SHAW AIR FORCE BASE

PCS GUIDE

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR MOVE TO

SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

20th Fighter Wing · Home to Two MQ-9 Reaper Attack Squadrons

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WELCOME TO SHAW AIR FORCE BASE

Moving to a new duty station is more than a change of address — it's a mission, a milestone, and the start of a new chapter. This guide is designed to make that transition to Shaw AFB smoother, clearer, and a little less stressful.

Shaw AFB sits just north of Sumter, South Carolina, about 45 minutes east of Columbia, the state capital. It's a well-established main operating base with on-base family housing, a full range of on-base services, and an easy 10-minute commute from most of Sumter.

Shaw is also home to a growing remotely piloted aircraft mission — two MQ-9 Reaper attack squadrons now fly alongside the base's F-16 fighter mission — so this guide gives that RPA community particular attention alongside the housing, schools, and lifestyle detail every incoming family needs.

The pages that follow combine official sources — DoD BAH schedules, MilitaryOneSource, installation housing offices — with practical, on-the-ground detail about the Sumter and Columbia areas so you can make informed choices before you ever set foot on base.

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION
Sumter, SC — 45 min from Columbia

NEAREST CITY
Sumter, ~10 min to Main Gate

HOUSING MHA
Sumter/Shaw AFB (SC263)

HOST WING
20th Fighter Wing (F-16CM)

RPA UNITS
482nd & 50th Attack Squadrons (MQ-9)

A BASE WITH TWO MISSIONS

Most guides to Shaw focus solely on the F-16 fighter mission. This one also covers the base's fast-growing MQ-9 Reaper community — the 482nd and 50th Attack Squadrons — since that population has its own unique PCS questions.

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YOUR SHAW AFB PCS: BEYOND THE BASICS

This guide is designed to go beyond basic checklists and generic relocation advice. Inside, you'll find practical guidance and useful, sourced information to help make your PCS transition to Shaw AFB smoother.

THE 5-STEP PCS JOURNEY

1 Orders & Planning
Review orders, understand benefits, and outline your relocation plan.

2 Pre-Move Preparation
Schedule appointments, organize paperwork, and prep your household.

3 Travel & Transition
Coordinate transportation, manage logistics, prep for moving day.

4 Settle & Adjust
Complete key tasks, unpack, and get familiar with your surroundings.

5 Build Your New Routine
Establish connections, explore the area, create a sense of home.

WHAT IT REALLY FEELS LIKE

Timelines Shift
Paperwork slows down — flexibility becomes important.

Expect Changes
Plans can shift quickly, so staying adaptable helps.

Out of Your Control
Housing, scheduling, and delays are common.

The Adjustment Is Real
Give your family time and grace to settle in.

Lean on Your Support
You do not have to navigate this alone.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

Housing costs, schools, financing, and local life around Shaw AFB — pulled together from official sources and on-the-ground detail so you can plan with confidence before you arrive.

SOURCED · LOCAL DETAIL · FAMILY-FOCUSED

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SHAW AIR FORCE BASE

OVERVIEW & MISSION

LOCATION

SUMTER, SC

45 minutes east of Columbia, the state capital

HOST WING

20TH FIGHTER WING

F-16CM Fighting Falcons; Air Combat Command / Fifteenth Air Force

RPA MISSION

2 MQ-9 SQUADRONS

482nd & 50th Attack Squadrons fly the MQ-9 Reaper

PRIMARY UNITS AT SHAW

- 20th Fighter Wing (host wing) — F-16CM Fighting Falcons
- 482nd Attack Squadron — MQ-9 Reaper
- 50th Attack Squadron — MQ-9 Reaper
- Headquarters, Ninth Air Force (Air Forces Central)
- Headquarters, U.S. Army Central (Third Army / ARCENT)

MISSION SUMMARY

The 20th Fighter Wing trains and deploys combat-ready F-16CM pilots and aircrew for suppression of enemy air defenses, strategic attack, and air interdiction missions worldwide. Shaw is also a joint hub for regional command: Ninth Air Force (AFCENT) and U.S. Army Central both direct forces across the Middle East from headquarters on base.

SHAW'S GROWING RPA MISSION

Shaw was named the Air Force's preferred location for a new remotely piloted aircraft unit, and the base has since stood up two MQ-9 Reaper attack squadrons — the 482nd Attack Squadron and the 50th Attack Squadron — flying alongside the F-16 mission. New MQ-9 facilities have been built specifically to support this expansion, and the RPA community at Shaw has grown steadily since the first Reaper landed on base. If you or a family member is joining one of these squadrons, expect a newer, still-growing community within the larger fighter-wing culture at Shaw.

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GATE ACCESS & TRAFFIC TIPS

Getting on base should be simple and stress-free. Below are gate locations, hours, and practical tips to help you plan ahead at Shaw AFB.

