

Should the Military Recruit in Schools?

It is common practice in the United States for military recruiters to present at high schools. Uniform-helmed tables full of pamphlets about military careers spring up in school commons a few times per year. At these presentations, students ask about the benefits of Army jobs, learn about the qualifications needed, and test their physical strength on a chin-up bar. Recruitment occurs even at schools in anti-military areas, as schools are obligated to give the military as much access as other employers. Some consider recruitment in schools beneficial, while others consider it a form of governmental predation.

Some believe that army recruitment at schools is the government's right and is beneficial to the United States. The army is meant to protect us; without it, the USA would be more vulnerable to attack by other countries. The American policy of protecting all citizens abroad is often enforced through the military. Because the army works at great expense to protect Americans at home and abroad, it deserves the opportunity to expand and protect us more effectively. The army also provides excellent benefits, such as funding for college, student loan repayment support and affordable health care. Many young people need such assistance and can learn about it at recruitment events. Like other employers and recruiters, military recruiters merely provide students with the option to join the military after graduation.

However, some believe that Army recruitment at schools is predatory. Developmentally, high school students are prone to making impulsive, emotionally driven decisions. Military recruiters exploit this tendency, considering students to be a prime market. Some argue that the USA has not fought an immediate existential threat since WWII, and the military, which spends hundreds of billions of dollars yearly, has sufficient resources to protect the USA if needed and does not need to recruit from schools. Finally, while the military does provide useful benefits, some believe that the government should provide these benefits to all American residents, instead of using them only as a reward for military service. They argue that directing young people into a profession that might injure or kill them with promises with the promise of affordable education and healthcare is manipulative.

Discussion Questions

1. Should military recruiters be allowed to recruit at schools?
2. What is the difference between the military and other employers, if any?
3. How much better are adults than teens at making important decisions, and when should society allow or require young people to make such decisions?