



## FEDERAL LEADERS CAN ENABLE

# State Access to Military Enlistment Data

People need access to data to navigate their post-high school options, including joining the armed services. Policymakers need to better understand how many students in their states are interested in joining the armed services, successfully enlist, and persist. And educators need to understand how their education programs are preparing students to be eligible to join.

**States hold the key to not only providing military enlistment data but also interpreting, contextualizing, and integrating it into tools that are vital for stakeholders.** Yet, states and state education agencies find themselves hamstrung, lacking systematized access to this data. The result is a reliance on makeshift solutions like surveys, which do not yield a complete view of the landscape.

### Why Military Enlistment Data?

Around 70,000 people enlist in the US armed services every year, half of whom are recent high school graduates. Joining the armed forces can constitute a successful career path for many graduating students, who may choose it because of the education benefits, a family history of military service, an interest in a specific branch or military role, or a wide variety of other reasons.

## States Need a Partnership with the Department of Defense

Clear, transparent, and useful data is not just a bureaucratic need—it's the cornerstone of informed decisionmaking for individuals, policymakers, and the public. States—through their statewide longitudinal data systems—are best positioned to provide this information, but to do so, they need to establish a partnership with the Department of Defense (DoD), where enlistment data resides. An ongoing partnership with DoD could provide states the key pieces of data they need on whether students are enlisting and succeeding in the military. States in turn could use this information to provide districts, schools, and students insights on the military as a viable postsecondary pathway. For instance, state leaders would be able to:

- Improve their understanding of the postsecondary pathways available to students, including military service;
- Develop more effective counseling services to support students in determining which postsecondary pathway, including military service, is best for them; and
- Ensure that students are adequately prepared for postsecondary success, including military careers.

Unlocking the full potential of young people hinges on access to data. Federal action will help these students, and those who support them, make informed decisions about their futures and ensure that they have the resources they need to succeed.



### How North Dakota Calculates Military Enlistment

North Dakota has established a Choice Ready framework that educators can use to support students and determine if they are postsecondary, workforce, or military ready. The tool provides a clear list of what a student must self-report to be counted as “military ready,” including scoring 31 or higher on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), not having any suspensions or expulsions on their records, and successfully completing the state’s required physical education courses.

The challenge is that this information is self-reported and collecting it is not mandated. If North Dakota had access to DoD data on enlistment, they would have an accurate picture of how many of their graduates enlist, persist, and complete military enrollments.

**For the full set of federal recommendations, please review the [Data Quality Campaign’s vision to transform state data systems](#).**