GATE	HOURS
Main Gate *Ashley-Bowman Blvd.*	24/7 — the only round-the-clock access gate; Visitor Center located here.
441 Gate (formerly Rhodes Gate)	M-F 6 a.m.-10 p.m.; closed weekends & federal holidays.
Sumter (East) Gate	M-F 6 a.m.-6 p.m.; closed weekends & federal holidays.
Frierson School (North) Gate	Teacher work days only, M-F 6:30-4:30 a.m.-p.m.; closed weekends & holidays.

All personnel should carry a valid CAC or approved identification while entering the installation.

REAL-WORLD TRAFFIC TIPS

Avoid Peak Traffic
Heavier during 0600-0900 and 1500-1800 at the Main Gate.

Use Alternate Gates
If the Main Gate is congested, check whether 441 or Sumter Gate is open for your commute time.

Have ID Ready
Keep your CAC, ID, and vehicle documentation accessible.

NEW TO THE AREA?

Gate routines and traffic patterns take a few weeks to learn. Most of Sumter is within 15 minutes of every gate, so this is one of the easier commutes in the Air Force.

EASY COMMUTE

10-15 MIN

MULTIPLE GATES

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CITIES & COMMUNITIES IN THE AREA

A quick reference for commute times, home prices, property tax rates, and school zones across the communities Shaw families most often choose.

SHAW HEIGHTS / ON-BASE

- **COMMUTE:** 0 min
- **MEDIAN PRICE:** N/A (privatized)
- **PROP. TAX:** N/A
- **SCHOOLS:** Sumter School District

ALICE DRIVE / LAKEWOOD (SUMTER)

- **COMMUTE:** 5-10 min
- **MEDIAN PRICE:** $230K
- **PROP. TAX:** ~0.6-0.8%
- **SCHOOLS:** Sumter School District

DOWNTOWN / HISTORIC SUMTER

- **COMMUTE:** 10-15 min
- **MEDIAN PRICE:** $210K
- **PROP. TAX:** ~0.6-0.8%
- **SCHOOLS:** Sumter School District

DALZELL, SC

- **COMMUTE:** 10-15 min
- **MEDIAN PRICE:** $255K
- **PROP. TAX:** ~0.6-0.8%
- **SCHOOLS:** Sumter School District

LEXINGTON, SC (COLUMBIA METRO)

- **COMMUTE:** 50-55 min
- **MEDIAN PRICE:** $385K
- **PROP. TAX:** ~0.5-0.7%
- **SCHOOLS:** Lexington County School Dist. One

BLYTHEWOOD, SC (COLUMBIA METRO)

- **COMMUTE:** 55-60 min
- **MEDIAN PRICE:** $375K
- **PROP. TAX:** ~0.5-0.7%
- **SCHOOLS:** Richland School District Two

Home prices and tax rates above are general-area market snapshots for planning purposes only, based on recent public data — not an appraisal or valuation of any specific property, and they change frequently. South Carolina exempts 100% disabled veterans (and surviving spouses) from property tax entirely on their primary residence.

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NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION IN THE AREA

What to Know Before You Buy New Near Shaw AFB

New construction near Shaw is concentrated west of Sumter, with a larger, faster-growing market an hour away in the Columbia metro if you're open to a longer commute.

ACTIVE BUILDERS & COMMUNITIES

WEST SUMTER

BEST KNOWN FOR: *Primary Growth Corridor*

Great Southern Homes, Clayton Homes, and Oakwood Homes are active in more than a half-dozen communities west of the city — nearly all of Sumter's current new-home growth is on this side of town.

LEXINGTON, SC

BEST KNOWN FOR: *Columbia Metro's Fastest-Growing Suburb*

Essex Homes, Great Southern Homes, and dozens of other builders are active in Lexington County, about 50 minutes from Shaw but with strong schools and amenities.

BLYTHEWOOD, SC

BEST KNOWN FOR: *Master-Planned Growth*

25+ builders offer build-on-your-lot and community options in this fast-growing Richland County town, roughly an hour from Shaw.

COLUMBIA METRO (OVERALL)

BEST KNOWN FOR: *42+ Active Builders*

Russell and Jeffcoat and other regional builders round out one of South Carolina's largest new-construction markets, spanning Lexington, Irmo, and Chapin.

THE NEW-CONSTRUCTION TRAP FOR MILITARY BUYERS

Builder incentives — rate buydowns, closing-cost credits, free upgrades — are hard to pass up on a PCS timeline, and plenty of military families take them. The catch: as long as the builder keeps developing nearby lots, they control pricing on new inventory and can price it below what you'd need to sell for a profit.

That built-in competition can suppress appreciation until the neighborhood fully builds out — sometimes for years. If you're considering a new build, plan to stay at least 3 to 5 years before you can expect to sell for a profit. If a PCS move is likely sooner than that, a resale home in an established neighborhood may be the safer financial choice.

