest and tracking the efficacy of efforts to really enhance military-connected students' educational success.

We've had some successes in the last few years, but we do have hurdles, and right now our biggest hurdle that we're facing is military-connected students are either getting too little or too much credit. So some of our states actually have legislation or policies where institutions must accept all of the American Council on Education's military credit recommendations where they generally end up as electives, which can then lead to issues with financial aid. The problem is really the amount of elective credit that the students are given, and these electives may flag the student as not showing satisfactory academic progress. Even though in their own core major classes they're passing with flying colors, but the institution may be looking at the data and say, 'Well look at these credit hours, and they still haven't graduated.' So then the student is labeled as not showing academic progress and may be put on probation or their financial aid is impacted.

But then on the flip side, we have some institutions that just automatically give credit for leadership and physical education - that's it. So, members of MCMC are working with legislators to reword the policy while others are working on streamlining the awarding of military credit via a public-facing military-connected student portal at their institutions. And then some of them are using proprietary higher education software that create transfer articulations based on the information that the institution submits.

**Line:** Well, that's interesting when you talk about the aspect of maybe having too much credit. I went through a similar thing, and it's one of those things where schools just need to look a little closer than just what the stats are showing. I had really high GPAs and high SAT and I graduated 11th in my class, but it was a small school, so there were 20 people and I got a rejection letter from a university that won't be named because I was graduating in the lower 50th percentile of my graduating class. So I know about not looking at the numbers correctly. Well, let me ask kind of one last final question and put this to all three of you. I guess what's on the horizon, and where can people go to find out more about this?

**Bill:** I'll start; this is Bill. And I think some of the things that we have on the horizon: COOL programs continue to expand. Each of the services approaches it a little bit differently based upon their funding opportunities and budgets. But each of the services - Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, soon-to-be Coast Guard - have found ways to provide some funding support for the credentials and certifications that members are pursuing. The programs and opportunities continue to expand. The Navy is looking at more individual opportunities that really do an individual look at an individual member's amount of

experience and types of experience. And they're gonna have another program, Line, taken off with that. The Department of Defense is looking at other programs, not necessarily credentialing specific, but something called the skill bridge program that they have authority to do now, which allows military members in their last 180 days to pursue training with industry and corporate employers, to still be on the government and the military's payroll while they receive training opportunities. So those are things that are out there that help the transitioning service members through credentials as well as other programs. And I think that Michael may have some other thoughts on their career readiness focus opportunities.

**Michael:** Yeah, real quick, just following on that, Bill and Line. The department is more like, I guess, maybe a mindset, this new focus on what they call career readiness focus. And it's really an effort that's, I guess, best described as ensuring that the separating service members are leaving the military with content knowledge, skills of course, habits, dispositions in multiple subjects to be successful in whatever their future career is going to be.

And this is no longer necessarily a focus on getting the soldier/ sailor/ airman / marine into a four-year college, but perhaps includes a vocational track instead. Training in particular technology or a work track, apprenticeship or bridge education to get that service man or woman into a meaningful job that can lead to a real career after the military. So it's not that they don't want you to go to a four-year college, but maybe that's not the best track for you and maybe your experience and the skill sets you acquired in the military should be helping to point you in a different direction.

Just one other thing about the states, and this could be part of the future, is that -Line, I suspect you know this, and Sara, you probably do, too- the Department of Labor awarded the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Council of State Governments along with the National Governor's Association funding for a three-year project to create an Occupational Licensing Learning Consortium. And it's intended really to try to harmonize licensure and certification laws and ensure that licensing requirements in the state are not overly broad or burdensome and don't create some unnecessary barriers to the labor market, but also to improve the portability for certain types of occupational licenses across state lines.

And I suspect one of the things that's really neat that just passed in Arizona is Doug Ducey, the Governor, signed a bill into law that makes Arizona the first state in the nation to automatically grant occupational licenses to anyone who moves there with an unblemished credential from another state. And it's just kind of neat because the legislature wants to bring more specialty professions and encourage more people to move into Arizona and help build its economy. So it'll be interesting to see what other states make of this and what other states follow suit, and how this Occupational Licensing Learning Consortium recommends that states move forward after it concludes its work at the end of this year.

**Line:** Interesting. And Sara?

**Sara:** Yeah, we've got some exciting next steps for MCMC. I'm really happy to say that MCMC is still very much involved with the Credential Engine. One of the MCMC executive committee members, Dr. Ken Sauer, has been deeply immersed with Credential Engine, I think, almost from the beginning, not only that he contributes the higher education perspectives, but he also shares the importance of how military-connected students fit in. Right now, many of our states are experiencing an impetus from their governor or other state officials to really focus on career technical credit and workforce development. So MCMC is really starting to examine what role or roles our military-connected students can engage in these fields. We continue to work with Army University and really hope to be part of the Navy's plan to create a community college. Lumina Foundation is interested in military learning, and MCMC has been asked to continue to be a part of that and we're very excited and honored to maintain that collaboration.

**Line:** Excellent! Well, thank you, Bill, Michael and Sara, for your time and being a part of the CLEAR podcast. It's wonderful to have the opportunity to share and learn from each other, and I wanna thank you for speaking with us today. And also I wanna thank our listeners. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation very soon. Please subscribe to our podcast. We're available on Podbean, iTunes, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast and Google Play, as well as Stitcher, Spotify or TuneIn. And if you enjoyed this podcast episode, please leave a rating or comments in the app. Your reviews help us improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find us. Feel free to visit our website at [www.clearhq.org](http://www.clearhq.org) for additional resources and a calendar of upcoming training programs and events.

Finally, I did wanna thank our CLEAR staff, specifically, Stephanie Thompson, our content coordinator and editor for this program. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey and I hope to be speaking to you again very soon.

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