

Living Arrangements Terminology

Military families are on the move, typically changing locations at 2-3 year intervals. There are special terms used to describe the process of moving and special living situations related to moves.

Full Name	Acronym	Description
Basic Allowance for Housing	BAH	Intended to supplement a service member’s income to support equitable access to housing based on duty location, pay grade, and dependency status. It may be offered when housing on a military installation is not available and the duty station is within the United States.
Cost of Living Allowance	COLA	A non-taxable allowance intended to off-set the cost of non-housing goods and services when living abroad at the government’s request.
Commissary	—	Grocery store on military installation
Continental United States	CONUS	References a location within the contiguous 48 states. This term is often used to denote the location of a base, next PCS, or deployment.
Deployment	—	The activities required to move military personnel and resources/materials from a home installation to another location. Service members deploy unaccompanied by family members.
Deployment Cycle	—	The general sequence of events related to a service member deploying, including: pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, pre-reunion, post-deployment.
Hardship Tour	—	A service member’s tour of duty when unaccompanied by family.
Household Goods	HHG	Represents the items that are moved from the household. Receiving HHG is often an exciting

		moment after PCS, and can also generate additional stressors.
Homesteading	—	Remaining at one duty station for an extended period or over consecutive tours. Homesteading can be desirable for limiting moves for some, but can be considered its own hardship for the service member depending on his/her/their career ambitions.
Outside the Continental United States	OCONUS	Represents a location outside of the contiguous United States, including Hawaii, Alaska, U.S. Territories, and other countries.
Overseas Housing Allowance	OHA	The amount of money provided to a service member to pay for housing expenses when overseas.
Permanent Change of Station	PCS	Refers to the process of a move to a new location to satisfy the work of the service member. Family members accompany the service member for a PCS. The term can be used as a noun or verb.
Quarters	—	Government housing.
Temporary Duty	TDY	An assignment which requires the service member to travel for work for a specified period of time (days, weeks, or even months), unaccompanied by family. It can be used as a noun or status. This term is used by the Army, Air Force, and Space Force.
Temporary Area of Duty	TAD	An assignment which requires the service member to travel for work for a specified period of time (days, weeks, or even months), unaccompanied by family. This term is used by the Navy and Marine Corps.
Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance	TQSA	Because PCS moves require transition, TQSA is issued as an additional amount of money to support expenses of residing in a temporary situation before HHG arrives and permanent housing is secured.