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2026 BAH RATES FOR SUMTER / SHAW AFB, SC

Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) can play a major role in your relocation and housing decisions. Rates below reflect the official 2026 Sumter/Shaw AFB military housing area (MHA: SC263) schedule, effective January 1, 2026.

RANK	WITH DEPENDENTS	WITHOUT DEPENDENTS
E-2	$1,440	$1,149
E-3	$1,440	$1,149
E-4	$1,440	$1,149
O-1	$1,563	$1,374
O-2	$1,944	$1,494
O-3	$2,052	$1,785
O-4	$2,361	$1,980

For the most current BAH figures, visit the official DoD BAH Rate Lookup at travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Basic-Allowance-for-Housing/BAH-Rate-Lookup/

Updated Annually
BAH rates are reviewed and adjusted by the DoD each year.

Tax-Free
BAH is a non-taxable allowance, unlike base pay.

Rank & ZIP Based
Your rate depends on paygrade, dependents, and duty station ZIP.

ONE OF THE MORE AFFORDABLE MHAS

Sumter/Shaw AFB ranks among the lower-cost military housing areas nationwide, meaning BAH here tends to stretch further against local home prices and rents than in many other markets.

LOWER COST

GOES FURTHER

LOCATION MATTERS

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AN HONEST HOUSING-COST ASSESSMENT

BAH rates are helpful, but they do not tell the full story. Housing decisions here involve budget, commute, lifestyle, and long-term comfort. Here's an honest perspective to help you make informed choices as you plan your move to Shaw AFB.

THE GOOD NEWS

Sumter/Shaw AFB is one of the more affordable military housing areas in the country, and South Carolina's 100% property tax exemption for totally disabled veterans can meaningfully change the math for eligible buyers.

THE CHALLENGE

Sumter itself has a smaller selection of newer homes and amenities than a larger metro. Families wanting more shopping, dining, and school options often look toward Columbia — trading a 10-minute commute for closer to an hour.

THE RECOMMENDATION

If Shaw is likely to be a longer assignment, weigh the extra commute time to Columbia against the added schools and amenities. For shorter stays, Sumter's short commute and lower price point are hard to beat.

FINDING YOUR BALANCE

Every family's priorities are different. Use the Cities & Communities and Gate Access pages together to weigh commute, schools, space, and budget honestly before committing to a neighborhood.

YOUR PRIORITIES **LOCAL INSIGHT** **YOUR FIT**

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VA Home Loan Benefit

A simple guide for Veterans, service members, and eligible survivors

A VA home loan isn't money lent by VA directly — a private lender (bank, mortgage company, or credit union) makes the loan, and VA guarantees part of it. That guaranty lowers the lender's risk, which is why VA loans come with standout terms.

KEY BENEFITS

- **$0 Down Payment**
  No down payment required in most cases — nearly 90% of VA loans close with $0 down.
- **No Monthly PMI**
  Skip the private mortgage insurance most low-down-payment loans require.
- **Reusable Benefit**
  See “Using Your Benefit More Than Once” below for the rules.
- **Negotiable Closing Costs**
  Sellers may credit up to 4% of the home's value toward your costs.
- **No VA Minimum Credit Score**
  VA sets no minimum; individual lenders may still set their own.

WHO'S ELIGIBLE

- **Active Duty**
  Generally 90 continuous days of service.
- **Veterans (Gulf War era–present)**
  24 continuous months, or full call-up period (min. 90 days), or a qualifying discharge exception.
- **National Guard & Reserve**
  90 days of active duty, or 6 creditable years of service.
- **Surviving Spouses**
  Certain DIC recipients, or spouses of an MIA/POW service member.
- **Certificate of Eligibility (COE)**
  Required for everyone — apply free online at VA.gov or through your lender.

VA Funding Fee — Purchase & Construction Loans

Down Payment	First-Time Use	Subsequent Use
Less than 5%	2.15%	3.30%
5% or more	1.50%	1.50%
10% or more	1.25%	1.25%

Rates effective 4/7/2023, as a % of the loan amount — usually financed into the loan. **Waived** for most Veterans receiving VA disability compensation, Purple Heart recipients on active duty, and surviving spouses receiving DIC. IRRRL, cash-out refinance, and NADL fees are lower and don't vary by down payment.

Using Your Benefit More Than Once

- **Repaid your prior VA loan but kept the home?** You can restore your full entitlement **one time only** to use again.
- **Sold the home and repaid the loan in full** — or had another eligible Veteran assume it and substitute their own entitlement? Your entitlement is restored, with no limit on how many times.
- **Didn't restore your entitlement?** You may still have remaining “bonus entitlement” to buy or refinance another home with no down payment, based on your county's loan limit.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA.gov) — Home Loans, Eligibility, Funding Fee & Closing Costs, and Loan Limits & Entitlement pages.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF DATA: Funding fee rates effective April 7, 2023; all other details reflect VA.gov content current as of January 15, 2026.

DISCLAIMER: This fact sheet is for general information only and is not exhaustive. The author is not a licensed mortgage lender or financial advisor. Consult a VA-approved lender or licensed mortgage professional for guidance specific to your situation.

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VA LOAN TIPS FOR A SMOOTH TRANSACTION

VA loans are powerful, but success often comes down to preparation and strategy. These tips help buyers avoid delays and navigate the process with confidence.

GET YOUR COE BEFORE HOUSE HUNTING

Your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) confirms your VA loan benefit and shows sellers you're ready to move forward.

WHY SOME SELLERS HESITATE ABOUT VA

Some sellers or agents may misunderstand VA financing. Hesitation often comes from outdated information, not the loan itself.

TERMITE / WDO REPORT TIMING MATTERS

Many VA transactions require a wood-destroying organism inspection. South Carolina's humid climate makes this a routine, often-required step — schedule it early to keep your timeline on track.

VA APPRAISAL PROTECTIONS MATTER

VA appraisals help ensure the property is safe, sound, and fairly valued, protecting your investment.

GET FULLY UNDERWRITTEN FIRST

A full underwriting approval (not just a prequalification letter) shows sellers your financing is rock-solid and ready to close.

KEEP YOUR FINANCES STEADY

Avoid new credit, big purchases, job changes, or large unexplained deposits between contract and closing — lenders re-verify before funding.

OFFER FLEXIBILITY ON REPAIRS

If a seller is worried about repair costs or the appraised value, offering to help bridge that gap can make your VA offer stand out.

VA LOANS NOW CLOSE JUST AS FAST

With electronic COE verification and streamlined underwriting, VA loans typically close in about 40-45 days — right in line with conventional financing.

PREPARATION BEATS SURPRISES

Every one of these tips reflects common friction points in real VA transactions. Working through your COE, timeline, and inspections step by step ahead of time helps keep things on track.

COE READY

ON TIME

PROTECTED

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WHICH MORTGAGE LOAN IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Qualifying for a VA loan is a real benefit — but qualifying doesn't automatically make it your best option, especially if you have money saved for a down payment. Here's an honest, side-by-side look at your three main financing paths.

	VA LOAN	FHA LOAN	CONVENTIONAL
Down Payment	$0 down	3.5% down	3-5%+ down
Mortgage Insurance	None, ever	Upfront + monthly MIP, often for life of loan	PMI if under 20% down (removable at 20% equity)
Upfront Fee	Funding fee: 1.25%-3.3% of loan (financed)	Upfront MIP: 1.75% (financed)	None
Min. Credit Score	No VA minimum (lenders often 580-620+)	580+ for 3.5% down	Typically 620+
Best For	$0-down buyers; eligible veterans & service members	Lower credit scores, smaller down payments	Strong credit and/or savings for a down payment

THE EQUITY TRADE-OFF: WHY $0 DOWN ISN'T FREE

With $0 down and the VA funding fee rolled into your loan, your loan balance can start at or near the home's full purchase price. That typically means it takes longer to build equity than with FHA or conventional financing where you put money down up front. If you have savings available, it's worth comparing the equity you'd start with against the cash you'd need today before deciding.

There's also a PCS-specific risk to watch for. With $0 down and the funding fee financed into the loan, a large share of your principal payments in the first one to two years often goes toward that fee rather than paying down your actual loan balance. If new orders arrive in three to four years — a common PCS timeline — you may end up selling having built very little real equity, and repeating the cycle at your next duty station.

RUN YOUR OWN NUMBERS

Every buyer's situation is different. Compare your VA eligibility, available savings, and goals against real numbers — not just the loan you technically qualify for — before deciding.

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CHOOSING A LENDER: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Choosing the right lender can make a major difference in your homebuying experience, especially with military or VA financing. Here's what separates a strong lender from a merely adequate one.

VA LOAN EXPERIENCE
Ask how many VA loans they close per year, and whether they understand entitlement, funding fee tiers, and VA appraisal requirements specific to South Carolina.

REALISTIC TIMELINES
A good lender gives you an honest closing timeline up front (typically 30-45 days) and communicates proactively if anything changes.

TRANSPARENT COSTS
Ask for a full Loan Estimate early, and compare origination fees, discount points, and lender credits across at least two or three lenders.

FULL UNDERWRITING, NOT JUST PREQUAL
A lender willing to fully underwrite your file before you're under contract makes your offer far more competitive in a multiple-offer situation.

RESPONSIVENESS
PCS timelines are tight. A lender who answers calls, texts, or emails quickly is worth more than a marginally lower rate.

LICENSED IN SOUTH CAROLINA
Confirm the loan officer is licensed to originate loans in South Carolina — a lender who only works in your previous state can't close your South Carolina purchase.

The VA maintains a list of approved lenders at benefits.va.gov/homeloans, and many banks, credit unions, and independent mortgage companies originate VA loans in the Sumter and Columbia markets — comparing at least two or three is generally worth the extra time.

WHY THE RIGHT LENDER MATTERS

Stronger Offers
Sellers trust buyers with strong, verified financing.

Smoother Transactions
Fewer surprises means faster, calmer closings.

Better Overall Results
The right partner protects your bottom line.

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TEMPORARY HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Helping You Navigate the Transition With Confidence

During a PCS move to Shaw AFB, temporary housing often becomes part of the journey. Here are your best options — from on-post lodging to off-post extended-stay and furnished rentals near the base.

ON-POST LODGING

BEST FOR: *Immediate Arrival & PCS Priority*

Shaw's on-base Inns of the Carolina lodging gives PCS families priority booking. Reserve at (803) 895-1502 or af.dodlodging.net.

OFF-POST HOTELS

BEST FOR: *Immediate Flexibility & Backup*

Hotels along Broad Street and US-521 in Sumter sit minutes from the Main Gate — a reliable backup if on-post lodging is full.

EXTENDED STAY HOTELS

BEST FOR: *Medium-Term Comfort*

Extended-stay properties in Sumter offer full kitchens and weekly rates, ideal while house-hunting.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

BEST FOR: *Longer Stays & Family Space*

Furnished short-term rentals throughout Sumter offer more space than a hotel room for a longer house hunt, priced within per diem for many ranks.

WHY TEMPORARY HOUSING MATTERS

Choosing the right temporary housing can reduce stress and support a smoother transition while you decide between Sumter and the longer commute options near Columbia.

COMFORT

FLEXIBILITY

PEACE OF MIND

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FAMILY RESOURCES: SCHOOLS IN THE AREA

Every school district referenced in this guide, plus named schools and college options on the following pages, so you can research and choose with confidence.

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Sumter School District

All of Sumter and Shaw AFB on-base housing; a Purple Star military-friendly district.

Lexington County School District One

Lexington, SC and the western Columbia metro.

Richland School District Two

Blythewood and the northeast Columbia metro.

SUMTER IS BUILT FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Sumter School District is a designated Purple Star District, and Shaw Heights Elementary sits directly on base, serving on-base housing with district-provided transportation to schools off base as students move up in grade.

HIGHLY-RATED / SPECIALTY SCHOOLS

Shaw Heights Elementary

On-Base • Sumter SD

The only public school located directly on Shaw AFB; serves on-base housing families grades 2-3 with above-district test scores.

Sumter High School

Sumter • Sumter SD

The district's flagship comprehensive high school, with IB and career-and-technology programs.

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SCHOOLS IN THE AREA, CONTINUED

PRIVATE & CHARTER OPTIONS

Wilson Hall
Sumter • Private, College-Prep
Sumter's largest independent school, serving PK-12 with a full college-preparatory curriculum.

Thomas Sumter Academy
Dalzell • Private, K-12
Independent school west of Sumter serving military and civilian families alike.

Sumter Christian School
Sumter • Private, Christian
PK-12 Christian school in the Sumter area.

COLLEGE & CONTINUING EDUCATION OPTIONS

University of South Carolina Sumter
A USC regional campus offering associate degrees and the first two years of bachelor's coursework, minutes from Shaw.

Central Carolina Technical College
Two-year technical college based in Sumter with strong ties to Shaw AFB and local employers.

Morris College
Private HBCU in Sumter offering bachelor's degrees across a range of majors.

University of South Carolina (Columbia)
USC's flagship campus, about 45 minutes away, with full undergraduate and graduate programs.

NOT SURE WHICH SCHOOLS FIT YOUR FAMILY?
Sumter School District's enrollment office can walk you through zoned schools and transfer options for both on-base and off-base addresses.

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FAMILY RESOURCES: CHILDCARE ON & OFF BASE

Finding quality childcare you can trust makes all the difference. Explore your options on base and in the local community around Shaw AFB.

SHAW AFB CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

504 Shaw Drive area, Shaw AFB, SC 29152 · Serves children 6 weeks-5 years. May have a waitlist — apply early through MilitaryChildCare.com.

PRIVATE / OFF-BASE OPTIONS

Licensed daycares and in-home providers throughout Sumter also serve Shaw families, including MCCYN-eligible providers.

FREE CHILDCARE HELP DURING YOUR PCS MOVE

A few programs specifically fund or provide childcare while you handle house hunting, out-processing, and the move itself:

Air & Space Forces Aid Society — Child Care for PCS

$200 per child (up to $1,000 per household) toward childcare during your move, including house-hunting trips. Apply within 60 days of arrival or departure.

Armed Services YMCA — Respite Child Care

Up to 16 free hours of childcare per child, per month, at participating YMCAs — no membership required.

Military OneSource — MilitaryChildCare.com

Free portal to search and request hourly, part-day, and full-day childcare near Shaw AFB.

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CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT FOR MILITARY DEPENDENTS

Spouses and dependents have several paths into civilian work near Shaw AFB — from federal GS positions with hiring preference, to on-base jobs, to private-sector partnerships built specifically for military families. Columbia's larger job market, about 45 minutes away, adds state government, healthcare, and university employers to the mix.

Priority Placement Program & Military Spouse Preference (PPP/MSP)

Register via myFSS (CAC login required)

Gives spouses priority consideration for DoD GS civilian positions (GS-15 and below) in your new commuting area. Register no earlier than 30 days before your sponsor's report date.

Military Spouse Noncompetitive Hiring Authority

Apply via USAJOBS.gov

Lets eligible spouses be hired into federal positions at any agency — not just DoD — without competing against the general public.

On-Base NAF Employment (Exchange, Commissary, FSS/MWR)

See MilitaryOneSource's NAF/AF jobs guide, or search USAJOBS.gov

Non-appropriated fund jobs at Shaw's BX, Commissary, fitness center, and CDC — many carry a Military Spouse Employment Preference for NAF hiring.

Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) & MyCAA

msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil

MSEP connects spouses with 1,000+ partner employers committed to military spouse hiring. MyCAA offers up to $4,000 in tuition assistance toward licenses, certifications, or an associate degree.

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

- **USAJOBS.gov**
  Search and apply for federal jobs; filter by the "Military Spouses" hiring path.
- **South Carolina Occupational Licensing for Military Spouses**
  South Carolina LLR offers expedited licensing pathways for military spouses who already hold an out-of-state license.
- **Shaw AFB Airman & Family Readiness Center**
  Free resume reviews, interview prep, and one-on-one employment counseling for Shaw families.

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OUTDOOR RECREATION YOU CAN'T MISS

From old-growth forest to a genuine state capital, the Sumter and Columbia area offers a lot within an hour of Shaw AFB.

FAN FAVORITES

CONGAREE NATIONAL PARK

Old-growth floodplain forest, the Cedar Creek canoe trail, and a 2.6-mile boardwalk — about 30 minutes south of Columbia.

LAKE MARION / SANTEE STATE PARK

One of South Carolina's largest lakes — fishing, boating, and swimming about 30 minutes from Shaw.

SWAN LAKE IRIS GARDENS

Sumter's signature city park, with the only public garden in the U.S. featuring all eight species of swans.

RIVERBANKS ZOO & GARDEN

One of the nation's top-rated zoos, in Columbia — a favorite day trip for Shaw families.

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MORE OUTDOOR ADVENTURES TO EXPLORE

Beyond the favorites, here are a few more highly-rated spots — some close to town, others worth the drive.

CLOSE TO TOWN

Patriot Park
Sumter's premier sports complex and greenway, popular for youth sports and walking trails.

Woods Bay State Park
A swampy Carolina bay ecosystem east of Sumter with boardwalk trails and canoe access.

Poinsett State Park
Rolling sandhills and Lake Poinsett, about 20 minutes south of Sumter — hiking, fishing, and camping.

WORTH THE DRIVE

Charleston Historic District
Cobblestone streets, harbor views, and Southern charm, about 2 hours southeast of Shaw.

Myrtle Beach
South Carolina's classic beach getaway, roughly 2 hours east of Sumter.

Lake Murray
A massive reservoir west of Columbia popular for boating, fishing, and lakefront dining.

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WHERE LOCALS TAKE THEIR OUT-OF-TOWN GUESTS

These are the places locals recommend when friends and family come to visit — the spots that capture the flavor of the Sumter and Columbia area.

SC STATE HOUSE

1100 Gervais St, Columbia

South Carolina's capitol building, with public tours and grounds honoring the state's history.

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE MUSEUM

301 Gervais St, Columbia

Four floors of science, art, and history exhibits in a converted historic mill building.

SUMTER OPERA HOUSE & DOWNTOWN

21 N Main St, Sumter

A restored 1893 opera house anchoring Sumter's walkable historic downtown.

EAU CLAIRE PRINTING / FIVE POINTS (COLUMBIA)

Columbia, SC

A lively college-town district near USC with local shops, restaurants, and nightlife.

"Sumter feels like a small town, but Columbia is close enough that you're never far from a bigger city when you need one."

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FAMILY FUN & ANNUAL EVENTS

Discover the events locals look forward to every year — the experiences that help make the Sumter and Columbia area feel like home.

SPRING

- Iris Festival at Swan Lake (May)
- South Carolina State Fair preview events
- Congaree spring wildflower season

SUMMER

- Lake Marion boating and fishing season
- Columbia's Riverfront summer concert series
- Independence Day celebrations, Sumter & Columbia

FALL

- South Carolina State Fair (Columbia, Oct)
- Sumter's ron Horse Half Marathon
- Congaree National Park fall hiking season

WINTER

- Christmas parades, Sumter & Columbia
- Riverbanks Zoo Lights (Columbia)
- Sumter Ice on Main (seasonal outdoor rink)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Sumter and Columbia area's event calendar is packed year-round — many events are free or low-cost, and Columbia is close enough for an easy day trip.

FESTIVALS

FAMILY FUN

YEAR-ROUND

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MILITARY-SPECIFIC MOVING RESOURCES

Moving with the military comes with unique options and decisions. Understanding the difference between DPM, PPM, and Partial PPM can help you choose the move that best fits your family, timeline, and budget.

DPM (Defense Personal Property Move)

WHAT IT ENTAILS:
The government arranges everything — a licensed moving company packs, loads, transports, and unloads your household goods. You coordinate pickup and delivery dates but handle very little of the physical work yourself.

BEST FOR: Families wanting less hands-on coordination and government-arranged moving support.

PPM (Personally Procured Move)

WHAT IT ENTAILS:
Formerly called a "DITY" move. You arrange and execute the move yourself — renting a truck, hiring labor, or both — and the government reimburses you based on what it would have cost them to move you. Spend less than that estimate and you keep the difference.

BEST FOR: Families seeking flexibility, greater control, and potential financial incentive.

Partial PPM

WHAT IT ENTAILS:
A hybrid approach: part of your household goods move through government-arranged DPM, while you personally move the rest — often high-value or sentimental items — for separate reimbursement.

BEST FOR: Families wanting flexibility while reducing overall moving workload.

Every PCS situation is different. Review your orders and transportation office guidance before choosing your move type.

Shaw's Transportation Management Office handles the paperwork and scheduling for DPM and PPM moves — make it your first stop once you have orders in hand.

TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT OFFICE — SHAW AFB
504 Shaw Drive, Shaw AFB, SC 29152 · (803) 895-8613 / (803) 895-8614 | Your first stop for scheduling DPM movers, PPM counseling, and move paperwork — visit before you finalize your move type.

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PCS MONEY & MOVING BENEFITS

Military moves include several benefits designed to help cover relocation costs and reduce financial stress.

DLA — Dislocation Allowance
Extra moving help for miscellaneous expenses that pop up during relocation.

MALT — Monetary Allowance in Lieu of Transportation
If you drive your own car, this helps cover travel mileage.

TLE — Temporary Lodging Expense
Helps pay for hotel stays and meals while moving within the United States.

TLA (OCONUS)
Similar to TLE, but for overseas PCS moves — short-term lodging support while transitioning abroad.

PPM Weight Allowances
Authorized limits for how much you can move during a PCS, based on rank and family size.

If DLA, MALT, TLE, TLA, or your PPM weight allowance weren't squared away at your previous duty station, you can get them sorted out at the Shaw Finance Office.

FINANCE OFFICE — SHAW AFB
504 Shaw Drive, Bldg. 1118, Shaw AFB, SC 29152 · (803) 895-1529 | Submit pay and travel voucher questions anytime through the Comptroller Services Portal (CSP) at csp.cce.af.mil — the primary way to reach Finance for PCS pay issues.

DON'T LEAVE BENEFITS ON THE TABLE

PCS benefits can be easy to overlook in the shuffle of a move. Review your orders against this list, and flag anything that looks off with the Finance Office directly.

DLA & MALT

TLE & TLA

WEIGHT LIMITS

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PCS MOVING TIMELINE

A simple step-by-step timeline to help keep your PCS organized, reduce stress, and stay ahead of deadlines.

WEEKS 12-9

- Review PCS orders and timelines
- Create a PCS binder
- Contact the TMO
- Start collecting documents
- Research DPM/PPM/Partial PPM options

WEEKS 8-5

- Declutter and donate unused items
- Arrange school and medical record transfers
- Review weight allowances
- Begin organizing travel plans
- Begin house hunting

WEEKS 4-2

- Schedule pack-out and transportation dates
- Finalize documents
- Confirm travel plans
- Goal for "under contract" on new home

WEEK 1 - MOVING WEEK

- Supervise pack-out and inventory
- Complete final home walkthrough
- Keep paperwork accessible
- Carry medications separately
- Travel to Shaw AFB

BUILD YOUR OWN TIMELINE

Every move has its own quirks — orders, school calendars, lease dates. Use this as a starting template and adjust dates to fit your family's specific situation.

CUSTOM TIMELINE

STAY AHEAD

REFERENCE OFTEN

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PLANNING FOR YOUR MILITARY LIFESTYLE

Buying a home is more than a PCS decision — it's part of your family's long-term plan.

1. DEPLOYMENT-READY HOME ITEMS

Low-maintenance landscaping, smart home technology, security systems, and durable finishes make homeownership easier during deployments and extended absences.

2. FUTURE PCS RESALE PLANNING

Even if you plan to stay for years, consider resale value from day one — school zones, commute time, and neighborhood growth all matter later.

3. INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Some military families keep their home as a rental after relocating. Shaw's steady PCS traffic supports consistent rental demand near base.

4. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Managing a home from another duty station can be challenging. A good local property manager can make long-distance ownership much less stressful.

PLANNING FOR THE LONG GAME?

Whether this is a two-year stop or a longer assignment, think through the resale and rental angles up front — not after you've already signed.

RIGHT-FIT HOME | **RESALE SMART** | **LONG-TERM VALUE**

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MILITARY FINANCIAL STRATEGY: BUY-AND-RENT

Buying a home at your current duty station with the intent to rent it out when you PCS can be a powerful wealth-building move or an expensive mistake. Here's a clear-eyed look at when this strategy works.

WHEN IT WORKS

- BAH essentially pays your mortgage — building equity with government money
- VA loan: no down payment, no PMI
- Rental income can offset your next housing cost during PCS
- Depreciation and mortgage interest are tax-deductible
- Steady PCS turnover at Shaw supports consistent rental demand

WHEN IT DOESN'T

- Negative cash flow if rent doesn't cover PITI + fees
- VA loan entitlement may be tied up
- Bad tenants or repairs can wipe out a year of cash flow
- Capital gains tax exposure if sold within 2 years

QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING BEFORE YOU BUY:
Would this home appeal to future renters? Could expected rent cover most ownership costs? Am I comfortable being a landlord or hiring a property manager? If I receive PCS orders in three years, would keeping this home still make financial sense?

RUN THE NUMBERS BEFORE YOU DECIDE

Buy-and-rent isn't right for everyone. Pencil out the real math for your specific situation — rent comps, property management fees, and vacancy risk — before committing.

REAL NUMBERS

HONEST LOOK

YOUR DECISION

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ON-BASE AGENCIES & SERVICES

Quick-reference contact info for the offices and facilities you'll use most during your move to Shaw AFB. Tap an agency's name to visit its website where one is available.

Base Exchange (BX)
(803) 668-5210
Shaw AFB Exchange

Commissary
(803) 668-3999
Shaw AFB Commissary

Library
(803) 895-1683
20th FSS Library

Fitness Center
(803) 895-1802
Shaw Fitness & Sports Center

Pass & ID / Visitor Control
(803) 895-1110
Main Gate, Ashley-Bowman Blvd

Military Personnel (MPF)
(803) 895-1634
Bldg 1118 - 504 Shaw Drive

Finance Office
(803) 895-1529
Bldg 1118 - 504 Shaw Drive

Legal Office (JAG)
(803) 895-1567
20th FW Legal Office

Transportation Mgmt Office (TMO)
(803) 895-8613
504 Shaw Drive

Airman & Family Readiness Center
(803) 895-1252
20th FSS

Fitness Center Annex
(803) 895-1802
20th FSS

Child Development Center
(803) 895-1287
504 Shaw Drive area

Exceptional Family Member Program
(803) 895-1252
20th FSS

Medical Clinic (78th MDG)
(803) 895-8410
Shaw Medical Clinic

DEERS / TRICARE
(803) 895-1634
Bldg 1118 - 504 Shaw Drive

Numbers and locations current as of 2026; call ahead to confirm hours.

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RESOURCES & CLOSING NOTES

Thank You for Reading

Whether you're arriving for a PCS or supporting a family member's move to Shaw AFB, we hope this guide has helped you feel more prepared for the transition ahead.

Every figure and fact in this guide reflects publicly available sources as of 2026 — official DoD BAH schedules, MilitaryOneSource, installation housing offices, and public market data — and all of it changes over time. Confirm current details with the relevant office before making financial decisions.

KEY CONTACTS AT A GLANCE

- Shaw AFB Housing Office — (803) 895-2421
- Shaw AFB Lodging (Inns of the Carolina) — (803) 895-1502
- Airman & Family Readiness Center — (803) 895-1252
- Shaw AFB Child Development Center — (803) 895-1287

DISCLAIMER: This is an independently produced informational guide and is not an official U.S. Air Force or Department of Defense publication. Always verify military benefits, reimbursements, and entitlements with your Transportation Management Office (TMO), Finance Office, or other qualified professionals before making financial decisions.

WELCOME TO SHAW AFB.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

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